

Poetry Series

**Sarah Mkhonza**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**  
2017

**Publisher:**  
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

## Sarah Mkhonza(May 7,1957)

Dr. Sarah Mkhonza is a writer activist from Swaziland. She has a Ph.D from Michigan State University. She has written young adult novels, short stories and poetry both in siSwati and English. She is a multi genre writer and researcher who has presented on platforms around the world. She has a PH.D from Michigan State University.

# A Bag Full Of Tools That Dig Deep

My spade is nothing but words  
that dig deep when I step on  
the thing and let it go into  
the fertile ground where I see  
the ground break into cavities  
like those in the center of my  
tooth.

I throw the seed and it  
promises a harvest which without  
water does grow but looks so  
wilted that I rush for the hose.

It comes dragging on the ground,  
and asks me where my mind had gone,  
when I put the seed down and did  
not tell it immediately to stand  
up and be counted for without  
thoughts the seeds called words  
just lay there until somebody  
comes to knock on the door and  
says, 'hello seed, would you love  
to grow?

This seed says, 'even if I would,  
the love that would take me there  
is not shown by the one who stole  
me from my kind and threw me here  
where neglect eats my body and  
all that is me gets lost in dry  
ground.

The field says words cannot be the  
tool of a farmer where thoughts go  
wild and no focus comes to the  
red spot on the forehead to give  
honor to a custom old that says  
think it, word it and then put  
some love into it and voila! A

field evergreen and lovely! . There  
we go where we are assured a  
bountiful harvest.

For the big book said you shall  
ask, seek and knock all words  
which come with consequence to  
those who dare to do as they are  
told for telling is about words  
and them as tools shall see us  
through, for what else do we have  
but language that even the poor  
cannot say they have little of.

Sarah Mkhonza

# A Belly Of Candles Of Mahogany Wax

For I have come to just put this candle,  
here down here in this hole, where bats fly,  
where birds sing during the day on these trees,  
and as I walk away, the light shines on,  
to be blown out when the wick is gone,  
and the air no longer blows into these,  
my nostrils that suck it daily,  
on an in and out basis,  
that I learned the day I arrived,  
In this grotto so quiet  
in this belly of the queens  
that surround me with their roundness  
which they hold with outstretched hands.

All the candles glow on.  
Mine sits and shines,  
dripping its bronze wax down,  
leaving ants under it,  
and sand to tarnish it,  
for when I have gone,  
I will look back and say,  
it was a candle of bronze wax,  
that melted and burnt my hands,  
and fell through them in dots,  
that let it harden on the surface,  
where one day someone stands,  
having forgotten I once lived,  
a sheet of melted mahogany wax,  
that was blown out on some fiercely  
windy day.

Remold me in your mind,  
for I want to remain alive,  
and tie knots of love,  
with everybody I know,  
who is coming to share,  
that I once was a queen,  
that knew births and deaths,  
in small acts of living,

that stung me like syringes,  
with poison in their words,  
that pushed themselves deep,  
and became hard to take out,  
only to be laid at the grotto,  
in confessions about life  
of a candle of mahogany wax;  
yes a candle of ebony too,  
the sceptre with no gold tip,  
to keep it burning forever,  
in the ears of ebony wax,  
and eyes of ivory and black,  
that burn on making holes,  
that glare on and on as they melt,  
till day break greets us too,  
with the handshake of prosperity.

Sarah Mkhonza

# A Do It Yourself Manual For Marriage

On the road to matrimony  
Take this manual this still  
Long written but hidden by  
Time for time wanted to  
Dampen the fire and never  
Give lovers the Tinder's  
And the one live coal  
To keep blowing with  
The bellows of old and  
Survive where the world  
Puts them on the map of  
Love.

Take the hammer and tell  
It you ate a hermit a  
Blacksmith that shapes the  
Bracelets and rings of lovers.  
Knock the ring into place  
That has no break in its  
Roundness for with this  
Magic hammer round and  
Round we knock two heads  
And hearts into place.

Get the scissors as you  
Rollbdown the scroll and  
Cut the two checks into  
Two pieces for now their  
Highnesses will use the  
State account.

Down the scroll it guarantees  
Servants called their hands  
That will do the chores in turn  
For the hpuse has to be clean.

Now the wheelbarrow for they  
Must bend and push their love  
To the next destination

One loading with the shove  
The other pushing.

And now the dishcloth form  
No dish washing machines  
Unpack themselves. Finally  
The handcuffs on their ankles  
For they are prisoners who  
Dared to like twins open  
The cookie jar. Thus ends  
The scroll of life if you  
Dare to follow the do it  
Yourself manual to make  
Yours a marriage that will  
Stand the test of time.

Sarah Mkhonza

# A History Of Kings In Mountains/ Swaziland

The day comes when a king must bow out.  
Skin to skin the body wrapped must go up.  
The march beginning at early dawn ends up.  
The shouldered dead once shouldered alive.  
Is laid down outside a cave to watch out.  
The nation must be watched by these rulers, who lived life to prove they were.

The space inside is found. A halo once worn is a halo lost. Things in time mean things in season. Lay him here where the others have made him room.

Left to hyenas and jackals this bundle of kingship watches the rest of us with the royal eye. We live to see how fortunate the watching kings have made us. At the end of one kingly watch.

Hard is the road that leads up there.  
Single is the journey that accompanies kings to the resting place of watch kings.  
Will you dare to be a king or a queen or a follower?

Sarah Mkhonza

# A Nickel Face Up In The Tar Heads Up

Was it tails up, I'D leave it.  
This nickel in the tar. One look  
the face talks to me. Says I must  
admit, it has an ace against me.

Shivering on this cold day in November,  
the road calls near the fire place. This  
friend this nickel stuck in tar, rejects  
my invitation to go and join it's lot in  
my purse. Says it all. Purse of a poor man  
worse than your head in the tar.

But what about the risk of disappearing  
under the wheel of a car? It's better, says the nickel. At least my head will be  
crushed to the flat head, and I will live  
again the hitch hiker who never got anywhere. My head still heads up.

Months later, I look for the nockel. I  
see the circle in the tar, no nickel! She  
lies heads up lighting the tar road with  
her warrior face. Smiles. 'See, I told you. You should have been a nickel. Nobody  
would want you even if they cannot do without you. Here I lie, so take me home.  
I am unstuck and so are you. Together we gand we light up the lamp. She sits  
laughing forever.

Sarah Mkhonza

# A Save Us From The Hour Of Our Death Story

When six slices have to be eaten dry,  
was because of the misfortune that befell  
a little person.

Standing on the student self-created board, looking at naughty student art,  
the drawing pin is pulled out. It is held  
by both lips. In serious anticipation  
of who could put up a naked woman riding  
a horse. This classroom will shock the nuns.

Everything African has happened already.  
Their dresses that sweep the floor have been used as the umbrellas on rainy  
days.

To save them fromantic this shock, pull out the nude naughty art. What happens  
shocks the drawing pin in the mouth.

This laughter as the two fight for  
the nude artist of the week continues  
has one mouth trying to stifle a laugh  
opening. Down a naughty laughing mouth  
goes a naughty drawing pin.

The verdict is humiliation plus diagnosis  
plus six dry slices of bread eaten dry. Was this fair you ask? You get a frantic  
'No, ' from the class and a the frustrates of the godly. Two saintly daughters walk  
to the hospital for a Jesus induced healing.

If Jesus likes art, surely he should look at the student art board and heal me for  
saving the children from uttering obscenities with their pens on sacred spaces.  
This sacrilege got me here. This  
savior of the teen world cannot suffer  
for the sins of the children of the children. God protects generations of the  
I am here to tell the tale.  
Make sure you remain to tell your story of crayon drawings and chalk ones on  
the pavement.

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# A Song For Nandi

I know you were 'mnandi' for I tasted you in history,  
in the courts where calabashes sang and horns whistled,  
when the king touched you tenderly, and let you go  
after drinking of your sweetness.

You were left to sort yourself out, but you sorted them out,  
standing with legs of love, raising a prince declared none,  
and never to rule. They did not know this belly of yours,  
this warmth rare. For it cooked them bold, and turned them  
out mean, and threw them on the ground royally furious,  
and ready to grab what is theirs.

Some women's bellies are hot to look at, yours was also  
hot to touch. It raised the rumors of this 'shaka, '  
and had palaces wagging tongues, saying  
that you were now in the manner, of women  
who have been done, the deed with no name.

For he would kill a lion with bare hands, this tiny baby in you,  
Born in rejection, grown in strange lands of stick fights,  
where he beat all those his age. With marrow regal,  
and bone smooth like his skin, he would call to order  
soldiers, and change the manner of fighting. The whole  
nation had to listen.

Those who plant in shame, will not reap in shame.  
You changed the rules, and came back in power.  
Those who would not have you, would soon see  
you walking in pride, curbing the cruel hand of him,  
who had grown to rule with anger, and grown a nation  
furious.

What did I do to the land? You ask a question we ask.  
What did you do to the nation of Zulu, by begetting  
this furious son of a nation, that rules with blood,  
and spills it like water, till even dogs can drink it,  
and get no satisfaction and thus cry for more, to  
one who is ever willing, to keep it flowing daily.

You cried for grandchildren, to one who would  
rip open bellies and want to see dead, anything  
that resembled him, for fear of death at the hand  
of his own sun. He sapped and tapped blood and  
saw his own taken, to graves which made him feel,  
'when they lie here I am safe.'

You stepped out strong, and walked into history,  
a story to be told, for yours was the history of a woman's  
belly, that changed a nation. For now people see life is in  
woman made, and grows to live and dies in the sleep of  
a people who live to tell the story of a people,  
who see the spirit, that hovers over the land,  
and talks loud, when things are wrong, like I will  
when I have gone.

Speak, mother of the nation, when the Xumas, and  
Zumas are corrupt, speak. When the youth are dying,  
speak. When they are jobless speak. When they die in  
kombis, speak, for the maladies are many. They speak  
to the skies and say once we had a mother. She would  
speak, till we hear. Speak, speak, mother of the nation speak.

Sarah Mkhonza

# A Story Written On Candle Wax

Have you read this story written  
On candle wax and felt how slippery  
It is? You read it and the last idea  
Peeters out with the ink blotting into  
Splatters where the smudges cannot be  
Read even with a magnifying glass. The  
Writing looks at you sturbbonly and you  
Look back stating arms akimbo that you  
Can never fail to read a story no matter  
How the smudges make it illegible.

You claim the right to have read papyrus  
Scripts written in hyroglyphics. You have  
A reputation of postings read only by you  
This defeat gives you fits and in that trance  
You decipher the script and ask how many  
Times should you die to write one story.

The sage knows that each line is a death  
For the depths that bring it into being  
Are where lights were long turned off.  
Even a hat of a miner with battered lights  
Does not light up there. It is a place where  
Only words have been for they know how to walk  
On spider's webs and leave them intact.

Now that the mystery remains untold how  
Will you end the story with a smile? The  
Cheating game does it for you can invent  
Stories as many as marbles for a game of  
Chines Checkers only to find that just o e  
Word is all you need. Then you can tell life  
It was all setendipity.

Sarah Mkhonza

# A Walking Vessel Filled With Hope

I walk on these pathways that lead on,  
To the clues that show me new buds,  
That shoot up their cropped ends soft,  
Tender even to the look of the devil,  
Who long lost hope in a world so mean,  
That the milk teeth grow up already rooted,  
In gums so painful that chewing is hell,  
To a toddler that still has to believe mama,  
When she offers a nipple from shriveled life.

Girls need to work and answer the call,  
The buds have not come out of a fallen tree,  
But stand as high like a flower rising up,  
And ready to be picked with their very hands,  
To end up in the hair of young girl's head.

Sarah Mkhonza

# A Woman's Destination

I have been everywhere  
Singing and crying  
Laughing and dancing  
For I love being.

Who can sing like a tourist  
That goes to every concert  
Listening to the sound of stars  
when they pop up in the sky.

I have heard real prayers  
People wishing for the unknown  
Asking it to kiss their hand  
Or else they will die.

Who can know when I go  
If I will reach my own north  
Where lights never go out  
So that my mind can rest.

The south rejected me  
They said my words were bad  
Their ears had stoppers  
Of a tradition we did not want  
For time for change had come.

I have sung real songs  
Not this bad use of instruments  
That you hear in the sounds  
Of traffic on the highway.

I have been everywhere  
Inside a tea cup with leaves  
Stirring them around  
Like there was wind in there.

My children wondered

Where their mother was  
When I scurried around  
After the nest had fallen  
After the rough winds  
Like that of the weaver bird  
And told me I would have died  
If I had not chosen to leave.

Sarah Mkhonza

# After The Sumptuous Feast Of Lies

Now that we read a lie, twit a lie  
We can rest assured we will be there  
When the four years if over, but we  
Will have had this feast of lies that  
We have poured into our ears daily.

We once thought it was the tabloids  
Now it is the journal of our lives  
That tells it all, for we asked for  
It when we said the machine that prints  
Can just keep going with these half truths.

When the banners are lifted and it is time  
To see the body underneath, we will be shocked  
To view ourselves embalmed in a cotton coffin  
Full of fluffy lies in it. Hoping we will not  
All sneeze and say, it happened in our time,  
Especially to the younger generations.

Sarah Mkhonza

# After The Tirade Of Insults Ends Spanish Bullfighter

When the parachute lands a new president will touch ground,  
The bruises will say it all  
When the hand touches the door of the oval office.

Even the key will say hallo head with  
a halo.

You the fighter that gave it to the world in a tirade of insults.  
Will your reign use better words and build the ones whose vote ushered you in.  
We know what you think of those whom you have spoken to in words that make  
us put stoppers in our ears.  
Here at the corner of trust move to the center and hug us all.  
Share some warmth for our hearts ate tired.  
Today's world drains us as it drowns in a sea of roughest storms.  
Don't leave us here in the eye of the storm for we will forever be blinded by tears  
for the wind is too rough.

You said you come to calm storms of hunger and poverty. Were you telling lies.  
How can you be fibbing when we are facing the hardest times?  
Life is not one big political arena of fibs told by fibbers like you for you you bend  
over backwards like a rubber band and sting those who stretched you to the end  
of your elasticity where agter hitting the mark you shot out the hope of your own  
and cast it in the roughest waves  
never to be retrived.  
Your messages of the campaign trail will haunt us for we will look till our eyes are  
red as the insults uttered on this campaign ask us what we expected.  
Do better than you did as you did when you had us listen to a his and hs and  
hers where we had to enjoy oue tango with two dear devils without horns.  
It has been a fight where we watched all the horns fall  
We stand outside the arena watching now the Spanish bullfight is over. Welcome  
hero in the most stylish suite.  
We bow to you with both respect and awe for you have won the toughest of  
bullfights. Even the loser knows that.  
Sincerely yours, the tired of the earth.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Always Take A Chance

Take a chance to deceive sorrow  
And tell it its name is happiness  
And then wait for the change in  
Your heart for soon you will  
Know the game of feeling bad  
Is one you can give to the game  
Changers and win.

Take a chance to serve a volley  
And make it land in the right  
Quarter and then you will see  
How your opponent will veer with  
The speed of the ball only to  
Be hit on the head and miss  
A return and that is called  
Winning a game by chance.

Take a chance to read a few  
Words in a library book before  
Closing time and recite them  
All the way home and watch  
Knowledge grow in your head  
For that will be the quotation  
You will wow your mates with  
For they will not know where  
It came from and neither will  
You. Then you will be called  
A wizard for you fight and  
Win battles that nobody thought  
Could be won. Soon they will'  
Wonder where you come from and  
You show them with the tip of  
Your thumb to take a chance and  
Look just next door.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Ananse Tell Me When Kings Die.

I never lived to believe,  
That a king dies a death,  
Like the one of simple men,  
I just saw the sunrise,  
And thought kings live forever,

Then the word came to me,  
That the king had died,  
I thought the sun would not rise,  
For I did believe it came and went,  
With his face printed on it daily,  
Like the money we used at the shops,

When I saw the sun rise at dawn,  
I woke up and pinched myself,  
Then was this another normal day?  
Was my misery fake as always?  
Was it disappearing in protest  
To tell me the king had not died?  
That my dream of what he was had gone,  
To a place where I could not retrieve it,  
But just walk inside my deceived skin.

Why had I lied to myself unknowingly?  
Who had lied, me or the people  
With whom we basked in a sun not there  
Growing up believing in humans  
That did not even know our names  
Or even care about our sorrows?

Yet the sorrow lingered,  
For my mind wanted it to go on,  
So I can share with my fellows,  
The loss we had walked into unknowingly,  
A silence of one who we believed to roar,  
Like a lion in the wild boasting,  
Of strength and wisdom unknown,  
Even to good old Ananse,  
Who knew every corner of my mind,

For there he had been since childhood.

Ask Ananse I did with honesty,  
And the answer I got was amazing,  
To be asked a question never heard,  
That asks who created the world of believing,  
For it is there I had gone to take a story,  
And wear it like a blanket,  
For it made me warm to know,  
I was also one of the many.

I walked away my face drawn,  
In the sadness of my own creations,  
Where nobody likes what they know,  
Once they see the truth rising,  
In the east as usual,  
Making them wonder where they were,  
The day before when they believed,  
What now seems a long held untruth,  
For kings too die and go there,  
Where we are all going someday.

They may walk the world like giants,  
Be made in big ceremonies with us like ants,  
Milling around to take a glimpse,  
Of the making of the world we live in,  
Being shown a spectacle to guide us,  
Into futures of life we have not lived,  
But they do go and leave behind,  
The same people they ruled unsure,  
What the next one will be like.  
Only hoping for the best,  
For they learned to be led,  
For leading oneself is sacred,  
Untouchable if known to exist,  
To those who always follow,  
The people they created to lead them.

You should have looked into your eyes  
For yesterday's beliefs and known,  
That the time you accept a truth,  
It is already being weighed up,

On the scale of questions by many,  
Just like the dust that gathers,  
Where the kings walk daily,  
For you are a dusty king,  
That needs to be shaken all the time,  
And told you will one day not even  
Have the blessing of dust gathering  
Around the feet you walk on today,  
And ignore, yet with your knees they bow,  
At every alter with toes upturned,  
Begging for the life of you,  
To continue the way that of kings,  
To keep on trampling the earth,  
And crushing ants like you do,  
For they do not know their names,  
For the termites when angry,  
Destroy buildings in silence,  
When they have not been treated,  
To termite proof smells of old,  
That can keep them standing.

For renewal is like a truth,  
It lives up there untold,  
Unless you bring it down,  
And hide it in your heart.  
It boasts of silences unknown,  
And makes others rich and others poor,  
Unless the poor bring it down to bear,  
On the lives they live alone in poverty,  
It continues to hang up there shining,  
Hoping one day they will see it,  
And live it forever like you.  
That is my advice and I am Ananse,  
For nobody told you this truth,  
The way I tell you today,  
That kings are just like rag dolls,  
They are made of the cloth they wear,  
And get old in same manner,  
To be gone never to come back,  
Like the one you had when you were little.  
That ended at the edge of the yard,  
With ashes all over it,

Its limbs no longer there,  
The head blinking its eyes  
And the torso lying far away alone.

The same is true of rag queens,  
They jump up and down in the march,  
They raise their knees on chariots,  
Like floats from far away,  
To end the day getting off,  
At their final destination,  
The activities of the day over,  
No money to count for none was made,  
For too expensive was the float,  
That left everybody broke,  
While they road away with the money,  
Never to return at payback time.  
For nobody likes revenge that looks backwards,  
And comes on head long like a horse.  
That gallops with strong hoofs,  
And gets into everybody's stable.  
To announce the king is dead.

Golden chariots lie empty,  
As do big round dwellings,  
As do the bellies of those  
Who fed on the truth they created,  
And told everybody it had to be,  
For who would look at a leader,  
Whose belly was flat?  
But one who told his people he was just  
A simple man like them, the Mahatma,  
Who walked and dressed like the poor,  
For he found wisdom in poverty of the flesh,  
And strength in the abundance of spirit,  
Only to be shot and killed while sitting,  
In that truth that saved his nation,  
And still does so today.

Sarah Mkhonza

# As We Launch Our Crazy

You told me to open a page about us,  
I told you I did not like the page,  
It told you it was full of ideas of others,  
You put your finger on the word,  
I looked at it and saw it underlined,  
I saw your frown and your insistence,  
I started to weep for your stubborn face,  
It takes me to another craze that is not mine.  
When, I ask, will we launch our crazy?  
We have something that I cannot define.  
You here, me here, the space between us,  
Yells that we should be on a mission,  
Ours is a walk to the setting sun,  
To a place where things begun end,  
Where we see two silhouettes kissing,  
They intertwine and get closer in the rays,  
The space between them gets defined,  
By the light of the darkening sky,  
The setting sun makes them darker,  
The surroundings touch them lightly,  
with a breeze so present it smells like us,  
You here, me there, yet so us right now,  
As we launch our crazy.

Sarah Mkhonza

# As Jealous As Scissors

Why should a pair of scissors  
be called a pair when one of  
each cannot be a scissor?

Why this act of cutting that  
leaves everything in shreds?  
Cutting, cutting forever?  
Cutting jobs, cutting budgets.  
When will my scissors stop  
this act so destructive it  
leaves my mind and heart  
severed? Life and scissors  
are unstoppable! Help the  
fingers stop.

Why does it use all my fingers  
When there are two holes that  
allow an entry?

Why cut the dress I am going  
to wear when I go out with Ben  
When Zen does not depend on  
going but standing and staring?  
I would rather the scissors had  
cut the dress I was going to wear  
with Dan for he whispered into the  
phone and said, he has found another  
date. Cut, cut, says the scissors.

When a pair of scissors stops  
to dominate my hand and cut into  
the future shaping each minute  
of my life, I will call on you  
Ben, for you are indeed as jealous  
as this pair of scissors in my hand.

I wish I could have a perpetual drive  
to cut into things and take everything

as it comes like my scissors.  
Even now they are itching to cut  
some more. They never seem to get full  
for they keep eating away at something.  
They never store anything for the  
future, all the time the two long  
blades keep saying 'give me more, '  
and make my day, for I am meant for  
this.' When my fingers are tired  
I throw them down and they go down  
with a metallic plonk as is they  
are sad that the game is over.

When I ask what I should do,  
the scissors tell me to ask  
my knife for when it is hungry  
it even cuts into my very fingers,  
I am just talking because I do  
not know what an angry blade  
does when it is not handled  
with care. These, they call  
themselves the master blades  
for they are twins that always  
work for me and never tire.

Sarah Mkhonza

# As Secure As A Scout Knot

I live a life as secure as a scout knot  
For I know not even one can break it easily.  
I only worry about the time when things  
Will be undone for the fingers that will  
Undo the knot had better be clean.

I do not care about where it will be  
That the first touch that undoes the  
Knot will be for I am not one to worry  
For they say worry did not kill a fat  
Cat the way curiosity did.

I am set to rise with the thing I am  
Tied to for only air separates me from  
The reality of my next landing.  
I seat secure as a scout know for I know  
That on the day of the scout fire I will  
Not be undone for who wants to tie this  
Secure not again and destroy such a piece  
Of work.

Only brides know that when they tie the knot  
With the person who has offered to do the deed  
Remain shivering for they let him do it and  
They did not to a preup for when trouble comes  
Their knot will be so easily undone and they  
Will lose everything worse still the love itself  
For it sent them on a foolish trail.

Not me, I say as I go flying in the baggage  
Carrier of the plane waiting for it to land  
And then I discover what a trip it has been  
For I felt the clouds at an altitude of  
Three thousand feet and said God loves me  
For I was very close to his heaven up there.  
That is why I always sing Hallelujahs alone  
For I do not want to take any fools along  
With me lest their insecurity rubs into  
My backbone and gets me undone.

Sarah Mkhonza

# As Unto Others As Unto Yourself

Watch your hands washing each other  
And so should you.

Watch one foot go into a shoe  
And so should you.

Watch your eyes look into the distance  
And so should you.

Watch one nostril perform a sneeze  
And so does the other.

For each unto himself as unto another  
As does one hand, one foot and one eye.  
For they know a tango of one is no tango.  
I if one lands a hand the otherust  
Imagine one of them on a strike  
And thy all strike a rock and  
Work has to stop.

Sarah Mkhonza

# As Was Proclaimed By The Supremes

That you would enter the stage  
In platforms was proclaimed by  
The supremes. They said you would  
Be a woman of action and always  
On the move. That you would be the  
Leader of the band was determined equally  
By the supremes for they could see  
Way beyond the now. Learn to live up  
To this prophecy for it comes once  
And only to those who need it.

Embrace it with both hands  
For once you let it go it will  
Be hard to get it back.

I know a person who let  
It go and lived to regret it.  
All his life for had to live  
Jumping in and out of a hot  
Frying pan held in two hands  
Not his own.

Sarah Mkhonza

# At The Sacred Pools After Thunder

The rain still falls,  
It has a vendetta again  
and comes falling against  
peace till we accept our responsibility.  
It sinks into the pool now unmoved.  
It stamps itself into the present as real.  
Till we accept the wet moment as real, we will be allowed and stand a real part of  
now.

Water is warm at the sacred pools after  
thunder. You get goosebumps when you step  
out. The rhythm of your jumps is what determines your warmth. To jump or not  
to  
is the rule.

Sarah Mkhonza

# At The Shrine Of Peace

Now we worship and beg  
At the shrine of peace.  
Prayers of babies born,  
Breathing war and spitting  
shrapnell. Pellets decorate  
walls and pavements where once  
they played. Peace like a spirit  
gone. They walk in foreign lands  
wailing. Women soldiers driving out war,  
guns in hand.

If it arrives our hands should be open,  
Like a stranger, this long awaited love,  
shall find us ready for we have cried  
enough. To dust the grit out of eyes red  
with crying. The thought of peace brings  
hope. Why wait at the place where we can

Sarah Mkhonza

# At The Very Least/Climate Change

This partial embalming  
Casts doubts on everything  
I will take action I tell myself  
But the plot to slay thoughts  
Is in the way the bullock  
Its horns gore into my soul  
Making me bleed internally unseen  
Like a hidden mummy laid there  
Yet unheard, unseen and unknown  
By a lukewarm world that pollutes  
As if spitting on its face  
And heeds no warning from the gods.  
At the very least  
I could open my eyes  
Or shut them by choice  
Not with the blindness of ignorance  
For such is the wave of today's heat.

It is difficult to see myself  
Lying there rusting away  
Having lived for just these years  
Telling the world there is still life in me  
There is still breath in this container  
Of life that walks and sniffs the air  
My nose breathing it voraciously  
Yet feeling like further from my truths  
At the very least  
I could open my nostrils wide  
And walk towards my own sunset  
Not shared by all of us  
Who are partially entering the tomb slowly  
As it yields falling on us.

I find it unbelievable  
This partial embalming of me  
As I go forward unable one minute  
Able the next  
Moving like there's a fire in me  
Stationary the next like a burnt log

If I will take action  
Let it be now I tell myself  
At the very least  
I could open my clenched fingers  
And let the words fall through them  
Like stalagmites and stalactites in a cave  
That stand to stab into it forever  
This world, this space that is me  
They stubbornly stick out  
To stab the mind of a feeling listener  
Who is not watching the death called life  
And takes words from the pain  
And agrees to speak unspoken truths  
That stab my burning self forever  
To bring justice for my killing,  
For our world is really under attack.

Who said I would not stand in the ring  
Watching the fighters at it daily  
Their health behind the masks  
For polluted air threatens  
Like a wave of deadly steam  
That deceptively warms the insides of the heart  
When it sidles inside unseen  
And renders me seemingly well  
Yet walking the streets everyday  
Like walking to my end  
At the very least  
I could dig my grave openly  
Knowing I will lie in it in time  
A person who protested  
That at the very least  
Companies could clear the air  
So I can breathe less dirt.

We all need to sing a song of protest  
As the earth warms to soaring heat  
Scorching the earthworms that we are  
Living on sea shores that rise to heights  
Drowning lands where we once lived  
A new song of 'not any more, '  
For if we raise our voices like the water

Ferocious waves of us protesting  
Singing along with the world  
At the very least the song will say  
You could spare us the trouble.  
The cows will join as will gorillas around us  
In the farms of lands far and near  
With snarls, screams and sneers  
Looking for grass where there is none  
The world has gone where no animal dares  
When we thought it had gone to the dogs  
It had gone to the money makers.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Barking Up The Wrong Tree

If I could bark at a tree  
and find it standing after  
a fire, when the bark has  
fallen, then I would have  
barked up the right tree.

Then I would bring a pack  
of dogs to help me to solve  
problems for the louder we  
bark up the right tree the  
more the politicians with  
thick skin would finally listen  
to our problems for we would  
be fuelling the fire.

Then thieves would know that  
we are a people with a voice.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Basalmic Vinegar Did Not Get Its Taste On The Table

It begins in vineyards of old  
With choicest of grapes picked  
By grape pickers who sing to  
Each grape telling of to go and  
Make good wherever it goes and  
Like a bride it goes into the  
Basket with a mission.

Then comes the process that only  
AItalians swear will never be known  
To the world for they guard it with  
The jealousy of a girlfriend threatened  
By the ex. The barrels in cellars  
Full sit waiting for refills sure  
That all will know they are made of  
The finest oak for the smell and  
Taste says it all. When the long  
Winding road to the tables of the  
Rich comes to the end their pallets  
Attest to that the finest of vinegars  
Surely is here being served. The price  
Attests to that which is why to you and  
Our pallets we stand the wretched of the  
World for to us vinegar is cider vinegar  
And the in this shallow end we  
Think this vinegar got to the table like  
Any other. Like all things special it  
Does not tell its story well, but just  
Delivers what is promised in silence.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Beams So Sharp They Hurt The Eyes

When ideas poke the mind  
So sharp their edges  
Come at you like beams  
So tired of jabbing and  
Being unheeded they stay  
There and turn where they hurt  
The onlookers who will  
Not say no, with a voice  
So big it causes the furniture  
To shake.

What irks us is that the  
Jab has always meant respond,  
But what do you do when the  
Knowledge is out there rolling  
On the slopes of cyberspace not  
Easy to tame anymore and the tweets  
Are coming out like birds bombing  
The earth?

It hurts the eyes like sharp  
Beams yet they called cyberspace  
Social as if it was friendly yet  
Its bite is worse than that of  
A serpent because it is self  
Propelling and moves forward with  
An in built ability to hurt like  
Beams of light that remain piercing  
One spot long after the car has passed.  
The poison from the syringe  
Remains and spreads way beyond the  
Four walls of bright screens into  
The four cardinals of the earth.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Bees Wax For Sure

When my hair does not lock  
I do not use candle wax  
I use bees wax for it is  
Soft and allows my curls to  
Come together and sing in  
Sync in the wind.

For those who may not know  
The keratin I lock together  
Has me also singing a Bob  
Marley song when the wind  
Blows into my eyes. T'is a  
Time to celebrate the no  
Cry, and remember the past.

I'm also glad the bees are  
Too busy to see the wax stolen  
To hold my house of hair by  
Taking from them. That is when  
I know I am a capitalist for to  
Buy the wax taken from another's  
House is sure to make me the  
Next queen bee and just sit  
While the others move around  
And want, just the stuff that  
Makes me buzz loudest.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Behind The Quarrels Of Our Clan

Behind the clashes of our clan  
Stands one woman who is as tall  
As she is as thin and destructive.  
Let us call her Getrude for I guess  
That is closest, in names, to how she  
Could be named.

So sly is she that she whispers into  
Every ear and the lies she tells go  
In and leave their prey so cold that  
You can see the beginning of a wintry  
Wind blowing on the head of the person  
She last visited.

So wicked is her heart that it glows  
Like the lava falling out of an active  
Volcano. Like lava falling into the land  
Her talk wiggles itself around each and  
Everyone and the clan begins to shake  
As if the earthquake she has conjured  
Is imminent.

Everybody listens to 'Get rude' for she  
Walks on stilts trying to be taller  
Than the untruths she tells for she  
Wants to hide that inside she is as  
Empty as the tomb in which Jesus lay  
The morning the women peeked into it.

She bears she news that confound us  
Like a radio station in the bush when  
There is a guerrilla war and spears every  
One she stings with it as if it is poison  
Coming out of the black mamba.

Her head rises in the grass like a mamba  
For she dwells in a grass hut away from  
Everyone so that every visit can be as  
Unusual as the spit of the puff adder

For when it strikes you rub your eyes  
Unsure where the devil is the snake that  
Spat at you like me when I was playing  
Hide and seek behind the mealie bags.

The clan stays there in the heat of Africa  
Shaking as if it has been treated with an  
Inner wind that came out of a stomach bubbling  
With wickedness that fermented as she brews the  
Next drink of marula it will gather around  
At our next family tit-a-tat.

As you can see, I have run out of words to  
Tell you how so good a smiling woman can  
Bite each person's ear and leave it aching  
As she walks away with the brightest smile  
At this age of seventy. I always thought  
confusion was a thing that lurked around  
The brains of younger people for they  
Are trying to find themselves. That this  
Aunt of mine has arrived is obvious for  
She will never leave the grass hut with  
Her ears like antennae for she would  
Have no news with which to deal the  
Blows on the clan that has quarreled  
Until it runs out of words to throw  
As spears at each other.

I tell you this so that you can know  
That if there exists the likes of her  
In your own clan know that the DNA  
Of such exists all over the world  
For Jezebel is not just a biblical  
Figure. She has been cloned and walks  
Alive in this world.

I have dwelt on description for if  
I went into examples you would see  
A sack bobbing down the river with  
A child in it and know that I  
Am talking is because I am past  
Madness for the truth as I always

Say sets us free only when we leave  
The examples that confound even  
The devil himself alone. This I  
Have told you was the saying of my  
Grandmother who always knew words  
Can make us look reality in the eyes.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Blow Some Cheese Cake Smooth Smiles At Him

Next time you meet a man you like  
Celebrate with cheese cake and blow  
Cheese cake smiles in his direction.  
This will cast the spell on him and  
He will be veered in your direction  
And keep searching for the cheese  
In the cake for it does not smell  
Like real cheese when it is mixed  
With your perfume. He will land  
Somewhere you can knock some sense  
Into him and tell him to look at  
You twice the way he does when  
He eats his cake which even though  
He has found it he cannot eat it.  
You give him the telling of a lifetime  
And then walk away. They say they  
Follow the wind when the smell of  
Perfume of a woman is in the air.  
Take my word for it. I heard this  
One from my mother the princess whose  
Bride price was paid by five men  
Consecutively. As the situation  
Stands I am still not sure whose  
Wife she will be in heaven. So  
Do not overdose for you might  
Multiply him into more than one.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Blueberries Are As Blue As Cherries Are Red

I want to tell you what I heard in the grocery  
Store of a big department store. I went to the  
Fruit section and took raspberries off the shelf.  
The packet opened and spilled on the floor. I told  
An employee that I had made a mess.

I went back to the shelf and blueberries got  
My attention. I picked them up and cherries  
Looked at me and told me to take them as well  
For what was I going to do when I make the pie  
For each fruit has its own power.

When I asked what that power was I was shocked.  
The cherries answered first with a sly move  
Wiggling themselves into my basket and not  
Minding that I had only a couple of dollars.  
They said you will not regret for you cannot  
Leave here and go into a world with regret  
For one pie cannot satisfy your tastes, for  
Blueberries are as blue as cherries are red.

I walked away and wished for a place where  
The power of choice did not lie with the buyer,  
A place where I could ask someone to hand me  
Stuff for there I called the shops. My world  
Has been taken over by the items themselves  
In this world where the goods call the shots.

I rest unsure what I will do now that I shop  
On the screen in front of me and every little  
Item wiggles itself telling me that buying is  
Not for those whose choices are not made prior  
To coming into their world. You click this and  
Click that and this click-click-world enters  
Your purse and wrenches the budget and tears  
Your world into tatters of debts. Only the  
Devil goes away laughing telling you, I told  
You so, temptation is the god that runs your  
Life since you hated the word discipline the

Day you were born and threw it out of your life  
as a teenager.

I sit on my kitchen table with two pies looking  
At me telling the story of the shopper of today.  
I face the two with a mouth that waters for both,  
But a budget that yells at my purse and tells it  
To shut the card section and throw away the keys  
For if this game is played like this someone  
Will have a heart attack for they will have not  
Even a sum to buy a piece of gum to chew for the  
Sake of these two that know how to argue even with  
The devil himself saying blueberries are as blue  
And as tasty as Cherries are as red, especially  
on a piece of crust bought at the store.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Born Inside A Kangaroo Pouch

I sit inside the warmth of the kangaroo  
And look at the world I am going to be  
Born into.

I see trees swaying in the wind and winter  
Fires igniting and burning huts that I am  
To put out.

I hear talk of an independence of Africa  
I must be a part of it for the drum is beating  
In nearby villages.

I learn the dance and move my tiny hands  
Faking a dance choreographed by the movements  
Of a kangaroo.

I hear the world calling me to come and be  
A part of something great that has no name  
So I search for the name in the darkness  
That connects my umbilical cord to the nerves.

I come out holding power in two words that  
Make me learn a language I can get at the

World of silence I lived in untouched  
and call it a mama papa world and then  
Begin to tell the world how happy I am to be  
In this beautiful place.

I look around me and see toddlers like me  
Who tell me stories of incubators human  
And I see they cannot jump like me and  
I thank God for being born inside the  
Kangaroo pouch for these are the cleverest  
Mothers on earth for like prophets they  
Take ypur story and bag it and take it  
Everywhere to the sound of a Maori drum.



# Bring Back The Love Letter

My mail box misses the  
Love letter in a blue  
Envelope. Its contents  
Played me a fool, for I  
Read with disbelief the  
Words written about me.  
I was no rose, but in  
This letter my petals  
Were alive and red.  
They jumped off the  
Page and together we  
Stood inside a vase  
Full of water. In  
His words I stood  
A goddess with a  
Magic that caused  
Him to forever want  
To spend his life with  
Me. This letter had pages  
That brought the sky up  
Above our heads and together  
We floated in parachutes  
Close to the earth.

Together we walked  
Under one umbrella  
On rainy days and  
Sat on green laws  
When there was sun  
Enough. All this was  
Packed in one letter  
With a stamp with  
A picture of Charles  
And Diana who were  
Soon to wed. This  
Letter like the  
Fairy tale gone  
Wrong has been  
Stolen at the

Posts office in Cyberspace  
And been replaced by  
Short emails with a  
Two word phrases 'love you'  
At the end as if he is  
Signing of a check for  
Goods he never received.

Bring back the love letter  
So I can put it in a picture  
Album for it paints  
Me into a world of  
A Picasso never seen.  
So full of love is our  
World that we float  
Two doves in the air  
And build our nest  
Under lofty city church  
Roofs and watch the world  
Go on without us for ours  
Is a world not known  
To everyday troubles. The  
Bats that huddle in church  
Roofs are no disturbance  
For we drown them with  
The squeaks of our laughter.

Write me the eight pages  
Of dreamy love with your  
Scrawly handwriting  
For it hides the heavenly  
Coded message you have given  
Me to be passed on to  
The next generation  
Like a scroll of old.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Can Justice Be Just, Just

The law hangs around our necks  
It makes us pay taxes so the likes  
Of us can experience life as citizens.  
What do we do when it locks out  
Some of us who we were hoping  
Would one day join us on this  
Road to citizenland? I feel justice  
Should not play tricks and just be  
What it claims to be, just, just.

For who wants to sleep when they  
Know the door is unlocked but people  
Cannot come in for one pen has said  
With one long squiggle, stand outside  
The door for you are a certain hew and  
Not supposed to have doors open for  
You to come in, no matter what your  
Condition?

It is when justice takes the shape  
Of one thought and not the shape  
Of another that we become wanderers  
Who can end up in the mouth of  
Those who want us to be no more  
Including the weather. These eliminators  
Of life have always been stopped when  
Justice and fighting together win. I think  
We need another ally when justice  
Refuses to be a part of the battle.  
Not so sure which one, but hope it  
Is time to look at the face of hope  
And wonder if it will come in and not  
Change into a squiggle like the one  
We had before.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Can Love Stand On One Leg

As if being tested for being drunk  
Can love stand on one leg and prove  
It can do what it promised to do, to  
live and let live for love is just  
That.

Can love prove it is without hate  
And continue standing and not be  
Interrupted by the moment of  
questioning?

Love like water flows from one  
Point to another and stagnates  
And when the valve opens  
Spills out to go and do the usual  
Water the hearts and make them sing  
in unison.

Like oil it lubricates the hardened  
And softens them to be pliable and  
Then they find the pot in which they  
Are being cooked is too small to hold  
The legs that have always been outstretched  
On a couch called time.

Can love prove that it is the only thing  
We seek when we walk with our noses in  
The air hoping something that smells like  
It will get wafted in our direction only  
To realize that we should have gone south  
Instead of north and east in stead of  
West. The in between does not do it for  
It feels like love yet it it is just  
What it is a feeling that wants belonging  
And acceptance that cannot be done by  
Means pliable and changeable.

This elusive love which we search for  
And go all over to find is just what it

Is, forever needed and surely something  
We never get enough of and always want more of  
Mother love and Father love do not  
Come into the picture and color it blue  
When we search for soulmates for they  
Are the best examples of what it is. We  
Look in every nook yet it lies all around  
Us laughing at us in this hide and seek  
Game it has us playing on this here  
Earth. Next time catch the feeling the  
Way you catch a bug and make sure your  
heart has liquid enough to baptize it  
And have it say your name night and day.  
Like a bug let it fly but not too far,  
For you will need it just the moment  
It breaks free. Know that freedom is the  
Essence of these things. For it is more  
About actions of touching, seeing and  
Saying than it is about objects.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Care For The Runner Without Feathers

It is your last days,  
You need yourself not others,  
You have to comfort yourself,  
And put yourself to sleep.

Give yourself the warmth you need,  
Protect yourself in your cupped hands,  
See the you that is well and up,  
Then throw ill will to the wind.

Remember the songs you sing,  
Listen to your voice at its best,  
Enjoy the dance inside yourself.  
For the best dancer is within you.

Walk this walk with pride,  
The whistle has been blown,  
Cheer the runner who makes  
The finish line hands held high.  
For that is the mark of winners  
Your stampede is powerful,  
It can be heard in far away lands,  
Where they know the winner is you.

Who said runners had no feathers,  
With which to fly to the future,  
And leave the world way down,  
So behind that it becomes a dot?

Fly for that is how you care,  
For the you that knows its self,  
In this flight of the bold  
Who are imaging new ways of doing,  
And creating a world of objects,  
To be used by others like you

Cheer the runner without feathers.  
Care for the ideas in you,

Pen them down and see the drawing,  
It is so surreal it demands more,  
Of the much closer look that you give,  
The food of thought you eat daily.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Carry This Memory Everywhere You Go

Me disappearing in the distance,  
my silhouette full of love for you  
have given me the best shot of the  
drink we drink out of each other's  
water bottles. This ends the yearning  
for you know I will emerge again  
with a body full of something that  
oozes of the juices of the yesterdays  
when we held each other close and  
smelt only the smells of ourselves,  
my breath, your breath.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Casting Spells That Work

Don't ever touch me  
For if I cast a spell  
On you only the gods will  
Save you. It is while herding  
Cattle that I learned my bag  
Of tricks and swear they work.

Walking in the forest  
When my father's herd  
Has disappeared while  
I napped under a tree  
Means waking up and  
Praying to the God  
Of the times that they  
Are not in someone's field  
For they love the mischief  
Of harvesting things green  
And causing quarells that run  
Through lifetimes in my village.

My heart, racing I tie  
Clumps of grass as I go  
For I could go in circles  
Forever and not see ground  
Already covered. My ears are  
As sharp a razor as is my wit  
For to return home without the  
Herd means a little comma in  
The freeze of embarrassment  
For now the elders have to  
March into the forest and  
Split in all directions  
And like demons they must  
Call out skills old while  
I await the judgement at the  
Court of sleepy heads that nap  
At the cost of the lifeblood of  
Men of my clan. I swear they were  
Born inside the bellies of their

Stock.

Two tricks I must perform  
To cast a spell on my father.  
One to stop him from shouting  
And another to make it hard for  
Him to open his mouth and spit  
At me venom of an udder. Pick  
A pebble and put it under my  
Tongue and I can hear him  
Stuttering on the first word  
And his 'what did I do to  
Myself this child! ' I know  
Then that he is calling on  
The world to answer him for  
He dare not lay his hands upon  
Me. Thanks to the pebble under  
Tongue.

To get his arms not to lift  
Up high as they beat me twig  
Them I must. As I run looking  
For these beasts I put two twigs  
Under my armpits and make sure they  
Stay there even when I bend  
To tie a clump of grass for  
That is the only sign that  
Tells me my sense of direction  
Is right.

Tracks on the ground useless  
Will tell you little in tall  
Grass, but one thing brings  
Hope fresh green  
And herbaceous it means hope  
That says you are not only on  
The right path but near finding  
Your father's herd.

The bull then bellows and you  
Listen whence that sound came  
From for you have prayed the

Name of your leader of the  
Herd till he heard you. You  
Go in that direction and find  
Them sitting chewing the  
Cud like angels feasting  
On blessed manna on the  
Tables of heaven. The only  
Difference is in the color  
Of the manna. Scold the bull  
You do not for he kept them  
All together and saved you  
From a beating.

You drive them home  
All worry gone for  
You all pass the drinking  
Hole water them and set off towards  
The sunset. Rest comes when  
They sit and chew the cud in  
The krall.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Catch The Bug And Run

There is a creative bug  
For this creative outbreak  
Is on the last round. This bug  
Will strike soon in this life at this  
So called alter of existence.  
It moves at the speed of light  
It seeks our nationalities  
And urges us to create, create  
And create something that  
Will bring us together as  
The world splits us with these  
Heroes of today who trumpet  
Truths that trample on us  
Making out of us tramps  
On letters with no stamps  
That are on a destination  
That is not known. These  
Envelopes red at the end of  
The year, green and white  
in this month are going out  
In droves not knowing where  
They will land and the year  
Is coming like a train that  
Is about to derail asking  
Us to catch the bug of creativity  
And steer home the lost spirit  
Inside ourselves for we hold  
The reigns if we have our words.

The creative bug had  
Fingers green and supple  
It touches the seed  
And puts it in the earth  
Voila! A sprouting idea  
Invades your mind and  
Walks you to the paint brush  
And there you start making  
News of yourself when you  
Do not have your words in

The rhyming dictionary  
That it gives you and says  
Take the ideas to the end  
For at the beginning  
There is an angel at the  
Gate that says you must  
Not eat of the tree of  
Wisdom for the end you  
Are walking towards  
Was created a long  
Time ago and you  
Can Only remember it if  
You sit and scream  
Out aloud and say you  
Want to see back there  
Where you were centuries  
Before you were born.

Let us say you scream about  
Just the year before you  
Were born or the decade  
When men flew to the moon  
And touched the surface.  
What were your little  
Spiritual hands groping for  
In the darkness called  
Time, if you may care to  
Know?

This question can only be  
Answered by the you that  
Was there and will be.  
As for me, I see a world  
Needing me and my words  
An Africa going into  
Independence wading in  
Wearing gloves darkened  
By colonialism and goggles  
And blurred by apartheid  
Full of the mud of ignorance  
For my people were wading  
Into westernization with a

Culture of taking and not sharing  
Leaving behind our values  
That would soon be lost at the  
Alter of gathering with  
The basket of education that  
Was always leaking when the  
Money to pay for it was not there  
So I stand privileged my head  
A basket that the florist put  
In roses with thorns that I  
Am forever picking and counting  
Each pricking counted as a blessing  
All the same for not being hurt  
Would make me live the life of  
A sheltered angel that does not  
Think of any mischief for there  
Are no words to make roses out of.

As I see this cloud cumulo  
Nimbus laden with creativity that  
Lets rain drops that fall on  
The window of my brain I declare  
To you all to look out the window  
Of yours for out there are the  
Drops we are to make new ideas  
Out of and walk on our heads if  
We have to for nothing normal  
Makes the world normal when we  
Take the creative animal  
In us and make it yell out  
To our world that we were  
Never anybody's really but  
Ours for we were born free  
To die free even if people  
May throw us into prisons  
And capture us in droves  
In police cars with metal nets  
Like the pregnant girls at  
My boarding school who sat  
In the little truck their  
Belongings in a trunk and  
Suitcase going home never to

Return for they had to tell  
The story of one impregnated  
By flying insects that invaded  
Their uterus and created in them  
A newness that the world had to  
Deal with later as it would be  
The citizen of tomorrow.

These outbreaks of creativity  
Are here and they tell us to go  
To the place where we can receive  
And not spit out the healing like  
A baby swallowing medicine that is  
Bitter for it has to be forced down  
And spat out when some of it does  
Go in no matter what for mother  
Says so. We are not doctors of time  
But in time we will be healers of  
Minds when we put our heads together  
And search deep down for an answer  
To the crisis that invades the world  
Where people die without knowing  
That they will for there is turmoil  
Invisible that seeks creativity  
Invisible even to us but because  
History predicted that we would  
Be the solvers of problems  
Let us usher in this outbreak  
Of creativity the way the viruses  
Invaded the world unannounced  
And toyed with bodies of mothers  
And heads of babies sucking  
Brains. Our is a new creative bug  
That mends the brain and makes  
It work better, sift better  
The ideas to use to motivate  
The mind to create better and  
Not kill but give life  
For doing so is free in  
Our world where we forever  
Give to the world what was given to  
Us in a cloud laden with power

Strength, and victory that  
Very few see, and yet are forced  
To see when we have spoken  
For our words come from a world  
Where 'it is because I have said so'  
Is a taboo. This dictatorship  
That invades us is unspoken and  
Has to be taken spear in hand  
To the ones who lack ideas for  
The killing was once an idea  
And once forced into heads  
At one point the way  
You force money into a thief's  
Hand in order to say that  
Breaking into a bank is not an  
Option for it is an unnecessary  
Risk because money flows at the  
Alter of abundance and only just  
Has to be seen with the sun glasses  
Of creativity.

The outbreak is on and we need to  
Catch the bug and then throw the  
Ball to the next person for it we  
Do not it will burn our hands and  
They will be charred and when people  
Ask why the charred hands we will have  
To tell a lie for they will not believe  
We were once told a message we hid  
We will be like false prophets who  
Are sent to one place and go to  
Another. Poets of the world  
Listen to the sounds that will  
Come in the laden cloud and make  
Sure you decipher the message  
With the right code for going  
Wrong in putting down the truth  
Will cost many their lives.

This responsibility rare is given  
Only to a few who know and feel  
They have heard the calling

Deep down in their hearts  
Or else they would not risk  
Being laughed at by the readers  
Of the world who are always looking  
For something to jeer at.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Caught In Our Own Snare

We built this snare poachers  
That we are. With wire from  
Our fences and stone from the  
Land. We made these traps that  
Now hold us hostage and have  
Us dancing on one foot while  
The wire goes deep into the  
Flesh as the blood makes the  
Leg swell and become livid.

The truth dawns at dawn in the  
East as each day begins. That  
To set a trap for other living things Comes back with the vengeful force  
Of the boomerang to haunt the poacher.

We now look far into the horizon  
For rescue only to see a swarm of  
Honey bees flying close to our heads  
And wonder if our hands can fight  
Them off only to find ourselves  
Covered with stings and bees on  
The ground for they were also  
Suffering after their suicidal sting  
That punishes them for stinging their  
Prey when they knew that they are  
Better off pollinating flowers  
And gathering honey for this world  
Deals cruelty to the cruel.

We try to play victims and tell Stories of sadness that stand  
Up and thank us for knowing how  
To tell a one sided story that  
Ends up entertaining frogs for  
They have never been caught in  
A trap. The rabbits look at the  
Frogs and tell them to wait  
Till those who sell frogs' legs  
Come like fishermen with nets  
To make their final haul in their

Noisy pond where they croak in  
Multiple tunes to the annoyance  
Of all living rabbits.

The trap still needs to get off  
Our leg for it is when we realize  
That there is only one leg that  
Is trapped in this trap and that  
This one legged nation trapped  
By its own plague will have to  
Bend and undo this trap with all  
The hands that lay idle for we do  
Not want the UFOs to wonder what happened to us that did not happen to the  
frogs in Egypt for in the fight for freedom they multiplied and invaded a  
Pharaoh's world a determination of millions.

This trap proves that playing  
The game of knowers of all things  
Has never worked. There is a time  
When learning to talk to bees, ducks  
And the likes of such presumed  
Unclever species help for one thing  
They know is the number one only

Is the most important for they  
Fly and swim in one direction or  
They would end up in self made traps  
And as lost for solutions as we are.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Charcoal Sellers Of The Apartheid Era

In tractors they came as dark as ever  
Charcoal powder on them and out we went  
To get the charcoal for stoves had to  
Burn at five o'clock in smoke chimney  
Township where smoke filled the air  
As if the earth had suddenly decided  
To smog the world.

The smell of charcoal filled the air  
Somewhat nostalgic this smell so foreign  
Yet so comforting for it means food  
Shall be on the table for parents went  
To work to buy bread and fish.

So old this manyano woman walking  
The streets while taxis zoom up and  
Down like it is yesterday's street  
Wedding when my cousin married her  
Groom as dust stirred and hit the sky.

We walked on sideways littered  
And did not see much litter for  
It had become flowers of the pavement  
That told us taxis still drove  
With passengers throwing garbage  
Out as they got off at the next stop  
In our Benoni township of Wattville.

Times have passed and the coal stove  
Has become an expensive antique that  
Costs tens of thousands when only  
Yesterday you could get it for  
A hundred or two.

Warmth is scarce in these days  
Where even security guards  
No longer light up fires and roast  
Corn by the wayside while they  
Wait for the night to go out and

Let in the day so they can go  
Home for when the world wakes  
That is when they rest and when  
It rests that is when the clock  
Strikes seven for these laborers  
Of the night.

Charcoal stoves up in the morning  
Coughing out fire that glows with  
Saucepans on top shiny for steel wool  
Knows its work in Africa south. Such  
Is the work that kept the morning  
Tea in my belly before I woke for  
I could taste the butter on the slice  
That would see me off to school  
Only to see them once again charcoal  
Sellers in their garb so black delivering  
Coal for a city that needs it.

Dare you laugh at these laborers in  
Your uniform black and white  
Scholar and your gym dress and belt  
Could mix with dirty coal. Dare you laugh  
At the bucket toilet pickers who  
Might empty the contents on the yard  
And dress it with smelly stuff just  
To fix you. You better not for this  
is a livelihood designed and sealed  
In the books in Pretoria and know it  
Or not you are bound for the grave in  
Some rigid graveyard designed on the  
Color of your skin for this is  
A mark that says it all about you  
For you walked out with it straight  
Out of your mother's belly.

.

No sewerage system no electricity  
Means people must shuffle and do  
The work of the plumber with their  
Arms carrying and pouring little

Miniature you when you pile and pour  
In the mystery of the small enclosed  
Toilets where people can see your feet  
From the life this township  
Life where everything goes and never  
Comes back just as does the money or  
Else the ships of the town these so  
Called townships would have long glistened  
With lights bright.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Chasing The World An Hour Behind

Waking up when the world has left you,  
Everything leaves you behind,  
For the world has marched on,  
To a future you will only know,  
When you catch up with it.

For futures to catch up,  
It is the effort of ants,  
Who always know it is coming,  
While we dawdle and fidget,  
In our daily musings,

Assured life will go on,  
We need to accept facts,  
And live as if the future is here,  
For it is coming here anyway,  
And never going anywhere.

I live and try to follow the world,  
That left me while I was asleep,  
And hate to know I am the last,  
For everything went on without me.

I sit on the table of life,  
Catch up on leftovers,  
Just glad food does taste better,  
When warmed up and taken later.

The juices mix in my mouth,  
And tell me with the after taste,  
That I have driven myself to a halt,  
By not setting the alarm.

My excuse of time changes,  
Cannot save me now,  
That the service has started,  
Church is going on without me,  
The choir will sing without me,

When I peek in heads turn,  
Everybody knows the truth,  
I was not aware of time changes,  
And thought it was still early,  
At the eleventh hour.

They flatter the last worm,  
When they tell him he is fine,  
For he will not be eaten by birds,  
For those early one always,  
Catch the worm like them.

This time thing eluded me,  
When it came to chasing,  
Even girls and boys knew it,  
That I fight for no worm,  
Hence this end of the game,  
Of chasing the world an hour behind.

When will you get to the finish line,  
When the others have finished the race,  
Before you start, they ask,  
I did not hear the gun and get on my marks,  
But I promise to make the it to the end,  
For it is more important to start,  
Then make sure you finish,  
For in this world of finishings,  
Endings happen because of beginnings.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Chauffeur Yourself To The Next Level

It will take guts, yes it will.  
You are on the wheel with keys in your hand..  
Put them in the hole and hear the buzz.  
What are you waiting for?  
The fuel tank called your brain,  
Ushers in new challenges.  
Take yourself to the next level.  
The food is in the trunk.  
Basketfuls that will rot  
While you stand idle lost in thought.  
If you do not move they have rear ended you and your car will be totaled.

What will you tell the saints that gave you wings?  
That you ran out of wind for windows were open?  
Lame excuses don't do it eve in the land of failures.  
For everybody knows you never tried.  
It shows on the tracks that the car never moved.

Why get into the car if you can't drive?  
Why sit on the driver's seat bum that you are?  
This is no sofa for the lost to throw themselves on.  
The game only takes tough players,  
For they run faster to the winning point.  
Play to win and chauffeur yourself to the next level!

Sarah Mkhonza

# Clay Of Other Clays

This clay that holds me,  
This mold, this vase too,  
So intriguing when I touch  
It with a scratch, wishing to  
Caress it and tell it that  
Ours is a journey of seeking.

This clay that sought me out,  
And covered me with velveteen,  
To hide my bareness which like  
Vapor was unseen like my intuition  
Was known only to me.

Together we've walked the earth for  
The clay stuck with me, hoping ours  
Would be a journey led by the unseeing  
Me, to the alter of goodness and beauty.

Oh clay of other clays, how we tripped  
While skipping into ditches and  
Dongas! How I led us tied together,  
A bundle of curiosity that sought  
Truth in other galaxies while not  
Seeing where the hole is in our path.

The foot which always wishes it had  
A nose so it could smell the moss soft  
And avoid the sharp edges of rocks  
That have sliced us deep bears the scars.

The hands that got burnt when we touched  
The untouchables still has the mark of the  
Biggest sign of how lost we were on my ring  
Finger and my index finger still points at  
The eyes that looked at us with love, pity  
And disdain.

When the time for promises comes, clay of  
Many clays, I will surely hold my hand up

Bible in hand and say, I will never lead us  
Astray the way I did on this journey.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Come Here, Go Away, Be Quiet

Two word phrases of meanness  
That are heard by children  
Always imperatives similar  
To those you hear from a boss  
From hell never preceded by  
the tentativeness of the timid  
but blasted as if its thundering  
And lightning right on your head

This bullying by mamas who never  
Say the word they teach that gets  
Everybody moving spelt p-l-e-a-s-e  
Means learn to speak out about being  
Talked to like that and stand your  
Ground for your baby days are over  
When your eyes looked at her and wished  
After you carried out the command  
She would say a word that also has  
two phrases, that 'thank you, ' that  
even if followed by no wink makes  
You feel somebody cares.

The middle phrase 'go away, ' even  
When mediated by a word of kindness  
Remains a pain for it is one where  
There is no return to the distance  
Implied for it thunders and goes  
Deep inside with meanings that yell  
Being unwanted and thrown into  
The dumpsters of the question not  
Answered which asks, 'Go away where? '  
For the mind needs to know  
Destinations when journeys are  
Implied.

These limitless wrongdoings that  
Have accompanied existence always  
Need to have us sit down and have  
A tete-a-tete with Almighty Trump

For he has said he will build a wall  
Because he never said 'come here, '  
To the immigrants of these New Knighted  
States. President elects also need  
To have a lesson in how to kiss the  
Hand of a fool before they are led  
Into the oval office for who knows  
If the fool holds the keys to the  
Master bedroom where Lincoln slept  
And room only opens with a  
combination that says kiss my hand.

Violence of words told to a people  
Is bad for it cannot be taken back  
After it damages how they walk, talk  
And think about themselves and the  
Earth on which they walk. They once  
said countries are like babies  
But now we see that babies are like  
Countries and mothers act like presidents  
And spill out trumped-up orders  
Each time they blow their horn  
Using trumpets as instruments of  
Justice just to prove they can do it  
And get away with it.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Come Let Us Walk On Mars

Come let's walk on Mars  
On this tray of chocolate  
For they say over there  
The earth is red and we  
Can be the only ones who  
Have been lovers where only  
Scientists go. As we spread our  
Chocolate on this planet and teach  
It love for the planet earth has  
Lost a taste of the essence of giving  
That you feel when chocolate goes  
Into the tastebuds for the nerves of  
Love as true as landing up there.

I hang on this chocolate kiss and  
Suck air in between my teeth trying  
To find your bits but they slip into  
A me I have never seen.

This essence of being so real  
So, silently Moorish on this planet  
Strange that you've put me on Isis  
Is so like being Mars borne the  
Earth has no understanding of the  
Steady mist that this chocolate leaves  
For it lingers in the space called me  
Long after the Earth has claimed us  
Back to its confusing bosom.

Tie me to you umbilical cord  
To umbilical cord for ours is  
A spaceship all our own. For  
Flotation of chocolate birds  
In their own Sputnik baffles  
Those who only get trapped on  
The doings in Stat Wars, for our  
Are Planet Wars that defy reason  
For they are made of entwined  
Chocolate love.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Come Up The Slope Rider Friend

Keeping my foot on the pedal has to  
be done to keep this bike  
on the path.

Keeping my foot on the rungs of this  
ladder is to make sure my feet don't  
get tandra up in the spokes of the bike.

Keeping it going is like working on  
till payday and the few days after.  
I hear the coins jingle in my purse,  
louder as I go downhill and not so loud  
when I go uphill. The loudness fuels my  
ride.

If I could have the wisdom of a coin,  
I would jingle in whisper mode. This  
can tell the world I live in the pocket  
of jingle-them-more. They would know I  
threw a die to get them jingling and won  
because my playmates were losers on the  
same journey.

Tangled up in the spokes of this bike I ride how can I peep into the future. Say it  
like it sounds. You say through the  
spokes of the bike.

Did you know I cannot even ride a bike when listening to this bike tale on this  
bike trail. You thought I took a break?  
Yes, the bike is being pushed uphill. It threatened to ride me and said that had to  
be. Why? For the pride of being a bike rider and entering a race without skill  
set number one.

Embarrassed on my own behalf, I take lesson number one. Equipped and pride  
beaming through my ceiling, I pass riders on the uphill and honk at them and  
share  
a survival of the fittest story.



# Compete Means Complete It

I stood in line shaking enraged  
For I knew I was the winner ignored  
Until I saw the line get shorter  
That it was more important to show  
Up with a well finished story  
Than to arrive at the finish line  
Empty handed.

The other people looked at me  
And shook their heads at me  
And told me to move over  
For only one rule matters  
That you never get to this line  
With unhemmed frills for judges only  
Look at the finished product  
For compete means complete it.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Confessions To A Priest At Dawn

I want to tell you this story,  
For it has become well known to all.  
Me and this other one I told you about  
Have not seen each other for a month  
Nor have we spoken to the God in us,  
To tell him how much we have grown apart.

Lest you be surprised by the rumors,  
That tell everybody heaven does not allow,  
The division of what was indivisible in your eyes,  
The heart knows the four ventricles part ways,  
When it stops beating in unison.

This truth bothers you and me most,  
But not new finds and new brooms  
That sweep the streets in a manner not seen before,  
As does my spouse's new find from the bar,  
Where wine is served in goblets that hang  
Down a bosom inflated with wild balloons,  
That have seen the touch of many,  
Who vowed they are worth possessing.

Now that you know my inner most confession,  
I am saying to you go and pray for me alone,  
In my absence so you can invoke the powers  
That be without fear I will hear you curse,  
The very God who had us served mass by you,  
To the joy of crowds whose tears of mirth,  
Were washed down by wine years ago.

This dawn has come with good news,  
For freedom was never a bad word,  
When it tells a sparrow that the sky  
Is all open when there is no rain,  
Pouring down onto its wings to dampen them.

With this confession I implore mothers of the church,  
To stop talking about us as two fish in a pond,  
Swimming around as if running away from a frog

But know one has fallen out and rotted on the sand,  
And has eyes looking out ready for birds of the air,  
To peck on it and swallow it into a gizzard where it shall,  
Rest with stones that churn pulp out of its flesh.

On this day I walk out of this confession box,  
With no tears but assured by this sunrise,  
That my fingers will point east when they mean east,  
And end up putting on a ring that is made to fit,  
Not the one which was hidden when others were being kissed,  
For this I know happened or my spouse would be here with me.

Tell me of vows of poverty and I will tell you  
That vows of love in this sacred sacrament of two,  
Are vows of chastity that land on one knee,  
Begging the other to rise so they can both walk  
Together to the alter of obliteration  
Where all insincerity ends with a bang.

Who said what we do in these churches is real,  
When we can break down and splatter it with words,  
That have one syllable and throw the rest in there,  
Where my finger points right now as this dawn yawns,  
Tired of the day I will spend after a sleepless night,  
For coming here was something I waited for eagerly,  
With not one wink of sleep creeping into my tired eyes.

The Lord bless these goodbyes of two birds,  
That fell into a trap at midnight,  
Only to separate in these confessions,  
On this dawn two days away from the birth,  
Of the savior called the happiest of days,  
For misery creeps along slowly when it comes,  
To break the heart and throw away the contents.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Cork-Stopper Your Ears

When everything happens for every reason  
Push the corks into your ears and hear no  
Wind, no woe for the world is turning round  
And round on the same dias.

You may like to open a little as the wind  
Settles down and whisper to check if you  
Can hear wounds for the world can kill the  
Eardrums with the likes of what is talked  
About in this changing world.

Don't cork-stopper too long and miss the  
Time to hear the bell ring for your last  
Mill for it means hunger. Your end of the  
Day has come with a bang.

The meanness that flies around in the name  
Of the law shows we gave the gavel to the  
Wrong judge for his law is more in the mouth  
Than in the statutes.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Could Be It Was Rose

My friend Rose  
Died while I  
Her friend was  
Away in other  
Lands. I seek  
Her in my mind  
And wish I could  
Tell her I had  
No passport to  
Travel to her end  
And lay her to  
Rest even though  
I had not been there  
When she crossed  
The deep Jordan  
And went to the  
Other side.

Could be it was  
Rose who said to  
Me when we pass on  
Make sure there  
Are flowers, I mean  
Lots of roses on  
My grave. You see  
Those flowers  
I want them all  
Over even on the  
Floor. I know I  
Can trust you  
To do that for  
Me for you always  
Gave me a rose  
Every Friday for  
You knew no one  
Would take me  
Out for dinner  
On the weekend  
Now that I am

Off the shelf.

Could be it was  
Rose who said  
To me her husband  
Had locked her  
Out of the house  
Making me livid  
For I said Rose  
When your cruel  
Husband whom I  
Shared tears before  
You married does  
This to you  
Just come to my  
House for you  
Know there will  
Be a bed for you  
Even if it means  
Me and you must  
Share the corners  
Of a blanket and  
Pull it this way  
And that the way  
We did in our youth.

For it was indeed  
Rose who shared the  
Bed with me and we  
Talked for hours  
In the night until  
Her grandma put out  
A candle we had burnt  
Out for we were also  
Reading a book about  
Truths we wanted to  
Know in our youth  
About men and their  
Lives for we were  
Trying to bring some  
Into ours the way you  
Blow them into your

Heart like air going  
Into a balloon.

Could be it is me  
And Rose so full of  
Air in us. Talking  
Love with men for  
We had read Mills  
And Boon and were  
Full of love stories  
We wanted to live  
With a chosen one  
From lands afar. Now  
We are at the crossroads  
Having taken paths  
Different into lands  
Different and ends  
Different for indeed  
It is Rose. She has  
Walked her path and  
Ended her Journey  
With me on the tail  
Still following the  
Same truths watching  
Her children marry  
The way we thought  
We would and even  
Almost did.

Ours is a story of  
Rose, two girls  
Whose story goes  
Into blissful ends  
Where we see the  
Ones once little  
Growing into men  
And women who must  
Journey like us  
These generations  
That blow their  
Air into balloons  
And get puffed up

For they do not  
Believe we once  
Stood on platforms  
Wearing the very  
Heels that they  
Wear today for  
Theirs shine in  
The path and helps  
Them take steps  
Where nobody can  
Cause them to trip  
With us looking  
And shining the light  
For we are here  
To kill a fly that  
Lands on them, not  
With a swap but surely  
With a volley of  
Words from our gut!

Sarah Mkhonza

# Could Be She Was My Twin Sister

When you grow up knowing there is a  
Part of you that left and never returned  
You look everywhere for it and always say  
Could be she was my twin whenever a stranger  
Passes by. She drops of a town in the north  
Of the country and you see the birthmark and  
You say, she could have had one too. Such was  
The heat inside my mother's tummy for I have  
One on my back.

When you have lost a child young and not  
Seen her grow to what she would have been  
You always look at others and say, could be  
She would be this tall now. This hang up gets  
You nowhere but keeps memory on its wake and  
Makes you feel human for loss is just that,  
A part of us we drag everywhere.

This could-be-business hangs around you like  
A shadow hidden in the glimmer of time and you  
Are always reaching for it each time it appears  
Knowing you are adding with a paint brush pictures  
That never were there for you have to satisfy your  
Longing heart whose musings never end worse stil  
At night when the ceiling ceases to talk to you  
But stubbornly stares at your naked face.

Like when you have been rejected by a man who goes  
On to make it big. You count your contributions  
In the millions he has made and argue you would  
Be going to Honolulu with him when you hear his  
Latest find just swam in the warm waters of the  
Island far and feel a lump in your choke and throw  
A glass of wine at the mirror which shows you less  
of a bikini girl you are.

Could be you would have been the twin sister  
Lost in thought and never doing the things  
She really did for you have not even looked at

Your own islands in the shallow waters of your  
Heaven for the longing heart is peering into  
The void where the love disappeared always  
Hoping one day...one day. It will be me.

Could be you were the Virgin Mary's twin sister  
And a virgin birth was brewing inside you like  
A storm in the African countryside unfriendly  
To any lights and ready to exterminate the world  
For they will be thinking you are a saint when  
You are plotting murder because of some dude  
That left you.

Stop being the wild pony that shags its tail  
On plains green and stand and look at the grass  
Where you are and be sure you could be the lost  
Twin sister for I have been looking for you all  
This time and I have now found you so let us dance  
For we just won one war. Never to fight over anyone  
For love is abundant all around us and we churn it  
Out like meet coming out of a mincer and eat it too.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Could This Be True Cupid On The Run

Could this be real  
That love has awoken  
Without Cupid's bow  
And stabbed a maiden's  
Heart with the arrow  
All alone.

They saw him in the  
Plains insane with  
Love no sandals on  
His bare feet on a  
Chase unstoppable  
Till her chest he  
Found. There he fell  
Bow in hand and in the  
Woman stuck with him  
Crying Oh how I love  
Jesus because he first  
Loved me and you last.  
Hence here I die for  
We two like Siamese  
Twins are bound together  
Till he returns. So kiss  
Me so that I do not die  
For nothing like Him.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Coursing Down My Spine

I feel the sweat  
Going down my spine  
I wonder what it is  
That makes me sweat.

Bills keep piling  
I am used to them.  
They arrive daily  
And my happiness  
Disappears slowly  
For I have tied it  
To the belt of money.  
When it goes up,  
I am happy, but  
When it goes down  
I feel naked even  
At the back where  
The labors of my  
Life lay.

Hence this sweat  
That wets my back  
At its center  
Telling me I was  
Born to work and  
Sweat even when I  
Am sitting on this  
Machine and popping  
Words on to the screen  
Like popcorn in a maker  
Making sounds that  
Make me drool for  
I am an animal of  
Another kind  
Having been raised  
In Africa South.

I am going into  
Tomorrow with

One resolution  
To laugh when I  
Get a bill and  
Make sure it  
Is paid on time  
For Satan comes  
And whispers that  
It will be better  
To wait and pay it  
Later only to find  
It gets bigger.

This sweat I wipe  
With this new promise  
Never to lengthen  
What time wants to  
Shorten such as the  
Days between receiving  
A bill and paying it.

For they say if you  
Learn to pay the piper  
He plays harder for you.  
Meaning even in heaven  
They will record how  
Late I was in paying  
Bills and if I ever  
Paid at all. Sweat or  
No sweat I came to tell  
The truth about everything  
That bothers the mind  
Of this so called human.

If my bills turn into  
Billions and these do  
Not help, I will curse  
Language for making  
These two words so similar.  
For I have promised  
To call my self a  
Billionaire without  
Bills in the coming

Year. Wait for the  
First day and learn  
From time what prophecy  
Is all about folks.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Cyberhacking Blues

I saw tears in the eyes of the youth  
who were crying 'Not My President, '  
which made me say if we will live to  
tell the story, we might as well as  
begin with clearing our throats  
of these cyber hacking blues  
that choke us into a silence strange  
for who knew that a mouse would  
one day ruin a country, let alone rule  
an a way that has us by our long tails?

This little thing once made with the top on a roll on  
top is now rolling over us in ways worse than a bulldozer.  
Once I lived in a world where we could set traps in real world.  
these virtual squeaks and so digital and so powerful left shoppers  
shivering in fear of hacks that can leave a household hungry.

Fat cats that we are, to think someone should  
have told us of the aliens that  
dominate the cyberworld.  
Our claws would have held down the mouse harder  
instead of giving it the softest touch  
that has us glued to screens  
that work against us in times of war.

This hacking has the hard swing of  
a knower of the gold swing that lands  
every golf ball right on the bald spot  
of the genius called humanity that leaves  
the shiny spot bleeding so that everybody  
can see we have lost a big fight. The day  
we win hair will grow back not just like  
human keratin, but with the sharp edge  
of porcupine quills. A weapon is no weapon  
when it can get into the enemy's court  
and shoot it's master. Thy say we hate  
surprises when the gavel is  
in the hands of the judge  
whose verdict cannot be appealed.

Yes when the color has changed to cyber blue,  
the game changes for it is a world too far ahead  
of the human hand because it does not change color.  
It committed to truth and needed  
The mouse to click on the plus sign  
only to learn that the word negative  
is represented in red that is preceded by a minus.  
So we remain empty handed, the bankrupts  
that cannot regain their dignity even with a bang  
made by a gavel from the heavens.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Dear Bird Stop

She pecks on the little rodent,  
as if ordered to do so and he stands  
helpless in the middle of the road.  
So confused as the long beak falls  
rhythmically on the top of his skull.  
I come to his rescue and take him  
near the tree trunk under the tree  
to hide him from this bird  
To say bird, dear bird, stop!

Sarah Mkhonza

# Dear Cookie With Frosted Eyes

Ours is a love supreme  
Laid out with a floured  
Rolling pin and cutting  
Board where you were  
Shaped with a cookie  
Cutter from a land  
Called Never Never  
Land for even though  
There are many of you  
You are the only one  
That looks at me with  
Frosted eyes and  
Make my eyes sparkle  
For yours glint with  
A mystery of making  
That could only have  
Come from the blessings  
Of the gods.

I laid you out on the  
Baking tray of time  
And knew the outcome  
Would have an impact  
That would fan out smells  
Into the air and have  
The neighbors wondering  
What was cooking in our  
Kitchen.

Now you look at me with  
Rosy cheeks near this  
Friendly Santa who laughs  
A bearded smile at the  
World. For the two of you  
Are going to be the  
Best presents I give to  
The world this Xmas.

Cookie with frosted eyes

Leave our house knowing  
There is only one I gave  
The power to be a blessing  
To the world. For only you  
Are my cookie cut out on the  
Cutest cutter that leaves no  
Clutter. So clean a job did  
I do that all the dough  
Is gone so that I know you are  
Worth the highest bid on  
The auction table.

I do not want to let you go  
But as life goes what you love  
You must let go for years have  
Proved that to let you go on  
Your way create new worlds where  
There can be not one but many  
Like you.

I know you will bring joy to  
The world for yours is a story  
That began in a bag of flour  
Grown on the prairies of our  
Land where you outshone the  
Brightest star for you shot out  
With a line that rode beyond  
Drawn high up in the sky.

Come back and know the cookie  
Jar is always ready to receive  
You for it will not be the same  
Without you for you are a cookie  
Of a kind not know.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Declaring The Next Hour The Laughing Hour

When the silent hour ended,  
we came out laughing. In this  
long joyless hour where life  
had us gagged for laughing when  
we should have been learning the  
rules of life, giggles was all we  
could show for it all.

Troubled by our defiance life called  
the street police. Close to tears we  
were stopped and told our crime was  
coming out laughing when we should have  
been solemn.

Why cry? Whom punishes people and has  
them sit for the silent hour. Surely  
the god of giggles knows and welcomes  
the giggly, godly, gifted.

Only when you stop laughing you citizens  
will you be freed again. The law you broke  
is the one that ensures you get another silent hour.

So laugh citizens of the earth. This  
judgement passed that has you gagged  
has been appealed. Laugh for the hour  
of your gagging is still to come. The  
hour hates your laughter. The street  
police say ter. Defy them  
before they ask death to be the judge.  
You and I know best what will happen.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Diana You Passed Near My Pew

If I could see you Diana  
I would walk for you to see  
For it was not just your tiara  
But what you did just for me  
With your girlish walk  
And your friendly look  
For now you are not here to talk  
And also not inside my book  
This talk of ours is late  
You hung up on me and left  
It was decided too soon by fate  
Your memories of good I kept  
To tell generations who may never know  
That you passed near my pew

Sarah Mkhonza

# Did You Hear The Leaves Of The Fall

I heard the red leaves yelling,  
To orange leaves a tune of the season,  
Calling to green leaves to sing along,  
For time was not on their side,  
Soon they would all join the only song,  
That falls to a soft falsetto,  
That buries them in the ground.

The leaves listened to the wind,  
And danced all night while they could  
For the tree was ready to do the twist,  
That threw them in the arms of the future.  
Where their songs would no longer be hits.  
Time overtakes the soft sighs,  
With the rumbling of thunder and rain.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Did You Know You Are Under Oath

When you lied to me,  
did you know you are  
under oath.

The ridge of your nose  
gave you away, as did  
the snorty little laugh.

You are under oath for you  
said you do. This lifetime  
will pass with your hand on  
the bible.

Choose to spit out truth and  
make it stand at the doorstep  
of heaven to say you tried and  
the untruths escaped through the  
gap in your truth.

This way you can have a better  
agenda at the venue of venues.  
Here they say liars will burn  
while those lied to will sleep.  
They will be making up for all  
the lies that gave them sleepless  
nights.

They say love will be there as a  
witness to surely say this did happen.

No two

Sarah Mkhonza

# Do They Still Call It Grounding

Those days when people hid  
From the Askaris they called  
Going into hiding grounding  
These days when we hide from  
Time we call it what.

Nobody is looking for you  
The way the apartheid regime  
Searched for you because  
You do not matter to the  
Times that we live in  
As you did then.

People hid under beds  
And hid in the forest  
And hid in the backseat  
Of beetles man.

They also died inside  
Wardrobes in lounges  
For life had to be bought  
With the price of death  
Just so that we can live  
And come together a people  
Who have cause each other  
To suffer for we did not  
Want to share fairly and  
Still do not really want  
To do so.

Get a new life and go on  
For the past long sailed  
Away from the shore,  
And went to the end  
Of the era.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Does The Number Of Rosaries Owned Make The Mark

If my rosary could talk  
It would tell the world  
How many 'Hail Marys' I  
Prayed to get this guy.  
This girl in mission school  
With nuns wearing the habit  
And blinded by my sheepishness  
Got on her knees in the grotto  
Of life and life to pray that if  
He were a fly I would be milk and  
He would fall into the jug and  
Teaspoon in hand I would pick  
Him and into the garbage can  
Of life we would go away from  
The eyes of the nuns. Our kisses  
All over us like the milk would  
Have us wrapped up and rosaries  
Prayed would be forgotten in the  
Mystery of our love.

As life would have it the boy never  
Even as much as looked my way and  
I blame my thin scrawny torso for no  
Hips round came to aid my  
Scrawny self with a curvaciousness,  
The African urn of a figure well  
Known to kill all African boys.

Now that I have forgiven time  
I stand asking for the passage  
To heaven for this sin of love  
Only happened in my mind  
For the ten rosaries I have owned  
Kept me sane enough not to die  
Of his love. Having survived I  
Ask only to see Mary for I hailed  
The one who is full of grace and  
Blessed and asked to be with me  
In that hour of dying for this

Boy's love. Now immortalized like  
A statue I stand rosary in hand and  
Ask if I will see her who never  
Made it happen for me at my hour  
Of greatest teenage need. What will  
Tenrosaries owned earn me I ask  
If I will not even see my female  
Idol. She has to deliver in the  
Next world and not make my chest  
Burn throughout life for I still  
Pine for him in my octagenarian  
Years.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Do-Gooder Turned No-Gooder

Once you turned in your work  
before the teacher told the date.  
Now you lag behind and time pushes  
ahead with you facing backwards  
waiting on the belt called no-gooder.

Once the tablets were taken  
as the prescription dictated,  
now yo swallow one here and one there  
saying you fear no sickness,  
for they are just giving you medicine  
when they are not sure what is wrong with you.

Once you crossed at the red and green light  
now you watch for cars and dash across the road  
anywhere, like the stray from the neighborhood  
for the earth once unfamiliar, now reads like the sand,  
that you see on your doorstep.

They say familiarity breeds contempt.  
Is it doing the same to you, making you  
give up on humanity and also on yourself  
for once you were a do goober, even helping  
neighbors with parcels when they walked toward  
the house.

What happens when you lose touch,  
with the best part of you, like a virgin  
failing to cling on to the promise once  
kept to the body, that not this boy or that,  
but the one who has the touch of love,  
and can keep your body warm, with the kisses  
longed for, and years of waiting?  
Keep the gentleman's touch like Tom,  
Open doors for ladies and pay for the  
dinner for two. I miss the do-gooder in you,  
and hate the no-gooder for I do not know  
where that came from.



# Don't Ask Me Ask Mandela

They eat together bunny chow,  
sharing as before apartheid goes,  
it must be going, going gone  
for these two it never was a problem,  
for one does not change life with a vote,  
but with a quarter loaf of bunny chow.

Apartheid is leaving this war,  
between friends who shared  
things bought, yes food  
and even bunny chow  
with pennies given  
come sunshine, wind, or rain.

Then the day comes and it goes.,  
the Black one and the lunny one,  
says to his friend with a hand  
reaching out, like a smoker to another  
'I will have a bite, won't I? '

'Don't ask me, ask Mandela! '  
April is round the  
vote is ready to be made by both.  
The bread loaf has become small.  
Bunny chow was meant for bunnies,  
for this reason he cannot give, for  
giving is yesterday's game. Today  
has new rules on how to share.

The one who gave yesterday,  
does not know it is not his to ask,  
these days when Blackness runs  
the show, for it has changed color,  
And hunger has also done the same.

Supplies will not come easy like yesterday,  
here the sun shone in the wake of life.  
It will spell color for some it will rise black.

Now in this street in the sunrise era,  
the sunrise error has taken place.  
At lunch time, new rules are being made.

Bunny chow may know no color,  
in the curried space where the  
softness lies plain and yellow.  
Where it drips warmly soaking into  
the white, with well blended spices.

To the hungry man it seeps into  
the breaded white and to the  
onlooker appeals like a prostitute  
Reaching out with a smell saying  
'eat me.'

It has lost its Indian pride  
and speaks to everyone who longs for,  
and hears appeals made and dressed  
in spice, speaking of one who looks  
at yellow with their tastebuds.

This taste that taps into the deepest  
part and knocks into the heart  
of each person out here, and it  
can surely split those coupled by  
its agreements.

The street dwellers see each other,  
but exchanges know when the president,  
has come anew he will roll over the field  
in ways that revoke the new chapter even for lunies.

We learn anew, that enemies will be about food,  
over shares of it we will fight one another.  
Yes the poorer will get even poorer,  
For one just exchanged a coin for bunny chow.

If you were my friend today, we are no longer  
the two who share today like yesterday. Who  
makes the rules, you may ask. It is the one who  
holds the bunny chow in his hand in the now.

Yet the answer speaks of tomorrow.  
for to find the vote and change things  
does not change this one rule,  
when you hold bunny chow in your hand,  
you can ask a question and not give.

When the wheel turns for the partner  
lunny or not lunny, the sharing can go on,  
for who said it was about bunny chow,  
this friendship of ours.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Don't Chase Love With A Bell Around Your Neck

Don't chase love with a bell  
Around your neck on Valentines  
Day, for love is already enveloping you,  
Waiting to see if you see it is all yours.

Love hunts you, haunts you and tags  
You for it sits in the car called you and winks  
At the passerby you are hoping you will hail  
And stop from looking out and not in.

For every look you cast asks if you see  
The love it goes out with, and comes back  
With. It hears the bell you wear around your  
Neck as it rings for love knows the tune of all  
The rings, just like love knows the tunes of  
The songs you love and love is ready to throw  
the bouquet when you are ready to catch it.  
It is always coming your way

Love is not for lovers, but for dreamers  
For lovers are already doing the ins and outs  
Of it and the dreamers are still out there  
Chasing the wind. When the morning comes  
They are sick with the hang over of wishing  
They had been loving and not doing what  
We call chasing love with a bell around one's neck.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Don't Kick An Empty Bucket

Since you will kick it,  
don't kick it hard, for  
kick it you will. For they  
say we never miss this one.  
Accurate as the goal you  
score in your dreams, they say.

They will hear it far, the noise,  
and know what went wrong.  
That bucket is noisy,  
make sure your bucket is full.

The noise will annoy the  
blacksmith, who meant it for  
work that is done with  
the hands and not the feet.

Fill it with deeds silent,  
for they will make less noise.  
Respect yourself and those who  
will hear the sounds.

The world is confused when faced  
by honor, integrity and truth.  
Challenging trio this. Go to  
this last kick well shod with  
boots made of wool. They  
will deal with the din of noise.

Close the holes at the bottom.  
You have worked hard. Create  
a self made gift to take along.  
It will tell those on the way,  
you were special. While they  
remain with the noise, you will  
go with the trinket made in this  
short football match where the  
bucket replaced the soccer ball  
even before you were born.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Don't Laugh At Life For It Is Liquid

When you drink it,  
it flows down your  
throat like soup.

When you gurgle with it,  
it goes down in bits,  
you do not want to take down.

When you drink or sweetened,  
it leaves an aftertaste like  
a stickiness that refused to  
go to oblivion.

When you call it, it does not  
answer, for it fears you want  
to make friends and be familiar.

When Jonah calls it it answerd,  
for it says it can live inside  
the tummy of a whale.

Seriously speaking the dead are  
our champions, for life was called  
to order and it bowed.

For who has seen a beast with no order,  
yet calls so many to deliver, all the  
contents of their chest.

Liars, thieves and all and ng  
their all into the big hole where the liquid called life keeps flowing into.

This one slandered goes, sure he will display his art, do the final stand up,  
give all the last life. He opens his  
mouth to bellow an insult. He finds his  
tongue has been cut.

Life laughs, calling him a simpleton, for  
not knowing you cannot make fun of life. Life is liquid. Hey life is so liquid

it sips into crevices and hides, ask  
doctors. They look for it and when it  
eludes them, they even cry.

Drink life knowing, it is liquid.  
Don't take it in large noisy gulps,  
It will go down the wrong pipe and  
woe unto you.

Don't laugh while you drink of it.  
Also do not get drunk, for your  
snores are not the hallelujah chorus.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Don't Listen To The Chorus Of A Swarm Of Bees

Don't listen to the chorus of bees  
For the notes are not as distinct as  
Their sting for their pianoforte is  
A flapping of wings that foretells  
That the spectacle they are as they  
Get within earshot is a suicidal feat  
For those who do not know that the  
Sting is deadly even to the bees  
Themselves.

They say when the buzz comes  
It does so with a zing above  
Your head. You look up at a  
A risk of getting stung right  
Above the right eye and when  
You turn your neck to get away  
Another sting gets you on your  
walk away swollen your  
Eyes swollen and tender like those  
Of a doll created with mud that  
Has a tint of baking powder that  
Was carried as pollen and landed  
In the wrong place.

The dance tune you hear above you  
Announced the end to this  
Army on a flight that leaves  
Nothing untouched not even a hand  
You can use to rub your eyes for  
Bees engulf their prey like a  
Mummy and render it ready only for  
The embalming chamber where one by  
One the stings can be pickef  
Out at the end of the life of  
The mummy you have become.

They call it getting ready to dance  
The dance of fools when you start to  
Listen to the music of a disc

Jockey on wings. For you never  
Live to dance to the stokvel on  
Wings. You may call it fate this  
Having an uninvited following  
That patronises like the age old  
Paparazzi. But others call failure  
To heed the wisdom of the elders.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Don't Look Into The Neighbor's Dumpster

I have been breaking the rules  
My mother gave me to carry me  
To the future like tennis balls  
Thrown at me by the couch  
And me letting them fly away  
Untouched by the racket  
In my untrainable hand.

Line by line we have combed  
Through my deeds supplanting a few.  
She kept warning me like an eraser  
Going through each sentence in  
The hands of a scribe from heaven.

Like a prophet of old she  
Went through each one of my  
Deeds cutting and pasting  
Onto this wall called my brain  
Rules and proverbs passed on  
Woman to woman as we put together  
My trosseau.

Of all the rules my child  
This one never forget even  
If you forget then all today  
Never look into the neighbor's  
Dumpster.

They will know by the look  
In your eyes if you have broken it  
For your eyes will not lie  
And your shoulders will slump forward. As did those of  
The disappointed night for  
On its face remainef a woman  
Carrying her load of bad deeds  
That darkenef the sky and  
Left the neighborhood in the dark.



# Don't Ring The Doorbell

When you arrive I will be waiting,  
When you arrive I will be sweating.  
When you arrive I will be worming,  
for loving you is an art I learned  
in a dream on waiting.

Don't ring the doorbell for my hand  
is always on the doorknob. My thoughts  
thoughts wake me up in the breeze and  
call you hither lover mine.

Don't push the door for I will fall down  
the way I fell for you. The thud will  
be heard in the land of love for I will  
have fallen that far deep.

My wait has been long for my feet know the  
wait was long in school at breaktime. Like  
a school child's break for to play with you is to play with you.

Our game has me shaking as I hold you in  
my mind. No embarrassment for you are the  
thing I want most. Don't ring the doorbell. Just come in for I wait in love.

I

I get

Sarah Mkhonza

# Don't Take My Dad

When the cop stopped his father  
This little boy cried out, 'Don't  
Take my Dad. I will be good, please  
He is a good man.'

This five year old cries for he has  
Seen and known the end has come  
In times where the law is on the rampage  
Taking anyone and stirring fear with the  
Spoon that once was meant to ring truth  
Into little ones that says, 'we are here  
To protect you and your own.'

This time the cop laughed, yet  
It was not funny, that children have  
Learned to fear those who should help,  
When things go wrong.

Something is hidden in the mix here.  
We have to look at what is going on  
For fearlessness is not something  
Children will have when guns shoot  
Too quickly for the wrong reason at  
The wrong time, in the wrong way.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Don't Zika Us

In today's world of uncertainty,  
Where you wake up with dry eyes  
And go to bed your eyes wet from crying  
For a loss that you can recover nothing from  
Not even a court case to win  
And set the events in the past.  
Don't zika us

For just these very days  
We were afraid of each other  
Fearing healing each other  
For a patient and a healer were skeptical  
Each fearing a disease that travels unseen  
From person to person unannounced,  
Like a gunman ready to strike  
Even inside the ward  
Don't zika our nations.

Our young ones are precious  
Born with hollowed-out brains  
How will they sink deep  
Into the depths of a mind not there  
For the brain boxes are empty,  
Making them to grow into a future  
That cannot invent a cure.

I shout on the mountains of Rio De Janeiro  
Remembering the time we sang  
Of the city with joy. For now we go there unsure  
Our eyes wide open with possibility and also  
with fear of today and repeat a prayer.  
Who wants to run past an insect  
And zig-zag past it at high speed as it stings  
A zygote inside a self made placenta  
That it has made a zoo cage where it  
has captured a generation  
That will come out with a brain  
that spells zero at the place of the zed,  
To which I will carry what remains.

Don't zika us.

For mosquitoes fly through  
the fingers and sting us without us knowing  
Now that they are deadly like needles of death  
They sing near my ear a fear, of babies that will not hear  
even the sting of the humming insect  
that carries death as it moves, spreading  
their wings and spitting into us sadness  
This current virus silently inhabiting  
And infecting the contents of wombs,  
The safest place of our source invading.

Yesterday it was malaria  
That ruled the streets of our towns and villages  
Filling hospital beds with the ailing.  
And then this ebola, named after a river  
For fear of calling it the name of a town  
For who wants to call a town home  
When it reminds us of the death

Like a fashion viruses attack us  
The the fashion of a designer at a table working  
Sitting in a secret world of patterns drawn,  
Making them come out one by one  
As if there is somewhere they are headed.  
Yet it is just to cause us to die  
and disappear a people unheard  
For we could not cry long enough  
For the past and future to hear us.  
I pray don't zika us.

When the heroes of tomorrow  
Are born with no brain to grow with  
Who will be the traveler of this earth  
That will visit the moon and come back,  
To tell a story from afar, that makes us  
dance around the water, defying the very  
insects that spread diseases with our deeds  
Of power, love and mystery.

The ancestors of zika are waiting

And ours too are searching  
They want the disease to die and return  
Where it came from like the others  
These viruses that speak with a voice  
Like ventriloquists and teach each other  
That our bodies are their closets  
Where they can pile themselves,  
as if ready to crush us as they dress us  
Like a pathologist cutting in  
To mess up our wardrobe as we wear our hearts  
and walk about, ourselves the killer bombs that are silent  
As we pass on each other this silent deadliness  
on the walkway of history  
Where mosquitoes fly on a runway  
For they have made a fashion parade  
Theirs a catwalk of models on a mission of death  
one after another parading  
As if our bodies were the walkways their stride the  
feared catwalk that cannot be doped  
As they show off a newness unheard of.  
How they fashion themselves in inside animals!  
How they sneak into us with a stealthiness unknown!  
How we sweat in the labs searching!  
And count those who disappear at the other end  
Where the fashion parade ends with a silence  
Our tears seeping out of our fingers  
Where no clapping can happen for we did not chose to  
Sit though this event that is no fun  
But one of a reckoning that stings the guts  
And spills them inside graves.  
I cry out and shout loud, 'Don't zika us.'

I'm looking for the stars from the other world,  
That can sing the sad song and be heard  
It sits on our sad throats as we search  
For we cannot clap our hands as we work.  
Yet the stars over there can sing a song back  
And come down to this death parade with a help  
Of healers and winners who never stop  
until they have brought to an end  
These maladies of the day.



# Dreams Of Futures That Happen

Like a strange voyage,  
To a foreign land far,  
Far even than your present port,  
Fresh in your mind and touchable,  
Like your little finger itching,  
And depending on you to fulfill,  
These visions, these longings,  
That you have had for years known,  
Only to you and nobody else.

Yet if you stay your course,  
They get near and you find them,  
So near that you fail to see why,  
You should be the one to go this route,  
Of doing, receiving, painting and writing,  
For you have longed for it and never thought,  
It could come and now it has,  
Yes it will be better tomorrow,  
The past said with a small voice,  
Encouraging you to continue and not stop.

For tomorrow is assured by the now,  
It is coming to stand in this space,  
And say I told you it would be,  
Like your mates laughing and not seeing,  
What you see coming in the runways,  
For it is a fashion in drawings,  
Not yet achieved yet seen,  
That your dreams are being rolled out,  
Like the clouds in the sky,  
One after another.

What prevented them was your seeing,  
Your taking and not giving,  
Your sitting in spaces that were not yours,  
And listening to sounds that dropped nearby,  
Like a marula fruit falling from a tree,  
And hitting you on the head,  
And breaking with sap on it,

For inside it has a nut that heals,  
All the ills and takes away the hunger,  
If eaten in time after being cracked.  
Yes you have cracked it and now it is here.  
Take it and bless it and share it,  
You have earned it, it is yours.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Drumming To Lost Tunes

Walking on this finalv jog,  
Is like trotting on hot coals.  
We turn away from unspoken goals  
And go to the future empty handed,  
Singing arias of songs from afar,  
Like lost guitars that have not been tuned,  
We drum the song of the lost and  
Dance on fractured legs a dance never seen.

We sing out loud in unison  
Each voice releasing loudest songs,  
Making the world stopper its ears  
With alarm at what this is that fills the air  
With strangest symphonies straight from hell.  
For we have outsung even the devil and his angels.

The drumming becomes louder filling the earth,

With these vibrations that shake buildings,  
Built to honor our father's voices,  
And leave untouched the very pages,  
On which they wrote true songs about us.

The devil laughs at this cowardly display,  
Andcshakes his head in wonderment and makes  
A sign that captures the moment as he yells,  
'Make my day' you strange doers of nothing,  
Who fail witout trying for fear of reprisals

Sarah Mkhonza

# Dry Bones Of Cows In The Heat

Dead bones with no flesh on them  
So dry you could touch the heat  
Dead bones of cows that died  
More dead than the dry bones  
Once spoken to and raised by biblical  
prophets that chant the songs of  
A heaven unseen and unspoken of.

Bones stripped and strewn asunder  
Once they walked in the heat  
As cows drinking with rib cages  
That breathed and changed under  
Skin so thin it could go through  
The needle of time and disappear.

Walking bones that disappear  
When the milk fails to come out  
And the children wonder  
For all they know is milk  
Why has the sun become so cruel?  
Why is the shade gone from us?  
That thirsty and dry and hungry  
We stand and wonder as the beasts.

When there was rain we sang  
With voices so clearly full of mirth  
We could be heard beyond the mountains  
Like the bulls that bellowed afar  
As they walked home to our kraal  
We eat soft leaves with them  
Fight over them like calves  
That have gone without any milk  
And died for that is better  
Than living in the veld so dry.

This year of the big drought  
Is painted on the bones  
That the child born this year  
Will be named after

For this is a year of pain  
Let us name the children drought  
and also name them dry bones.

The clouds in the horizon  
Do not bring hope anymore  
They do not turn black  
They do not rise hopefully  
They just rest afar  
As far as the eye can see.

They do not bring the windy cheer  
That made the children dance  
And made the whirlwind sing  
As the swallows flew in flocks  
As they went in the direction of the rain  
We once knew when life was in the chain  
Of a time that changes with seasons of hope.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Dumbells That Ring At Night Be Quiet

Like a slot machine on the run,  
These dumbbells picked up the tune.  
Tired from being the neglected duo,  
showing their master how it is done  
became their mission.

Up, at five with the rise of dawn,  
they held each other as up down  
they showed their way of working out.

In a make believe, in the next wake,  
he will know we were bought for this.  
Yesterday found us there, now we climb  
the air, all on our own.

Envyng the see saw did not help, for  
village children kept up the laughter,  
while we lay in this corner abandoned,  
like someone had died and left us to  
be included in his will.

Now we declare freedom. We cannot face  
a morrow green. For we came to help the  
grass turn yellow, without a touch of  
gentleness. Like the lawn at dawn soaked  
in dew, we rise. Such companions that  
grace the world remain unmoved le when  
the house catches a fire.

Dumbells bells we are. Without eardrums  
we hear. Who lifts us shall live, mule up  
and sweat, for the motto is from dull ones, comes the good result of things you  
get in twos.

Two dumbbells ring better than one. For you  
never ring them once before the other one  
asks, 'what about me.' Now you bow  
to the pressure of taking what people say  
and making it yours. Who cares about a cry of the dumbbell when you can fake a

weight

loss by buying a size smaller and yell 'I dI'd it, ' to the applause of the well while the dumbest dumbbells lay near your gym bag untouched.

Yes they may ring all night. Nag you with truths untold for months. The secret remains. You two are not first cousins no matter how loud they can ring. Bought to play the gambit, girls will see you pump.

in the

wallpapee

Sarah Mkhonza

# Emanations Of Light From Light Land

This light you are  
Can be seen far away  
It shines in the dark  
It shines in the snare  
Called life for it looms  
Bigger than the mountains  
Only when you let it.

Shine for me for if you don't  
I will light you up with my  
Flashlight bright so together  
We can be heard in valleys  
Deep the way I heard a singer  
Playing drums in the night  
Under an African night.

She drummed for me and all  
The people of the village  
Her light reaching into my  
Gut and my insides danced  
And played the drum into  
My mind and I sang all  
Night even under the blankets  
Until my siblings asked  
What dance this was that  
Carried the four corners  
Of the blanket we shared  
To my side always leaving  
Them bare and unexcited.

They still wonder at my light  
For it glows daily making me  
Tell stories new and old for  
All the world to hear.

For this light is not about  
Having and not having much  
But about just being and standing  
In it as you are letting it

Grow out of you the flash light  
That everybody needs in order  
To have hope and love.

They say the south of Africa  
Is Light land for there we  
See no northern lights but  
Reflect our joy to all who  
Care for we know this light  
Lives and walks inside ourselves  
Including you if you care to look.

I give this light to all the  
Little ones of the world and  
Say take this at the count of  
Three and go and stretch and  
Share a love with your friend  
By making a pact on little  
Finger to little finger that  
Together we will shine brighter  
Than the stars always. On, Two  
Three, Go!

Sarah Mkhonza

# Emotional Hangups About Independence

I saw white people driving cars  
And thought all independence would  
Do was rain cars. I saw them drinking  
In clubs and thought liquor would rain  
From the skies like rain without hail  
But equally pouring hard on our heads.

I saw them dancing in clubs and though  
Men would dance with me on independence  
Day until I drop dead on the floor the  
Way I would shop when the man who would  
Come with independence takes me to London  
To buy at Harrolds with the money from  
The banks that we would have after independence  
Only to find there was not even one dollar  
In the bank.

Now it has dawned on me what independence is  
A lack of money, water and electricity that  
Is rationed like food for others have to have  
It for they were contracted to get it by  
ESCOM who controls when I switch off and go  
To sleep.

Where is the new toyi toyi so I can take  
To the streets and ask what it was that I  
Fought for if I cannot get even lights in  
My house. The olden days look better in  
The distance for like a distant destination  
They glimmer out there and at least I am  
Walking towards hope and not kneeling on  
Bended knee as if to ask a queen to marry  
Me and take me into her courts so that we  
Can sink in the millions that I see people  
up above the neck only for the cars they drive  
Are equally soft seated.

Palace like houses in suburbs new where lawns  
Wear the latest manicure as the fingers that

They point at me with for I am now the thief  
That demands that taxes be lowered with my  
Dirty fingers that have been sinking in the  
sand at the horticulture gardens of the town.

Where is the mirth that made me sing God bless  
Africa with an energy of a horse and bite my  
Thick lips when Die Stem was sung for here were  
People who wanted to take us back to the olden  
Times threatening to take the stirring wheel from  
The Madibas of the time.

Tell me to speak not when I am tired of waiting  
For a tomorrow written in a constitution that  
Never tells when the end of one rule is for  
They forge it as they go and leave me here  
With the emotional hangups of independence.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Enemy Heights Turned Into Survival Heights

We thought we would get debris,  
and found our heads on fire. It  
is fire sweat that  
ran down our faces.

While enemies stood on levels  
above, they burnt fiery rocks  
dipped in oil.

We saw hell running with a rage  
that made cutting the grass inutile.  
Soon there was nowhere to stand for  
the land had been taken over.

Our leaders told us all to yell surrender  
and we cried out a word we had been told  
was never to be used. With  
feet charred, hair and lashes gone,  
we joined to share a life no longer our own.

When it was our turn we invented a land  
where platforms could take one up  
and down. We made pools around each level,  
knowing whether winner or loser, the way up has to serve both.

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# Entrusted To Us This Greatness

Have we seen the truth  
About this great world  
Entrusted to us, full  
Of wonders we marvel  
At daily when we look  
Into the eyes of another  
And see them reflected  
In there like there is  
A mini world that says  
Are you a creator or  
Creatress?

These hands that can  
Hold clay and mix it  
With sticks and turn  
It into a wonder by  
Folding and enfolding  
Something in it, and can  
Turn a dream into a  
Nightmare and back  
Again.

For bursting in you is  
This fountain that never  
Stops spitting holy images  
Into a pool that ripples  
And ripples still reflecting  
Back to you that you are a  
Part of this. For you were  
Not born on a Sabbath that  
People argue should be wasted  
And not used to make  
More as is the motto  
Of our capitalist world.

View the hands and their  
Lines as miles you will  
Walk without touching a  
Stirring wheel for if you

Stir it, it stagnates, but  
Just see yourself as an ant  
Inside your hand on the  
Journey of discovery for  
They were made for this  
Thing.

Catch it the stigma is  
So good even if they said  
It back at you that you are  
A person on the look out  
For images that come into  
The chamber called your mind  
You would still get the  
Crown that you deserve for  
The world would be better  
For it. So be stigmata and  
stigmatize yourself with pride  
And call yourself and son  
Or daughter of one who  
Has seen the greatness  
Not just with a glimpse  
But a touch for the ant  
Told you so when it crawled  
On your hand carrying parcels  
That it would leave for  
posterity.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Even Shoes Paired Are Not Identical

We go out looking out for each other.  
Me and him wearing similar smiles.  
We do the same things as always.  
Till the world says it's overdone.  
This pairing cannot bring back us.  
Something has gone away in this quiet.  
Even shoes in a wardrobe are not identical.  
To walk away now or lay down new rules.  
To play or surrender is the question.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Examining This Wall Of Booze Around Us

Nothing said by the two of us,  
Just manic giggles, and perplexed eyes,  
Looking, glaring at each other,  
Wondering why this wall is here,  
When we worked on it and let it grow,  
Only to stand strong and look at us,  
As we both clamber up and get thrown down,  
And then wonder about the weir as it lets down,  
The water that flows, this booze around us,  
That endlessly gushes down with a fury,  
And takes our hopes and dashes them in the pit,  
Where you piss on our marriage and let it go,  
To the end where the promises we spoke,  
Just go into the air and smell,  
The same smell that confounds us now,  
Of this booze that makes us drift away,  
The lost two who bob up and down,  
In this current that never stops,  
This flowing that can be quiet,  
For not even fish can survive in it.

If I could fight with water and not drown,  
I would fight with this object that looks,  
So liquid, so clear, so powerful, so amber,  
Like a medicine that heals yet kills,  
As you take it faithfully not heeding,  
Even my cries as I try to throw myself out,  
Of this moving car, this death,  
That has come to swallow us and tear,  
The very paper you signed when you said,  
You could be with me to the end,  
Of the river of time like all,  
Who stand together in the pairs,  
That went into Noah's ark before the flood.  
That came to kill a nation with rain.

This distilling of the good and bad,  
From droppings in the big drums like sewers,  
That separated the pulp and liquid,

In big drains that run on and on in drains,  
That make the flow to go on for ever,  
Till the rivers flow into the ocean,  
Where all water goes saline and useless,  
For it is so bitter no one can drink it,  
After it gets into the blood stream of those  
Who keep keep on swallowing to the end,  
Where the last gurgle being heard by me here,  
Where I watch your Adams apple move,  
And wrest with the truth still unsure,  
If ours is a curse raining down,  
From the endless rain of heaven,  
With the flow of the torrent,  
That hits me on the center of my head daily,  
And render me the unthinking simpleton,  
That chose to lie here and smell,  
Dead fish on this very shore,  
That take the money, the oceans,  
That swirl endlessly for you,  
To honor them with your sweat daily.

Not even once did we think,  
It would be as easy as crossing a river,  
And refusing to get wet in the throat,  
For you would hold up your head and not want,  
To drown in the swirl of the downstream current,  
As you do now with this water,  
In this bottle that you hold in your hands,  
That shake and cause your eyes to go red,  
And your body to die in front of me.  
Yes this wall has grown even inside,  
Our hearts so hard a hammer would not do anything,  
Even when held by Golliath of old,  
Who died from the swing of a sling with a stone,  
And went and fell with all the clamour of amour,  
Bringing shame to Phillistines and angels  
The way our togetherness has been washed down  
This sea that you drown in everyday,  
You walk towards yet another cold one.

This last cold one you swallow now,  
That makes my head so mad and hot,

As it burns our money to ashes daily,  
And leaves us broken even at the bank,  
Where those you broke the rules are broke,  
Like me and you now in this emptying,  
Of cans, this madness of repeated actions,  
Looks at me and says because of you never,  
Will there be something after three takings,  
Of our only livelihood that you worked for,  
And sweated with each month the moon swearing,  
That at the end it will give you,  
Bread for your children to live on,  
And grow to be people who will count rands,  
At banks that rank with the same smell,  
That ranks of the smell of this liquor,  
That has swept us down the current,  
As if we were written on paper,  
For where the money went so we went,  
You swimming in the current to your end.

When the end comes we will speak well,  
Of all the things you did well,  
We will tell people you were swell,  
For you dressed impeccably each day,  
And went to the bars and beer halls,  
Stokvels and shebeens of this land,  
That feed on the pockets of those who choose,  
Not to shepherd their purse's contents,  
And let them walk away like letters,  
Written to those who would not harken,  
To the rules of putting away a little,  
Drawing out a little like milk from a nipple,  
That one day will go dry,  
Like a river after the southern African drought,  
That we wish could come and dry all the beer,  
That drowns this nation of ours,  
That nurses on alcohol as if it is milk,  
From a poisonous cow that was built of steal,  
And made the wicked substitute of mirth,  
By those who get the money at the end,  
While children look on with hungry eyes.



# Eyeball To Eyeball

Let us tell each other truths we fear,  
eyeball to eyeball and remember the year  
the cobra stood facing us head up and ready to spit into our eyes and say we  
both cannot stand being in the same space.  
Nobody will rejoice when the spit hits their iris.

We do not need nuclear war to declare winners. At this place where forehead  
of each bull hits the other, peace talks  
run in us like blood. Let the bullfight  
not derail a train so long on a lifesaving  
journey. We will not tire for fear of  
being those who remain to tell a lifetime  
story of being late at the arena.

Eyeball to eyeball we can pull two bulls  
by the tail and leave the bullfight  
without spectators. Let us refuse to be  
called to watch this spectacle of words,  
lest it becomes real.

are face to face throwing nuclear words  
int

Sarah Mkhonza

# Fair Enough People Of My Congregation

We have entered the door of this church  
Day in and out and prayed till the sky  
Yielded seeing our tears wiped with tissues  
That when wet left pieces of paper on our  
faces. Till you know that the offering  
Will go around the world and reach the  
Poorest of us, we might as well give up.

Fair enough people of my congregation  
We have sung hymns old and now my voice  
Is horse for how many times my breath  
Went out toward the alter where the candle  
Remained lit and went out when I left  
Till we take the man who sleeps on  
The bench outside and help him find a  
Place to live we might as well go home.

Fair enough people of my congregation  
We have worn beautiful clothes and come  
To sing for the Lord and thank him for  
He loves sinners like us for we know  
Ourselves and know how to present our  
Emptiness before the angels. Till we  
Go to the sick and touch them with love  
We have another thought coming.

Fair enough people of my congregation  
We have turned the pages of the bible  
Until they got worn out in Psalm  
Twenty three. Till we shepherd others  
The way the book tells us we are by  
The Lord we haven't started yet.

Fair enough people of my congregation  
We have told the story of the widow's  
Mite a thousand times and thrown our  
Hands in the air lamenting how she laid  
It down when it was the last when we  
Were counting pennies to take to the

Alter for we had much more than her.  
Till we feed the widows and stop  
Making the coins sound loud when we put  
Them in the offering plate we have not  
Started to practice charity for they  
Say it begins at home.

Fair enough people of My Congregation  
We have stood at the entrance of the  
Church and looked at our high heels  
And walked in dressed to kill when  
The clothes in the closet are so many  
It cannot close. Till we share the  
Loot we gather after each payment and  
Show gratitude for our jobs we are just  
Plain good old sinners who still need  
More grace from above.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Fairy Tales Are Never Fair

Tell a fairy the stuff and she  
can tell you it did happen in a  
dream in another life.

Tell her you long to be one who  
sparkles from the laugh to the  
spit you see on the pavement that  
is yours.

You will learn that fairies do not  
look down and see odd things on the  
ground on which they walk. Once a  
fairy always a fairy.

They are never hairy and they do  
not know anything about tails on  
cows for their species was born  
with a sparkle in a girl they do  
not know's mind.

Tell them you are that girl and  
their mouths will gape for you  
still do not know they do not have  
a mouth.

Your learn from the mirror that you  
are there and in front of you is a  
story you refuse to change for you  
want to walk the last mile in the land  
of fairies and be hugged with feathery  
arms.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Feel The Petals Of The Black Orchid

Feel the softness from afar  
And smell the unusual scent  
For here comes the truth held  
In the hands of a flower rare  
Coming at you while you twist  
And turn for you are at the  
Mercy of your truth for it  
Wants to add to your love  
Of life for all for one day  
It will save us all.

In the eyes of the world,  
Orchids purple orchids yellow  
And all colors of the rainbow.  
And then steps in the phiri  
Named for the woman who saw it.  
Like the ruins of Great Zimbabwe.  
It did not have the wings of the  
Zim bird to fly into the face of  
The worlds dollar the way the bird  
Perched itself on a nation's paper  
Money with birdlike majesty, but  
Remained in the forest to be  
Put into history by one Phiri who  
Fought the war of liberation  
And felt what freedom felt like.

The time for the flower with velvet  
Petals black that history had not seen.  
It takes a fighter to see  
What history has left out  
And tell when there is something  
Missing in the mix of things.

This victory of the black orchid  
To be seen by all who dare to know  
For it sits in the pages of books  
Telling the world that wrote things  
On the fauna of the world precious

It can still rewrite history the way  
Phiri has done as she gave the world  
This flower with the double root.

\*The orchid Virginia Phiri discovered in Zimbabwe  
is called *Polystachya Phirii*

Sarah Mkhonza

# Fighting Battles That Won't Die

This battle that has us neck to neck  
Claw to claw, and spear in hand  
Is one of the cheetah and the leopard  
Fighting the biggest cat fight ever seen  
Based on looks for each one sees itself  
As the most beautiful.

The tiger comes in as a judge  
And asks how they want to end the fight  
He asks who should win for he looks  
And thinks better than the two  
For his stripes are longer  
Making his coat more beautiful.

The lion fights on the side of  
The albino for he claims he is  
The one who has no melanin  
So his is the one who knows  
Everything about the things  
That changed the all the cats  
On the table of evolution.

When the battle goes over  
To the moon and extra terrestrial  
Hear about the cats they laugh  
And say how can animals with  
Such small ears and small heads  
Fight when they have not even  
Evolved to be hairless on their bodies  
Like the dinosaurs of old who walked  
The world with the wisdom of survival.

Fighting battles that do not die  
And have a soul of their own  
That keeps them growling at  
Each other endlessly looking  
For another cat fight surprises  
All for they wait in vain for  
A ceasefire that will never come.

The lion refuses to join the cat fight  
And walks away from endless  
bickering called war.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Fighting For My Place In Life

I hear a muffled curse,  
It comes from behind my ears,  
As if someone is looking,  
Through the lobes of my ears and sneering,  
For fighting for my place in life,  
Is not something that they want,  
Me to keep doing as I go,  
Back and forth on this swing,  
This see-saw this trial,  
That throws me up and down,  
Forever breathing and unsure,  
If my guts will be inside me,  
When the next push forward comes,  
Leaving me at a level high up,  
Holding on with one hand hanging in,  
Then letting go and flying to a fall,  
That makes me keep this going,  
For I was born fighting for my place in life.  
Even as I pick and dust myself up.

The sniffing after struggles,  
Stifling all my muffled cries,  
As I fumble and tumble,  
And end up on my feet,  
Against bodies of lovers,  
Who have left me wondering,  
If they wanted me to get into,  
This fight for my place in life,  
Or just claim we were together,  
When the fight got tougher,  
For that is what it is right now.

Do you hear the words that were said,  
Let me tell you what I heard,  
They were caresses and cuddles  
Followed by curses and callings,

Sometimes banging of doors with muffled sounds,  
That cannot be heard even by this,  
So called object on which we speak,  
As I tell the past for what it was  
When I did this which I now call  
Fighting for my place in life.

There were doors I woke up to open  
With questions inside my head,  
Where is the key to this door, I asked,  
My sword has been locked in with its scabbard,  
Like a warrior of old I swerved,  
Against winds that hit me in the face,  
And drew water out of my nose, eyes and mouth,  
Leaving my ears hearing sounds I dreamt of,  
In the sleep walking of the time,  
Near imaginary shores of sandy and gritty hate  
Whose pebbles I crushed when I ran,  
As took a step and reached for the door  
On this wicked deed that had to be done  
In this that I now call a big fight for my place in life.

I hear a clashing of swords as I lift,  
As I swing into step with another,  
My right hand arm lifting and pointing,  
To the one who is nearest in this battle,  
For I want to win the war yes I do,  
For I did not come to love only, but to live and work,  
And fight for this place I sit on,  
For if I do not someone will take it,  
Like they took a heart I had my all vested in.

I know what it is like to go incognito,  
To come to a road with an end that walks in,  
And speaks that it is shut just to me,  
When the hinges were squeaking just now,  
When my hand was reaching out to open,  
That very heart that beat to my name,  
And jumped about as if it would soon,  
Pop out and seat in my hand.

Fighting for my place in this life,  
Is not new to me for no one said welcome,  
When I arrived and sat on a lap so muscular,  
And touched a face so bearded with the back of my hand,  
And was held so close life sang out of me,  
In peals of laughter that could wake a sleeping cat,  
And make it purr just next to us.

Nobody says goodbyes are easy,  
When you have fought and lost the battle,  
And then realized you were deluded,  
To be fighting a non existent scuffle,  
That was created with teasing,  
And laughing and chatting,  
Yet ended in a real outbreak,  
Of words that go out like a disease,  
So contagious you just need to touch,  
The source and hurt forever.

Keep up the fight if you want,  
Fight for time does not wait,  
These voices keep telling me these rules,  
They call them rules of the game,  
That we must follow or lose,  
Whenever we enter this place of giving,  
Where only takers survive in their game,  
When we all fight for our own place,  
In this thing called living.

I have vowed to keep struggling with words,  
Trying to call it what it is,  
For if I stop I will regret,  
Not trying is not winning,  
And losing before you start,  
Was never a way to do things,  
Just know it was a battle you entered,  
And not let go or hang on loosely,  
For like a swing that you do not hold,  
With both hands you get flung,  
Way out there where no movements call you back,  
To swing you back with peals of laughter,  
From the pusher who now waits on another,

Swing with another fighter for their life,  
Who did a better job than you.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Fighting This Window Banging Wind

The storm brews up above us  
As governments change in ways  
Which make us feel the sky is  
Falling. The fear of being around  
Stirring waves that pile up  
High so that we are swimming  
In an out wave asks if we  
are looking out for ourselves  
For we should surely know  
We need to have lifeguards  
For this coast is rough.

The milling around we do  
At the bottom of the hill  
Of our world is soon to stir  
Up a hurricane so that we  
Find ourselves in the eye  
Of the latest storm where  
There is no left and no right.  
Like dirt in the vacuum cleaner  
Each party sucks us in the  
Way our paper votes go and after  
The melange of the devil  
We find ourselves in a world  
Where only swimmers with a  
World record will survive.

This time to mourn and cry  
Foul calls us to sit,  
Stop and find a way forward  
For tomorrow is the day we  
Leave to the dogs who will  
Tear it into shreds not recognizable  
While the ants still carry  
Little bits they are shifting around  
On the plates on the floor  
Of the earth on which power  
Walks.

Life is a bad joke they say  
For we cannot say can't for  
This word is proving that  
Truth is made as the wind  
Turns and turns making this  
bang that forces my window  
Open and refusing that I  
Shut my eyes for one day  
I will have to answer to  
Those who fought for this  
Right to vote.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Fire Burns Odd Hopefuls

When you remember words of hate,  
They feel like the sound of a volcano,  
That is erupting at the summit,  
The very top of the crater,  
And pouring ash all over you,  
Saying you are not the open lily,  
That white lily in the water.

It sinks in the real to suck the pollen,  
The little one does and goes away,  
Sits on the lily that you are,  
And then voila the pink flower.  
No more hardened ash it is,  
This odd giver that takes away,  
The big sores created by the lava,  
When you wished it would be lavae,  
Of the worm to turn into you,  
The butterfly that flies far.

Let what came out of the crater,  
Cool and then shake it off,  
For these words do not know,  
That you have sworn to smell sweet,  
No matter what the fire does,  
This pain in the volcano,  
That was poured all over you.

You owe yourself the new way,  
This new beginning that grows all,  
Whose seed comes and sits on your turf,  
For you are fertile because of it,  
This fiery fury this spilling out,  
That took place and filled the abode,  
Of hope that you carry with you,  
Everywhere you go for all to see.

Turn this burning into farrows,  
Grow love where yesterday's hate,  
Sat smiling with a sneer,

Telling you butterflies grow not,  
Where there is something that looks like you.

Who knew your wings would grow?  
And fly you to the future that you see,  
With wings with powdery lava that sticks,  
To your back, front and beyond,  
For yesterday was hot and furious,  
To turn into the now that looks at you,  
This odd hopeful from odd beginnings.

Know fire burns odd hopefuls,  
Fries the blessings in their hand,  
Chars them, wrings them and strikes,  
Like lightening that flashes down,  
Count it an adventure of this game,  
For life without it is life closed,  
To the hardship that burns us all,  
This life that we came to turn on,  
This torch that lights up and burns,  
One day like glue, one day like goo.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Flying High Up With The Ravens

Undertaking this feat of flying with the ravens  
Is going against the grain and doing what is unlike  
A person who sings in the shower and bathes in the rain  
For they fly up high and perch themselves on branches  
That hang on cliff tops where I remain looking down  
Wondering what would happen if I lost my grip  
And tumbled down like a rag doll that has lost its path.

I stand wondering whether it is envy or jealousy  
That had me trying to stand out as the doer of all  
That humans dare not do if they must protect  
The little of what remains of their dignity after  
The birds have proved smarter by crowing so far  
From the ears of the everyday corvid.

These black ravens so wise and so adept at changing  
Wherever they go cannot have me following like a saint  
That has lost his calling for they will not give back  
To me for all the loyalty I have shown in joining  
Them on this battle that for me is a sure sign of daring.

Next time I take on a new task I will know better  
Than to go after the strongest trying to prove that  
I too can do it. For it leaves me wondering when  
The mouse that woke me up last night will return  
And gnaw on the door of my room leaving me awake  
And ready to leave and go up with the ravens who  
Now fail to appreciate my dilemma.

These wings glued on me are now tearing off  
And so is the tiredness that had be breathing  
Hard just yesterday wearing me down when I vowed  
I would go on no matter what which now I see  
As a vow lost on the word for to keep such  
A vow was only said to wow the world.

There is truth in this saying, don't fly with  
The ravens for they do not know your ability  
To reach the heights where lies the nest egg

You are trying to get at. They also do not want  
you up there annoying them by taking down what  
Is theirs and going to tell everyone you did it  
To prove you can. Such vanity and audacity is  
Not known in the world of reason. This just  
says return home for you are not a black raven.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Follow The Poem

When it speaks, truth only rings,  
When it winds, the path only winds,  
When it rhymes, the words only do,  
When it jumps, the legs only go,  
Do just that, speak the poem,  
Where ever you go walk the poem,  
You will never be lost.

Even if you followed the poet,  
And looked straight ahead of you,  
Her eyes are lost in the deed,  
Of making it happen.

Make the right bid,  
On what you really need,  
When the poem has gone,  
It will leave you no stone.

Its long tail goes,  
As your own thought does,  
Making your teeth grind,  
The truth in it to find,

Follow the poem,  
With hands that never held  
What happens in the night,  
For it is still in you.

The poem ever faithful,  
And you ever full of need,  
The two can give and take,  
In times when your head you rake.

Sarah Mkhonza

# For The Wives Of The Lion Of Gaza!

The lion turned prisoner,  
in a small island far away,  
sings the songs of his land,  
all to himself and Zixaxa.

Their wives on colonial land,  
far from the lowing cattle  
and bulls and calfs in kraals,  
they chose to remain in Lisbon,  
and not go to the place unknown.

These wives said not this time,  
on their own ship arrived  
at the root of wisdom and let the men,  
for once go where they would not return.

Standing for a truth they knew, was  
swearing allegiance to their land.  
Not to follow the men like shadows,  
even after years of being ruled by  
these, they chose to remain, and remain  
they did.

Sing lion of Gaza. Sing Zixaxa is listening.  
The women hear you in the distance,  
that separates the love you had, and  
give it to the Portuguese, who listened  
when they said, no further will they go.

Miles away from home, the women stood,  
for a truth deep in them, that the island  
was worse than the mainland. They would  
not go.

Like Ndzinga, these women, their strength  
in their voices, not afraid of foreign voices,  
they added to the past, a voice we uncover,  
for it says, the word no, is the beginning of talk.

Mothers of the nation, who have raised it,  
still stand. They will not be swallowed, on  
the shores of the Azores' Terceira Island.

Speak women, speak! Speak for the nation  
torn apart. Speak about the fear of going,  
when you have not chosen to get on a ship,  
and be taken away from children, who are  
the future and life of the nation.

Speak for the kings. Tell the truth,  
for you will not go, and you will not do,  
what the nation would not do, for  
the power had been taken.

Exile is pain, exile is a taking,  
a not seeing the usual, but looking  
at the distance and waiting for a day,  
when home at last one can go.

We are amazed at the audacity of life,  
in lands foreign, for when force and power,  
push lives to a corner, there lies something,  
which will not give. This I see in your eyes,  
all eight of you.

We salute your, 'No, ' which resounds in ears,  
of women around the world. Violence, emotional,  
violence physical, violence social, to these  
in one word, we say, 'No! '

Where royalty is not royal. Where  
the familiar is unfamiliar, and the  
docility demanded is like a bridle,  
Let all women join in one word, 'No! '

Two men and their followers went,  
uncushioned by the warmth of these  
who would not venture into the seas,  
that rage and take away, the last shred  
of dignity.

Sing to him, people of the land. Sing  
for your king sang. Ngungunyane sang  
daily, about the land of warriors, the land  
he had ruled, till he was captured and separated  
from a people he loved.

Widows of conscience, these prisoners of the same,  
look in the direction and point, as the ship disappears, .  
They came, they saw, they refused, and they remained  
standing till today. Their eyes squint like mine, when I  
look at the story of their loss.

This loss of country, loss of loved ones,  
can be celebrated by togetherness that  
passed between these. There is little that  
separates people, like the distance between  
Lisbon and the Azures. There is a chasm  
deep, that tears apart hearts, when those  
we love are taken, no matter where to.

That far we should not go, after going  
a step in the direction of the one who  
cares not about the nation for it  
threatens the future of the nation,  
which must be powerless.

The history ends with the songs,  
the singing, holds souls together,  
for in song, memory comes back,  
and sits in the center of the heart.

We salute the goodbyes,  
the last handshakes, and nods,  
for who can dare say there were none,  
when the story is not told by the ones,  
whose love was torn asunder.

The nations like an old blanket,  
after a dirty wash, remained on the  
trees, waiting to be picked up,  
and taken into the hut.

We know such could not happen,  
for the lion would roar no more.  
The end had come, for what are  
people without their kings, has  
been the lament of the kingdoms  
of the south.

Still we hear the talk of strength,  
and see the likes of 'amakhosikazi.'  
We know when you touch them,  
you are touching the grinding stone,  
even if the sayings are said in far  
away lands.

After years the Lion of Gaza,  
lies in the his lands, after years,  
this Napoleon of Africa, is back,  
once king, now remains of the king.  
was blown in the air

Sarah Mkhonza

# For The Girl You Are

I started off with short hair,  
Curly, cut and cute like you,  
I ended up with a long wig,  
Tangled and tied at the back,  
Only to find it wasn't me.

I walked in high heels like you,  
Wore the shortest and longest skirts,  
Then found that fashion changes always,  
Only one thing remained the same,  
The color of my hue and all that is me.

When the young man saw me then,  
He liked just the me he saw,  
I never changed that much,  
In bell bottoms I looked the same,  
In the last fashion so did I look,  
Then I learned the lesson,  
It was not about the outside,  
But about the inside that I am.

To change the outside was all I knew,  
My life wanted what I did not have,  
While getting rid of what I had,  
For it would always be faithful to me,  
Never moving even in the roughest wind,  
For it was born of strange doings like you,  
To stay the cause for the girl you are.

Sarah Mkhonza

# For The Love Of A Pumpkin Frond

Each season comes with a new love.  
This love is old, this love is new  
For my grandmother picks these ones  
Long and tender they are for the  
Idiom states the child has to be  
The long pumpkin frond that will  
Go all over and achieve the birthing  
Of the largest of these. See them in  
F flower and you know they must be picked  
So that they can flower a meal  
And make us know it is indeed  
Summer. See them after the flowers  
Are gone and there goes the beauty  
As the idiom says it no pumpkin  
Fronds to pick any more for the  
Big leaves of the squash are rough  
Going brown and then out of sight.  
Then you know the fall has come  
For the one plant will disappear  
Till next season if you have  
Planted the winter one.

Makes me want pumpkin confetti  
This talking about plants  
That nestle on the ground  
And grow on and on taking  
Space and feeding the world  
Where people make Jack Lantern  
Smile and me wonder how come  
This pumpkin smiles everywhere  
When my smile is failing to  
Fill my wide face. My friend tells  
Me a story of culture that the  
Pumpkin sheltered a candle  
And allowed a man to walk even  
On an empty stomach. I have  
Protested the waste of food  
The way I protested the banana  
Slip where people swam in a ripe

banana liquid and made me wonder  
Where the fun was in being slippery  
for I believe in a A world where  
The hungry eat than stories  
Of Jack-O'-Lantern Who was Stingy  
For this is indeed being stingy  
For all these pumpkins could  
Feed the world. This lit up  
Pumpkin though glowing all night  
And making everybody a fete  
Surely did not make me laugh  
As wide a smile as I saw.

Pumpkin pumpkin my love  
Now that I will send you  
Off like the creeper you are  
Tell me if you love me too  
For you are my pumpkin frond  
Whether you like it or not  
For daughters and sons  
Will know they were honey  
Bunches when you mix all  
The ingredients of love  
And let the flower of the  
Squash and pumpkin dress  
The plate of t the next meal.

Sarah Mkhonza

# For The Wives Of Sondelani

'We the wives of Sondelani,  
declare we will wear mourning  
clothes, ' they say on a rented  
page in classifications that  
put them out to be speakers.

The black clothes of mourning  
cannot surely be the cover  
of these women who sit here.  
Solemn they are about the death  
of Sondelani.

As his name calls to all of us,  
to come and hear the story of  
the widows of the man whose  
passing has them sitting here.

They have to sit and be respectful,  
to the one who has left them in this  
space, where they march in single file,  
as the wives of Sondelani.

Sondelani once owned a bus,  
Once his name was out there.  
If big, it was bigger than the clouds,  
for his purse was also full.

'We the wives of Sondelani,  
declare in mourning clothes  
black, we will mourn him for  
the clan says we must.'

These widows in the dark of death,  
and the dark of black clothes,  
have sworn allegiance, to follow  
Sondelani, as his and stand as his.

This loyalty to the dead, speaks volumes,  
that roar in rivers and rivulets.

'I was his, as these black clothes state.'  
'Me, too, I was his, ' says the second wife.  
Who does not say words like this in sorrow,  
When women mourn a man.

I look again at the paper. Where were they  
when they took the picture, that puts them  
here in the face of everybody? This wisdom  
to speak out, tells a long story.

I long to know what it is about.  
I long to know stories of widows,  
who walk the land in black,  
and live to tell what happened  
after they were so clothed.

Maybe some cried, till they almost  
fell into the grave. Some cried for  
sure, remembering the tree  
they climbed the day they married  
him, these wives of Sondelani.

I love their faces, but wonder if  
they have done the rest of the things,  
that are about getting what you have to,  
and then show your face as a wife.

These claims are many. The land teems  
with widows. Some much younger than these.  
For the death that walks around, biting  
everybody like a silent mamba, strikes  
at dawn, and also at night, like the  
biblical thief.

As people line up to bury each other,  
the widows sit at the end of the journey,  
of a loved one reliving the story,  
of what brought them here.

Wives of Sondelani, you call us to come,  
close and hear, what your husband  
said when he asked you to follow his name,

and come close to his mystery.

Death has told you to come here,  
Death has no voice, but the power  
of actions. For it forces women to  
dress up and speak in papers.

Death writes the obituary,  
where six women line up,  
and declare to have been  
the wives of Sondelani.

The nation now knows,  
what they have declared.  
The nation has seen the  
cries on the face of the paper,  
Now we go and end the story,  
of this bus owner with respect.  
As the wives call us, to come  
and see what they will say,  
these days where we mourn  
in the classifieds.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Forever Wishing Never To Be Caught Aavesdropping

I do wish I had been eavesdropping  
When the guy I liked was talking  
About girls so I could know what he  
Was all about. Life since has taught  
Me never to be caught eavesdropping  
For you hear what you are not meant  
To hear.

Never be caught eavesdropping by life  
For you will start acting on things  
That are not meant for you and get into  
Deep trouble. I did this as a teenager  
And found myself wishing I was older  
When it was not yet time.

It is like being caught with your pants  
Down and makes you feel very bad that you  
Did not trust that things were going right  
For you felt excluded when you were included.

Imagine the devil catching you eavesdropping  
On the plan he has of misleading you and you  
Start acting against the plan when all he wanted was  
For you to be lost the direction you were not to  
Take and then hear him say, Got Ya!

So what is it that we should be doing if we are  
Not on the look out for ourselves with our ears  
Like antennae reaching out to the world? Should  
We be sulking under the sun and looking at its  
Rays and asking them to strike us in between  
The eyes without any goggles and then saying  
We cannot see the future?

The future is not written in space in red ink  
Like the marks on your spelling book, but it is  
In the things dragged by you. When you go into  
The next alley do not say we did not tell you  
You listened for the wrong message. If you could

Listen to your surroundings and eavesdrop on your own  
Breath and watch ants crawling life seems to say there  
Is a mountain to climb where what is said has  
Already been spoken About you, if you are alive  
and ready for your plan to take off.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Four Tires On A Journey

Let us do this,  
We were meant for this,  
To go on journeys forever,  
For not to do so means death,  
For you are cast away where flames  
May find you and melt you down.

Let us work not like strangers,  
Us four brothers whose anger  
Causes us to burn on the asphalt,  
And smoke on our way far away,  
Thinking only of the destination,  
Where we will get to rest,  
When the journey is over.

Don't squeal so loud as we roll,  
For if you need oil say so,  
If its a fever that sickens you,  
Know you will be alright and me too,  
We will find our bearings,  
And keep going on the right track.

We are grinding sand right now,  
I have a hiccup, let me breathe,  
It makes me weak at the knees  
I sink deeper and deeper,  
We are stuck aren't we?

Pull, let us pull up y'all,  
Push and pull out with power, y'all,  
For we are now reeling,  
In our old feelings,  
That take us all over,  
Where we were not meant to go.

Heave up, and out

Fight up and out for here we go,  
Lean this way and move,  
If you lean that way we sink,  
Not this way, you are killing me,  
For I am the rear tire that pulls,  
Harder than all of you.

Don't yank so fast for we spin,  
Turning in the same place and going deeper, ,  
For we are tightened with bolts  
You will break the metal,  
It will loosen at the hinges,  
And everything will be lost.

See that hill out there,  
We are near for we can see it,  
Though we go uphill with our eyes,  
That have seen the downhill we come from.

Your rubber is wearing out,  
Your lines are fading,  
You are losing traction,  
But you, you are out of bearings,  
I swear if we listen to you,  
We will not make it to the end.

Roll up your sleeves y'all,  
It is a dance we have to win,  
With this clink clink of the spanner,  
That turns round as it is worked,  
And fixes us and makes us go on,  
For we were meant for this journey,  
Black and white rubber and all,  
Our reams shining to the end.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Funny Gods Of Yesteryear

They had me praying a hole  
In the ground my hands on my  
Back facing heaven ready  
To receive from them the gifts  
Of life for I knew life had  
Not been fair in giving me no  
Father who had the latest car  
For when other dads brought my  
Class mates to the boarding house  
I looked on hiding in a corner  
Envious like the moon envies the  
Sun for shining brighter.

Now I see I needed to know lack  
For it makes my day to stretch  
A hand to others the way my friends  
Did in earlier days. Now we laugh  
At how we were daughters of the  
Widow whose mite got lost for we  
Did find it in the offering  
She made and gave it back. Now  
We thank the funny gods of yesteryear.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Garbage Is Always On A One Way Street

Garbage and clutter are always  
Going on a one way street for  
Once they turn back everything goes  
Into a tangle that nobody can  
Untangle even with scissors in  
Their hands. It goes into a truck  
And goes to the pit and then the  
Dump never to return where it came  
From.

The expense of keeping it going to  
Its final place lies on all the shoulders  
Of the world from where it came from  
And the stops it gives itself and then  
The final ride to the burial place.

The story is the same for all that lurks  
In places which are temporary and sad  
For the human baggage you carry on you  
That should have long left yet lingers  
In stops that have you tripping as you  
Walk for the truth about shedding it  
Remains a mystery you alone can solve.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Genders Galore That's What Life Is

Have you heard the latest on these  
Multiple genders asked the truth vendor  
I asked what that is, curious what this  
Unknowing person was going to say about me.  
For as a woman I had been cast in the  
jelly mold that always had me shaking,  
Before I set, especially when a man asks  
Me a question at sunset.

Have you heard of pan-gender the truth  
Vendor asked. Is that one a gender we  
Fry in a pan? I just bought one of those  
Non stick pans you bake in. When will we  
bake that one? Oh!

You surely have heard of trans-gender?  
I have and know we transplant just  
About everything we want to grow.  
I honestly answered as my ignorance got  
The better part of me. Oh!

Have you heard of a-gendered-third sex?  
Wait a minute, I am still dealing with  
The gendered-second sex being a woman  
For I learned that I had to speak up  
And fight for womanhood lest the men  
Get high salaries and my children starve.

You are too gender fluid, the truth vendor  
Told me as he gave up on me and told me  
To read sociology and know that these  
Are the truths that are not being  
Made up but written in our veins by the  
Masters of truth for not to know them  
Is to violate the rights of humans  
For for they live under them.

He advised me to go and train to become  
A gender lawyer so that I can get to

be hired by these folks who are still  
Being written into the constitution  
For their rights are just as important.

I was saddened because I had just  
Gone over a study of copyright law  
Hoping to catch anyone who does  
Not acknowledge I am a gendered  
Species that does not like hackers.

To add another kind of law was  
Not a mother of two could do lest  
I live my life on a court bench forever  
Defending the naming of life,  
Both public and private.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Get Off The Bus You Are On

Ever heard of passengers in a bus  
To nowhere talking and laughing  
When they finish they find they  
Have been kidnapped by the time  
Thief called sloth.

I rode the bus and then had to ask  
Where I was going and the driver  
Asked me why I was asking on the  
Way when I should have asked before  
Embarking on the journey.

I told him some journeys are finished  
Before they are started and this was one  
Of them. He said I should join the  
People at the back for I am causing  
Unnecessary fracas that can cause him  
To lose focus and get an accident.

Accidents unplanned happen when we are  
On the ride to nowhere for you are too  
Relaxed to see if your foot is pushing  
Hard on the gas and before long you  
Are in a mess you never knew.

Time comes when the bus gets to a  
Stop and all you must do is get out  
And breathe and then take a step and  
Look around you for you will notice  
Life moving at a pace that allows you  
To join for the bus called sloth  
Has hit a cul-de-sac with you  
On it.

There are no stripes that mark this  
Bus nor is it written a word that  
Makes people recognize it, but it  
Surely moves daily in the minds of  
Our folk asking them to get on and

Be the also ran.

Bus conductors who announce where  
A bus is going shun doing so on  
This one for they would be colluding  
In a game that time long decided  
She had won. Next time you get on  
The bus know that the clock will  
Not tell how much time you have  
Spent on it and just get off  
All the same.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Going Out With A Kiss And Tell

You never know when you meet the partner,  
that there is a hole in his chest that seeks to brag,  
about what you did when you were together.

Caught off guard you let down your own,  
you miss a beat and he records it for the future.  
Like a machine he mumbles this and mumbles that,  
you speak in earnest and he whispers into the rhythms  
of your bodies.

Then you see it by accident, the event for two,  
laid out for the public in a sheet of mail or storying  
that is now public and see yourself lied about,  
but you know some of it is true.

You wish you could go back and withdraw  
the hour with this fool, that has not chest,  
for the cat is now out of the bag,  
never to go back again, even if it had  
nine lives, your one life is out there,  
singing hallelujahs for the devil.

If I could kiss and tell, you threaten  
this fallen duke that has a shaking  
aerial that reads the news of the town  
and spread the tabloid page on which  
is written, the story of my integrity,  
is fit for one place only. Jail.

Never again you say, will I go out with this,  
for now you label and spread vernon  
over everything in your path, for to be hurt  
once is to be hurt twice. I wish I did not care  
who knew this and that about me, but when  
the signs its true are there, I hurt and hurt and hurt  
only to hurt again. I do not know about you.

Who in their right mind, the sage asks,  
would go out with a kiss and tell,

for he is doing it to you, for he has  
done it before? I look at the eyes of wisdom,  
and say, you know you are right. I am wrong.

This kiss and tell nonsense has to stop.  
At the alter of obedience it must just stop,  
before I open the door and let out all the stories  
I carry in my gut out of respect for all those  
I could betray. You know what I mean.  
Vengeance is a malady I have lived with  
for too long. I cannot die of it, or shake  
an axe to kill with it. So leave me alone.  
For all the world to see, now that you  
have crucified me at the alter called 'goddess  
of the field called love.'

Sarah Mkhonza

# Good Bye Ponytail

I have heard of trains crushing youth,  
Whose blood mixed with metal rails,  
Sipping under noisy metal wheels,  
With noises that call us to stand up,

For we know a life has stopped on its tracks  
Right there where the rail tracks wait,  
Calling us to go and conjure spirits that wail,  
Asking if we have seen the poor in spirit,  
Begging on a railway line with their guts,  
Waiting, the passenger that goes to nobody's hope.

Those in the train wonder at the stops,  
As they fear derailing trains with tops,  
That tell them that our lives have an ending,  
That bleeds on the tracks and goes into the mail,  
Where the post does not cost a penny,  
For death itself has become the  
Doing that cannot be stopped,  
That leaves a parent bleeding  
As she looks at an empty chair  
Where once a supper sizzled.

See the faded picture in the paper  
It is of one who died crying out,  
For to be loved is not easy,  
To be missed is easier to dismiss,  
When the paper is deep in the rails,  
It is after the winter rains,  
Faded with the face of a life,  
Blowing in the wind that touches our sadness,  
Refusing to leave us people who care,  
Asking us to kiss the ponytail,  
Of the youth that has laid it down.

If I could hold this ponytail,  
While still hanging down on a life,  
And say do not say goodbye to us,  
Tomorrow there will be a boy cut,

That will make you look better,  
And not speak to you of ending it,  
But take a brighter place in the sun,  
For you are just on a brunch,  
Like a bird flying on to another,  
Never to be trapped under this train,  
That has its wheels ready for you,  
Like the teeth of a big whale,  
Here in this sea of life.

You belong far away ponytail,  
Where tattoos were created,  
Where no train can reach your soul,  
And crush your guts to pulp,  
Living the stain of blood,  
That remains in our souls,  
As we look at these rails,  
Where this train that ate you,  
And moved fast taking you  
For it could never be like you,  
For with no brain it hoots and howls,  
Like a wicked darkness you want,  
For you are looking down,  
And not seeing the you up there.  
Don't do it! Bird!  
For we will miss your tattoos,  
For the drawings that you were,  
Now remain wasted on the rail tracks.

Give us a song not a lament,  
One we can sing forever,  
Till everything bows down to amen,  
For your life will have ended,  
With hopes we built high,  
Our skyscrapers looming up,  
Higher than any bird could get,  
For we dreamt and still do dream,  
Of the you who was a wonder,  
Who remains with us a marvel,  
To be talked about always.

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Sarah Mkhonza

# Graduation Blues

If you stand in line  
You've got to be fine  
When you are not there,  
even on the face of the earth,  
your name will sign you out,  
with one word, posthumously.

Break it down to these time delays  
cost us some dignity for they come  
when we have gone.

This car, rickety and old reads,  
'Mama's baby, not married but  
still looking.' It drives around  
looking for you. You meet by accident,  
then labels follow you. Posthumously.

On roads far away are your dreams.  
Everybody Knows You Left IN this,  
'not married but still looking,  
now you really are the baby.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Grandpa's Hands On Cactus Pears.

These days I miss grandpa's hands  
handing me the soft, seedy, sweet  
and reddish contents of the cactus  
pear.

He splits the fruit and I see red.  
Follow with my eyes his surgery on  
the cactus pear. Opened my saliva  
already tastes the bite to vomit.  
Taste buds singing in my mouth I wait.

When the moment comes, I seize it and  
let it stop. My mouth  
rolls the sweetness in and sparks  
Of joy fill my heart. I will stand  
in this moment forever.

The shot is made. Grandpa stands smiling  
everywhere I go. His knife on one hand,  
my piece on the other. He smiles  
at me from the world.

This smile seals a deal we made  
that I would not forget.  
That I would receive always  
this gift of the cactus pair.

Our lone tree gone, I still  
gift as I look at  
his life hardened thumbrella  
lines running down the hardened  
nail. I take my cactus pair.

,

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# Guilty As The Guillotine

A woman stole a poem  
And had it out  
There as written  
By her and when  
The world read it  
It kept reading  
As two words that  
Said one thing  
Guilty guillotine.  
When she took the  
Guillotine and tried  
To cut the poem out  
Four words appeared  
Guilty as the guillotine  
They said. She looked around  
To see where the words  
Came from and saw no one  
But the gavel dangling in  
Front of her.

For if you defy  
The statutes and  
Run around with  
Stolen goods I will  
Warn you once in surreal  
Dreams and then make sure  
You end up where  
The likes of you belong.

You may accuse because the  
Devil is the accuser  
But the truth runs the  
World. Mark my words, said the poem.

You can ask the shredder  
If I have not done this before  
And it will tell you a  
Story of cutting up and  
Throwing in jail you have

Never heard.

The woman walked  
Away in clothes  
Tattered and torn  
Speaking the words  
Guilty as a guillotine  
Like a new madness  
Had attacked her. Some  
Called her a witch for  
They thought she was  
Casting a spell on them  
And went to the priest  
To confess that they do  
Not not know how their sins  
Could be so much that they  
Confuse even the devil himself  
For he has turned into  
A loner that points them out in  
The streets. The priest  
Told them not to worry  
For the cross is meant for  
That and asked them to pray  
That they sin no more.

Next time you read a poem  
Remember the sage and know  
What goes round comes round.  
For the world is getting smaller  
As it gets hotter and more polluted  
For we are all guilty as the guillotine  
As we go into this world  
Of global warming where we  
Stand accused by a poem that  
Walks this warm world. They say  
The children have gone to court  
To sue the rulers whom they accuse  
Of negligence. We know the verdict  
For we saw the gavel hanging in the  
Air saying guilty as the guillotine.  
They say the government argued with the gavel  
Only to be told to go and hang for the

Gavel is never wrong.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Guns Must Be Silent Naked Protest

When the ground is powdered with bodies  
from the salt and pepper shaker of death,  
and all around us the smell of blood  
mixed with the tears of ants that walk  
with hands on the head like me and you  
I take of my clothes off in protest.  
The strongest truth that speaks  
enough is enough with my navel linked to  
the next victim's navel in birth  
I cry enough is enough!  
Guns must be silent.

Why should my shriveled breasts  
be babbling biblical truths out here,  
telling with the nakedness of an African woman,  
angered by a society that kills  
itself and walks about clothed,  
when bodies lie scattered  
on the conscience of the earth  
scribbling a tale with no end.

I say guns must be silent now as my hand goes up  
to conduct the last salute to tell the world  
this is not to be repeated to a people  
who cry after each incident when my children have paved  
the walkways in death in a silence I could not awaken  
to give me back their dream,  
which was also an American dream  
that folded up when they fell  
Like jewel thrown into the deep  
Of the forest of time.

The arguments say let us spit death into  
each other's faces and hold out guns to  
greet each other as if we are furious  
at each other always when we live and wake  
a nation of endless bickering that will  
lead to another blast that drown the ears.

Guns must be silent when you look at these  
my sunken eyes which once shone with love  
when I heard the first cry  
that landed in my ears piercing them forcefully  
and grabbing my shriveled C 44 breasts  
to suckle there making them so flat  
I could lay them on the pavement  
a mat for the dead child from Ferguson  
because if society says I am mad,  
society is also mad and walking about naked and blinded  
at gunpoint pulling hair in a madness in the dark  
that does not say guns must be silent.

I do not look at history with teary eyes when  
the baby pops out from in between these thighs.  
I do not go to rallies when I wrap my arms in love  
To talk about weapons of hate and stories of death  
And argue guns will help us even when pointed at a newborn.  
Giving birth in one push is not like taking away life in one shot.  
These actions have become cousins at two ends of the rope,  
that we have linked together to sit in a raping with wrappings  
and sing a chorus of ants that go deep into the earth  
to taste the supper we left when the bullet hit.

Guns must be silent for the naked woman has spoken  
for working in silence will not drown  
another blast that drowns the ears  
for the birth of all of you  
is a form of naked protest  
that is done by two bodies  
that stops every action  
even that of the shooter looking him in the eye,  
saying guns must be silent.

Remember shooter how you gasped for air  
How your small head popped out  
Held by all of you  
Who now stand and suffocate  
your own first wail by not voting  
that guns must be silent  
as on the day you were dropped into my hand  
when I first saw your little face,

and you first saw my touch in the love of my eyes.

I stand inside my naked torso  
My head not there for in madness  
I have thrown it to the scuttling ants  
That say to protect ourselves  
Guns need to be here.  
All my work was nothing  
My stomach a dreamless roundness,  
To be deflated by one gunshot  
that landed its contents on the walkways  
Like the spit of a beggar  
after eating a spoonful and sensing a fly  
that went down the throat by mistake  
leaving a taste lingering all over,  
the humming of an endless  
aria of a society that would do nothing  
to protect itself while claiming death can  
protect it when it swallows it daily.

This is not the bark of a strange dog  
Fighting for space in your ear  
but the anger of my mammary glands  
That murmur to themselves missing a baby  
whose foot danced when feeding from them,  
in years past. Yes guns must be silent!

Sarah Mkhonza

# Hair Raising Looks From Where

I make the mistakes  
That tell me there  
Goes! These actions  
That I get myself into  
And entangle my spirit  
Are the same ones my  
Mama said should not be  
Done by the hands  
Of a child of hers so  
Now I come the child  
Worse than Squeler the one  
You clean and she goes  
Back to the mud just glad  
That people will always  
Miss the smell of bacon and  
Make a dirty muddy one welcome  
For everybody knows no pig  
No bacon.

Yours faithfully still knows  
The rules that keep us  
Close such as eating chitlings  
For ours is a tradition  
Written on the backs of  
The humble of the earth  
Who could make life out  
Of nothing. So cleanse the  
Slate with the eraser of  
Forgiveness for truly  
This is no disrespect  
Meant to you members  
Of the clan of oneness.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Hallo Beautiful The Mirror Says

You look at the back and the front,  
The mirror smiles and you are serious,  
Your thoughts are thinking of those who will look,  
And disapprove of what you are,  
But you do not affirm this glow,  
That the mirror smiles back at you with  
Even as you put on the light.

Hallow beautiful the mirror says,  
You go and change and not answer,  
For this dress and this coat and tie,  
Do not look good to you.

The mirror is not talking to the tie,  
It is not talking to the colors of clothes,  
It is not worried if they match,  
It just loves the thing unseen,  
That it is greeting while you turn,  
Trying to impress it with trivialities,  
That you bought at the thrift store,  
And will never take beyond the grave.

Listen to the mirror with the shadow,  
Of the unseen things that talks,  
And tells you to stop and think deep,  
For in you is a lover of love,  
And a hater of hate,  
That turns in front of mirrors,  
Having forgotten all its truths.

Next time let the guts churn it out,  
Let the cherub play the chess game,  
It is written on the mirrors around,  
Where you look at yourself all alone,  
The way you do in your own bed room,  
And let alone what you do in bathrooms,  
For it is here that the soul sings to you.

Even if we can tell lies on these pages,

And talk to the world for it loves to hear,  
Talk of love and nothing else,  
For all cowards run away like me and you, ,  
And end up tired for they never listened,  
To all this talk that was yelled out in images,  
Of a you and me that never tires,  
Of looking at ourselves no matter where we are,  
And then rejecting the truths we search,  
For we do not know what they look like,  
When the mirror greets us with greetings,  
Like, 'Hallow Beautiful.'

I have never heard a mirror say,  
Hallow tie, what color you are,  
Or say with disdain the name of the one,  
Who stands before it searching alone,  
What it is they are taking to the world,  
That gives back to us with no shame,  
When it looks as us like the mirror,  
Whose blessed sighs we ignore always.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Hallo; Young Lady

A beggar's summery smile salutes my mercy  
with hands outstretched. Yesterday she was  
here doing repeated acts. Greeting the workers  
from downtown. The train pours them out timely.

My mercy seat is waiting and looking,  
Will I give my last dollar freely,  
or feel defrauded with my eyes looking,  
at the same woman who got my dollar  
for the same words yesterday?

Let us change seats with her. I come to  
greet people for pay daily. No shame in  
poverty. No smile in shame. No bluff  
in hunger. But sharing the look and what  
jingles in a purse pocket. Who will give  
up doing what they have to do.  
Me or the beggar?

Tricky places outside the Boston train  
Beggars whose children are hungry,  
Not looked after at begging time.  
Fliers claiming "hungry with two  
children";

Inside the train the saga of yore.  
The drug pusher comes in with his.  
The bus to New Hampshire has left him.  
His dad is a dying man. He needs just  
a twenty to get to him.

Flash back, this could be anyone.  
Trying to lie their way to something.  
This money crowd rides tired. Look  
at each actor with half disdain.

The Nigerian pastor preaches loud.  
Tired workers look bored and curious.  
Will he get to heaven with a few,

who heard him on this Boston train?

The woman is on my mind still,  
His greeting is not on my paycheck.  
Nor are the taxes going to make up,  
The difference between the beggar  
and the worker. Both look so alike  
I shake to think of it. "Hallow,  
brave lady, " I say and walk home.  
Taking comfort in yesterday's dollar,  
for in her hands it did land. I land  
on the mercy seat with my tired bum.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Hands Dangling With My Vote In Them

Where I come from is marked by mountains,  
Of a past that is green with trees that bloom,  
Whose summers light up skies with blue and red,  
That look at the world as it changes,  
Jumping on everybody's unshaven head,  
With a face that faces the beginning,  
And the end of our time here.

I look back and see the games I played,  
Letting time slip through my fingers,  
Which caught it and shook it off,  
Grabbing this and grabbing that,  
Only to find themselves empty,  
And all of them inside my mouth,  
Dripping with my own memory of a supper,  
That once silenced my wailing,  
Telling me I am crying for nought.  
For to go back cannot bring back,  
The losses that have left me like,  
The purse of a MaBenzy who lost it all,  
When gambling in Monte Carlo,  
And returned home to Lagos,  
With nothing in her hidden belt,  
But an empty stomach that flips  
And flops as she treads on up the road,  
In her last tired walk.

What is money when it hits us in the face,  
And leaves us with tears of what we lost,  
When we were gambling with bills,  
That were to pay for the poor,  
Whose bills remain unpaid,  
Yet they voted in the long lines,  
For they owe nobody and everybody,  
Who held the purse and signed the papers,  
That feed countries in exchange rates,  
That cannot be used to feed a mouse,  
That wants the seed in the vault,  
That is kept in the big powerful silos,  
That reach the sky with their parapets,

Like medieval churches of old,  
Yet squeeze the poor like worms,  
That must fry in the unsalted heat,  
And revile everyone who sees them,  
Crawling on the pot holed roadsides,  
Where they sit and beg hands outstretched,  
Saying even if you spit into my hands,  
That will be precious rain to me,  
For the drought has brought me here,  
To see if anyone can see the drought  
That has me peeling the sores you see,  
Which are the only proof I live,  
For you spoke to me like a person,  
I went and voted for the likes of you.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Hanging Between The Hands Of The Clock

It is between the hands of time you next to the long hand your feet walk to your next errand. Touching the world with a soft kick minute by minute.

Next to the shot hand is your head, sitting on the stool of time, quiet and guilty. All your life like a puppet you hang on the guillotine of time. Wondering if the hanging is real. Seconds become minutes. Hours, weeks and then years.

Your fear of the master called time is real. As your stomach rumbles you see one truth. You did this to yourself. Made the rope and stood in position for what?

soul sits on the doorstep  
of time g you will repent of this blindness. Your walk can sing to the sound of the Ling hand. Your dance is a choice. It began on the first hour, you yelled and time heard you had your journey be a tribute to yourself or time, your master?

Sarah Mkhonza

# Happy Birthday Nelson Mandela (Posthumously)

We never have enough,  
Of the wisdom of leaders,  
Whose voices ring true,  
Even to an angry nation,  
Where the truth was hatred,  
Told and touched in its coldness,  
To be smashed at the end of time  
And be told not to try,  
To engage the people of the land,  
In useless words that kill,  
For all souls are special,  
Ready to make a new nation,  
That can stand on its own,  
And be the envy of the world.

We never get tired,  
Of thinking about your words  
Well said Nelson  
For you taught us to talk  
To hold hands and sing  
For we are one inside  
As we walk the land you led  
To a place of oneness  
That few could imagine  
After years of fueling hate  
In a system of me not you.

Well thought out and executed,  
This creation of truth,  
This nation in rags,  
That was dressed in red blood,  
For people died in prisons,  
Both on land and on islands,  
To buy today's freedom,  
Which we use like the soap and suds,  
Of the rivers of yesterday,  
Which let their water flow even now,  
In their perennial beds,  
That are today as dry,

As the deserts in the west,  
That stand with the high dunes,  
Of sand that roll on and on.

Nelson well said  
A life is a life  
A man is a man  
He builds and then goes  
Does his house fall after he goes?  
The words remain his words.

Never to be imitated  
Never to spoken in like manner  
In this land of the south  
Where people live and sing  
About truths you told.

To miss a life is all we do  
To repeat the words also  
When the gifts were shared  
By a nation in despair  
That was taught to be one.

We miss the advice  
Let bygones be bygones  
We do not want to let you go  
For bygones cannot be bygones  
When we need you as 'Tata.'  
For fathers are not easy to find,  
For there are no leaders like you,  
Who keep the principles we know,  
Standing even when they are attacked,  
And apply them when the rough gets tough.

It is easy to make a baby  
To raise it is another task  
The challenges face us  
The mind you shared with us  
Leads us even in the dark  
For we cannot bring you back  
But follow you in time  
Such are men of honor

For where you went  
is where all heroes  
Of our struggle have gone.

There are days I sing  
And walk in your energy  
And ask how you could forgive  
For the act is hard  
When I have looked at the enemy  
Whose dogs sniffed my food  
Looking for weapons at the border  
Where fires were lit on roads  
And a gun was pointed at me

I am thankful for the example  
To know it can be done  
My nerves tell me to become  
A Madiba inside and stand  
Like a Tembu chief would  
As the elders taught you  
For this is what you taught  
That love frees the slave  
That has an enemy in its  
Neighbor the fellow man.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Happy New Poetry Year Folks.

The old year stands on a mountain  
And waves at you like a golden sunset  
That gleams half hidden in the darkness  
That creeps in slowly ready to throw  
Itself on the couch of time and sleep  
Never to awake. It will not snore  
Loud unless you want it to  
So make sure you pull out  
The stoppers in your ears  
Lest you miss the song I  
Will sing from up on top  
Of the mountain my silhouette  
Standing against the setting  
Year.

We will never step into it  
Once it steps out so on this  
Day let us walk with loud steps  
Stepping on it harder for it  
Is better to say goodbye to  
This year that gave much more  
Than we expected.

The year says that we will  
Return and spell out the  
Minutes in story if we did  
Not write a few words to  
Remind ourselves that life  
Was just another starry sky  
That we walked through  
Without catching anything  
Not even a fly that buzzes  
Into the house of our time  
Asking us to swat it and get  
On for when it has fallen it  
Will be evidence we were here  
Like a deer hunter carrying home  
His poached burden and not wanting

To be found out.

The new year rises in the east  
The sunrise that is crowned  
By the rays that greet you  
And makes you say the day has  
Come for at the hour of midnight  
There will be new cries as  
Newborns come to this world  
Like the year we greet in two days  
Which has come to ask you  
A question you need to answer  
Because if you do not you will  
Return to regret not doing so.  
What do you see your self  
Doing in five years after  
You yawn your first yawn  
On the first day of each  
New year including this  
Very one you are going to  
Stand in and make a prophecy  
About nothing?

The blessing is to step  
My foot into the whole  
Thing clean and take what  
My shoe has created prints on  
In this muddy world where  
I turn mud to build another  
Year without a broken window  
So please do not trouble  
Me by sneaking into my stories  
For I am not royalty  
And deserve the quiet  
For I do not live on your  
Taxes and claim I can make  
You what you are. I just give  
For God gave to me.  
I love you with the love  
Of the mud that made you and  
To which you will return  
At the strike of twelve.

Happy New Poetry Year folks  
From your Princess of Poetry.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Have You Seen The Foolish Five

Surely you know of the foolish five,  
with their lamps ready, mates and all.

Yet when called for the action that closes  
the deal they scuttle around.

On their lips is the latest lie.'We saw him. He kissed her and did a few things.

The reason we run around is to stop others  
marrying him. He has five already. Isn't it?

We heard the wedding announced. It got nearer to the hour. We ran looking for  
you.

Oil, oil wet our lamp so we can see what  
he will do with the five. Clever is it not?

To look before you leap. We are only being careful. If the groom has five, what if  
we walk into a stable where the bridle is on  
the foolish five who came last to a case  
that already had its queens?

Better to go looking for oil and  
tell the true crowd.

The clever five can handle the load.  
We are the maidens with atiti

Better never to go near hell with your  
eyes open. There are fires everywhere.

Better to start your own with tinder  
from your own yard than those from afar.

The groom is arriving. Let him come in  
the daylight. We fear midnight stunts.

Breaking news, midnight mews. The screen is rolling. Things are under control.

Who heads the harem? Zinita. Who tails  
the head and talk game. Anita.

The harem now swings on a hammock. Who is  
in the kingly suite. Nobody.

See? We told you five girls one groom no  
bride in a veil says run, run, run.

Smells like the marriage of the gazillion  
we know who marry like the moonies.

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# Have You Seen The King?

Given this life to lead,  
With Nothing but hope,  
Dropped into your hand,  
In years past by life,  
Have you seen the king you are?

To be given to go ahead,  
Into a future of fantasy,  
Makes you a prince,  
Who can find a Cinderella,  
where the cinders are.

Did you look in the right place?  
Did you throw away the ash,  
That remained after the cinders,  
Without seeing your picture,  
In there with a crown,  
On this very head of yours.

How can you be a king,  
Given a destiny to lead,  
And then not know,  
That you will be nothing,  
If the king in you is asleep?  
For kings like big beds,  
And rule with scepters that write,  
The very poem they live themselves.

Your majesty I call on you,  
To walk the tightrope with pride,  
For people want to follow you,  
But they cannot follow a turtle,  
Whose head goes in at the slightest sound.

Rise with leopard skin pride,  
Take the strides of a cheetah,  
Overtake time with your gusto,  
And land with a double fold,  
On the other side and stand,

For your kingdom needs this stirring,  
That awakens even the dead,  
Who attest long after it is done,  
A real king was here,  
For you can see the royal trail,  
With all the followers' foot prints,  
Imprinted on the sand.

Once you asked with need,  
If I could be king of my own,  
This kingdom this fief,  
Then you were given the heart,  
It told you you were king,  
Then you asked it to knock,  
With the sound of the scepter,  
And it did just that,  
Then you gave up and walked away,  
Arguing you were a subject.

Whose subject are you Oh King?  
Subject of others you say,  
Nobody claims a citizen,  
That is not a patriot,  
For that begins in your heart,  
For power is a choice you make,  
People do not follow one who abdicates.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Have You Seen Twenty Four Inches

She walks the streets of Mbabane  
All legs with a skin smoother than  
Butter and smiles the sunny smile  
That makes you see two stary eyes that  
Hide behind ringed glasses. This  
Beauty has a figure that is the  
Envy of Mbabane girls who in turn  
Gave her the name of the inches  
Around her walks down  
Allister Miller a virgin spited  
And her instep tells you that she  
Has won the contest for if you  
Live in this little town all fights  
Take place on Allster Miller. Handbags  
Swing on shoulders as determined  
As the outstep of the maiden they  
Call Twenty Four Inches. In this  
Vanity world of the thin ones  
You live and hear the drama from  
The People's Theatre where the  
Ticket is your eyes. The seat  
Number is written on the pavement.  
The snack is ready for you on  
The same pavement. Everybody  
Turns to watch her on the runway  
For they have been waiting and  
Now they whisper for here comes  
The girl handbag in hand wearing  
The latest on her body with a  
Figure like a wasp.

She does not wear rouge  
For rule of the streets  
Is no enhancements for  
It is African fair to  
Come as you ate. Her  
Hair is short. Confidence  
Calls you to dare say a word.  
You stand and watch for next

Week you have to pass the gossip  
Test for all the news will be  
About this movie that goes on  
Reel by reel a life unfolding  
In front of a nations audience  
That walks and does not chase  
Its prey, but sits a paparazzi  
Of the streets that chases its  
Prey with the eye.

\*Mbabane is a town in Swaziland, southern Africa.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Have Yourselves A Merry Southern African Christmas

A Christmas of blasts of music  
And cars going up and down  
Tells you are in Kimberly  
The town where diamonds are twenty  
A scoop, in the biggest hole  
In the ground ever made in the  
History of man. Living in  
A township called Homestead  
You have to know that there is truth  
In that Jesus was born to merrymaking  
And laughter as well as the  
Slaughter of sheep that hang  
In the fig tree outside.

My Aunt sits in her sunken lounge  
In the house she loves for it is  
A semblance of how far the  
Clan has come in getting ahead  
In the things of life. The township  
Buzz that brings us all together  
Is on as we watch the lively television  
That we just bought two miles away  
In downtown Kimberly.

Small box it may be it does carry  
A few pictures of bearded Father  
Christmas for merchants will always  
Invade our fun with each period  
Of merry making. The kitchen is abuzz  
With cooking on this Christmas eve  
For Jesus surely knows he has to come  
Out of Mary at midnight or else  
There will have to be a Cesarean section  
This once in the life of history.  
For when the story came south he  
Was not born in a manger but on our  
Streets where the cars visit the  
Bottle stores down the street  
For there surely was a lot of

Thirst in hot Bethlehem.

No Boerewors, no fun for this  
Sausage long colonized the tastes  
Of the clan. Sizzling on some  
Outdoor fire its wafts into the  
Air with a smell you can touch for  
It lingers in township air like  
We live on Sausage Street. How can  
This be that nobody thinks of a  
Woman in labor for no labor pains  
And no midwives are talked about  
In a history of the birth of the  
Son of Man. The story is felt as  
Children jump higher outside for  
Even the goat pans and grazing  
Lands will have fewer sheep so  
So there will be leg room for  
The beasts and a space to lay  
A bed when all the beasts are  
Out there waiting for slaughter.

The smell of mutton is in the air  
For the rams tied to trees speak  
The full story. Wake up this Christmas  
Eve as my Aunt shoves the celebratory  
Mutton sandwich into my face and I jolt  
Up and join the party around the fire.  
On the strike of midnight up goes the  
Street abuzz with cars honking loud  
As women throw nigger balls through  
The windows so when the kids wake up  
They will surely know Father Christmas  
Did not forget a soul. Morning dawns  
With children running up and down  
Their mouths 'licoriced' showing teeth  
As darkened as the night for they  
Have picked all the balls of licorice  
That were thrown in the night. Soon  
They will walk house to house to ask  
For Christmas and get a meal, a present  
Or drink. They will all eat themselves

To death for as they say in Kimberly  
Christmas comes once a year.

Aunt Rose dressed to kill in her  
Small heaven beret perched on top  
Of her head makes her entrance  
Umbrella in the air and handbag on  
Her arm. She sweats her way into our  
Yard dressed in the latest of  
Johannesburg fashions for she works  
In the kitchens far away, and this  
You can see from the ear rings of  
Green, red and green plastic that  
Show Made in China in a tiny glow  
Of gold seen only when she sits near  
You and invades the air around you  
With Country Club, the sweetest of  
Our local perfumes.

A Young man tsotsi-walks his way  
In pants that are held by a belt  
At the base of his bottom and comes  
To tell uncle Bob, "I ask for  
Christmas', man Uncle Bob.' Between  
A request and a demand you know  
This day of generosity might as well  
Be a day of young and old. Together  
They drink shots of whiskey and  
The young man goes on his way.  
The clan trickles in until it  
is time for the main meal where  
All the prayers will tell us to  
Watch out for Christmas can be  
A dangerous time and then the feast  
Begins. Boys in the garage blast  
music and my mom and her sisters-in-law  
Retire to the sunken lounge for  
These sisters of the clan  
Have seen generations come and go  
On this day of our Lord's birth  
And so deserve to rest while

We all have our fun. With gifts  
Galore one says Merry Christmas  
A-la-clan of Isaac Steinkamp,  
Good people.

\* Nigger balls are marble like balls of candy  
made with a coating of black licorice. No  
disrespect meant I had to use the word as it  
Was used then.

Sarah Mkhonza

# He Pulled The Ivy Out

This man, this landlord has  
pulled out the ivy. I grew  
this ivy from my bouquet  
so precious I could not throw  
it to the girls.

So precious was this ivy I let  
it grow in front of the house.  
In a trough it grew as the marriage  
grew.

Then this landlord came. He uprooted  
the ivy and said it causes a fungus  
to creep on the wall. Next  
thing he danced on the rough like a cowife. Said he was tearing out more  
ivy to let in the son.

Crazy man, he I fell from the roof  
and now walks with a limp. Look what  
the landlord, my only husband has done  
to our marriage!

I came to share the rent and now  
I get a cripple. Should have surely  
let the girls catch this fire of a  
bouquet, that made the ivy, that broke  
the leg, that left me with a crippled land lord, my husband here, and bills to pay.

my

,

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# Hello She Woman Of Iron

Hallowed she woman of iron  
Like a statue you stand  
Your hand behind your head  
Looking at the future long  
In front of you spread. For  
Grass likes to claim it knows  
Where we are all going for it  
Alone refuses to change color  
And stay the same.

Hello iron lady for you see  
The same bit of grass year in  
And year out and know if this  
Is true that a tuft of grass  
Should fade and then renew itself  
When people have no power to  
Even clump and form themselves  
Into a tuft and line up the lawns  
Going to get what is theirs by right.

They call it government when they  
Bundle people into usable hands  
That pour out power together  
And get things moving in all  
Directions some good and some  
Bad, but because you have never  
Cast a vote, but voted to stand  
Here a statue that read the statutes  
And knew all statistics sent in  
That cement our being tell me what  
We should do to stop being led  
In directions unsought by those  
Who have us bound together in  
Bundles as nations?

Once there was an iron lady  
Who tried to pull the strings  
The way you have your hair and  
The world called her point blank

Without respect an iron lady yet  
She was flesh and blood and sang  
With her voice in parliament only  
To hear it ringing back after years  
As hard and horse as water coming  
Out of a horse pipe. But one thing  
Consoles me now that we see you  
Standing here, she did what no  
Woman in her country had done  
Like you for you have stood for the  
Likes of us and like it or not  
Nobody will move you and remain  
untouched for you touched my soul  
Even though with an iron touch.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Here Begins Your Journey On The Sledge.

It is a bumpy journey,  
When you are led by two,  
Four, six or so animals,  
That pull together only  
When the ground is flat,

It is a lonely journey,  
When you have not packed,  
A few friends to journey with,  
On the same route that you have chosen,  
For to choose to go, is to choose to,  
Journey all the same.

You cannot run forever,  
From the cold that hits you,  
And penetrates into the depth,  
Of the soul you are taking far,  
The sun shines and dims yet again,  
As you go on to unknown horizons.

The friends who cheer you now,  
Will not be there tomorrow,  
For their thoughts wonder,  
About the space so blurred,  
And want to see what you keep  
Showing them in the yonder,  
Where you go foot sore.

Keep your eyes open at night,  
The stars are looking at you,  
Opening up and shutting down,  
As they dash in your skies,  
Wondering if you see the way,  
The way they see it.

Your call is further than this,  
It takes you to worlds far away,  
As far as the world of your dreams,  
Where you see demons green and furious,

Leaning towards you as they surface,  
Out of the leafy forest floors,  
To scare you if your heart is faint.

The journey continues to be bumpy,  
Your sledge hits a stone and you hurt,  
As you get thrown up and down in jumps,  
That cause hiccups and yelling,  
That tells the world you are alive,  
For such is life on this journey,  
Where prisoners of life tell you,  
That is the way it goes here.

You listen to mockery displeased,  
And swear never to mock someone,  
Who undertakes a pilgrimage,  
To a Mecca they do not know,  
Except only in books of old,  
Only to be told the journey ends here.

Believe for you started out,  
And hope for you had faith,  
And strength to try alone,  
With the friends who abandon,  
A cause so lofty that it is undertaken  
By those whose eyes have holes in them,  
That gleam the future forever,  
And say the journey continues,  
Until the breath says, 'No you anymore'.  
Give us the sledge and we will walk away,  
With your animals and leave you here,  
Where your dream ends  
The trail continues,  
For we know it better  
Having lived it for years,  
And seen more like you.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Here Is A Gertrude Sneeze Number 10

'See how many times I have broken  
This wooden spoon on a person's  
Head? ' My Aunt Gertrude's tongue  
is at it again. If speaks and goes  
Out of her mouth in a false licking  
That circles her whole mouth with gile  
Goes back in and her eyes look at the  
Wooden spoon that Uncle Bob made when  
It was my cousins wedding for every  
Man contributes a traditional utensil  
When there is a wedding among the  
Members of the clan. Strong long handled  
And as big as my aunt's foot the wooden  
Spoon she holds looms higher then her  
Head scarf right now that it has become  
A weapon much better than the stick  
My brother gave my mother at the last  
Battle of the titans. I stand amazed  
As usual as I look at these arch rivals  
Whose eyes look at the hoisted spoon. 'Two  
And you will be the third and know this, they  
Were male including your husband.

I had heard the story many times when my father  
Was talking to my mother about my aunt and  
Her experiments at disciplining them as younger  
Siblings. I had laughed as he told us how  
Our grandmother had stood between them telling  
My aunt to stop what she was doing and stir  
The stew and stop stirring chaos and pouring  
It on the boys. My father told us how she had  
broken the spoon on Uncle Thomas also for  
His refusal to grind millet on the grinding  
Stone and then tipping a piece of wood and  
Spilling all the contents of her hard work  
On the ground.

Now I stood looking at this spoon she held.

Once it had stirred the meat in the big  
Pots that lay turned upside down in our  
Big kitchen. Now that my aunt has gone  
In and told the ancestors it shall be  
A weapon wiggled by women at each other  
I start to wonder why wars were always said  
To be fought by men. For the ones of the  
Daughters of the clan cause as much laughter  
As those of the sons of the clan, if not  
more so.

'Hey you, who said you must come and rais  
A wooden spoon here. Look, I held a spear in  
This home and it told me that you would go  
To other homes and hold that weapon there.  
Now that you have chosen to stir stews in  
The air amidst a broadcast of ancestral nonsense  
From the radio station whose antennae is your  
Crooked head blast on, but be sure I do  
not get near you. I am ready to do what  
An in-law-has never done in this home. I  
Am no longer a new comer but a woman seasoned  
With the savory sauces that you mix daily  
In your daily songs of wrath that you have  
Poured on my head. In short, I mean I am  
As ready for you as you are and also very  
Much so even though I have no weapon on my hands.

The force that my mother uses in pushing her  
Words out of her mouth is enough to blow the wind  
And force it to have my aunt receding one step  
At a time. She trips on a wheelbarrow that lays  
In the yard and almost falls and then turns  
And walks away.

Always I feel the relief as the queens of wrath  
Make distance between each other and the other  
One decided the words are enough for today.  
There is no love lost between these two and now  
That she is gone my mother starts telling  
The food she is stirring that my aunt had  
Better bring back that spoon because it is

A symbol of luck shared by one generation  
With another and this wiggling of it by her  
Honorable is a sure sign to cause bad luck  
To the marriage of the couple that it was  
Made for.

I know next time, if ever I marry I want to  
Hide all the symbolic gifts if my aunt is still  
Going on with these fights that take place  
Between the two women I love so much.

I am torn as always for my aunt it my  
God mother because of the position she  
Holds as the first born who must bless  
Every action I take. My mother is also  
My love for she is the best things that  
Ever happened to our family. No mother no  
Family for my father is a very level headed  
Man.

Cry with me when the wars come and rest on  
The top of my head and I cannot do anything.  
I always pray for fear to get a hold of one  
Of these and then hope time will save the situation  
Till they come face to face again.

I am praying that they grow up and find out  
That all this acting up does not make life  
Better. It saps energy and then fuels us  
Up with confusion and anxiety and then we  
Go back to normal wondering what is next.

I go to sleep today with my mind trying  
To live a live where the two have their  
Hands intertwine in love even if it is  
In my dreams. I always wonder when I fall  
Asleep what would have happened if they  
Were co-wives and fought over legitimate  
Inequalities that are done by a husband  
Between wives. My grandmother saved us  
By getting the family to live knowing that  
Hail Marys said with rosaries go before

Anything else a young person can do with  
A young man. For this we thank her and wish  
She had worked more sense into the minds of  
The clan before she left for the other world.

F

Mother ceremonial piece of property

Sarah Mkhonza

## Here Is A Gertrude Sneeze Number Eleven? ?

Now that you have gone  
To discuss the bride price  
Of Alexine, everything concerning  
Her life from now on will  
Be on your shoulders.  
Her sickness, death,  
Jail sentences, fines and  
Pregnancies are all yours,  
You hear me, last born of Isaac?  
My aunt said as always from  
Her shrine of the Black Madonna  
Where her authority oozes  
Copiously, the day my in-laws  
Came to ask for the girth, for  
This is how you speak with the  
Kingdom of the people of Ngwane  
About marrying their daughter.  
You ask for the girth of her whom  
You have come to request to keep  
The fires on the hearth of your  
Home warm. My father, knowing  
Her sister had not told my aunt,  
For fear of the scene she would  
Make in front of people who 'do  
Not know us.' Like a queen of wizardry  
She accused him of loosening the  
Knot around the family that Isaac  
Had left tighter than one around  
A victim of a suicide by hanging.  
'For you have trodden on the snake  
That guides our safety, ' my mother  
Mocked after she had finished.

You, said my aunt to her, 'When I  
Am spited, I spit fire and very  
Soon you will know what kind of  
In-laws we are for you speak to me  
As if I am a rotten fig that dropped  
On your head from that fig tree, ' she

Said pointing at the fig tree near our  
House. I thought the fig tree would  
Shrivel when I looked at her finger  
And remember Jesus and the fig tree  
That would not bear any figs. 'I was  
Not born first so that I can arrive  
At family gatherings last. I hold  
An invisible scepter that can stir  
Things around day in and day out for  
I guided you all out of my mother's  
Womb into this world. No marriage begins  
And ends without me, unless you want it  
To end before it begins. If you want this  
To be a marriage, let us right now pretend  
What you did, did not happen for I swear with  
The tears of my mother at birth when birthing  
Me for they were the first tears of her sweat  
That she remembers clearest. If you want to  
Create your own ruled go and live in  
The land where people do as they wish  
For the spirits that made this crest that I carry  
Are shocked as I stand here naked for  
What you have done has removed the only  
Sign of blessing I bring to all our occasions.

As she speaks, I see her tears glistening  
Down her face attesting to her crest-fallen  
Ego and for once my father is calmer than  
Cucumber as he listens to this tale that he  
Has heard repeatedly. How she has repeated  
The importance of her birth to the world has  
Thoroughly bored my father for he does not  
Even move to show that her tears are powerful  
When they pour in torrents and land on her  
Bony chest.

She who reigns from the shrine of disorder's strength,  
Is etching out. I can cracks in her long and stable  
Ruling of the house that has borne the disorder she  
Wields with quiet poise. It is now splitting into  
Fiefs that make me wonder what we will do now that  
This story with no end is coming to an end, especially

For me who is trying to leave and go as far from here  
As I can. They say a story that has no end  
Is no story for every beginning foretells and end.

That my father would be the one that would start  
The rocks rolling down the mountain of this kingdom  
Renders me mute. They say surprise chokes its victim  
for it leaves the fiercest fighters and their armies  
In disarray. The house of Isaac has finally decided  
That nakedness does not hurt a clan when they have to  
Undress the queen bee for someone has to remove the  
Knickers from the bee so that it can sting and die. The  
Risk is in work whose results we are already enjoying  
Because nobody needs to answer the questions that have  
The same preamble, 'if these imbecilles will call me to  
Our home...., ' Isaac no longer threatens to turn in his  
Grave for he is as dead as a nail. His silence down there  
Creates a new truth that leave tentions between family  
Members reminiscing in an air that is free of the billows  
Of anger that drown every voice and sink every heart.  
Fighters only do so when there is an audience. My father  
And his actions have rendered the air quiet so that anyone  
Who dances in front of our family in outbursts expecting  
Explosions hears the 'woosh, ' as the balloon flattens  
because of the affairs aforementioned. Now I know me,  
Alexine will marry in peace and say goodbye to chaos unending.  
The girth has been set at a herd of ten, to be paid slowly.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Here Is A Gertrude Sneeze Number Five

The fees of my uncle Mark, son  
Of Gertrude have not been paid.  
Guess who is knocking on the door  
To fight about this.

She tells us that if my mother  
Wants to stay at our homestead,  
She had better make sure that  
The fees are paid for no grand  
child of Isaac will have to leave  
School because of money. For money  
Was never an issue in the house of  
Her father. The only problem is  
that 'rats and mince' have come to  
Live on the money and are now causing  
Members of the clan to walk about naked.

the struggle to control the money  
And distribute it fairly lies heavily  
On the back of my dad, for he does  
Not like the bickering because he knows  
The cause is that my aunt does not like  
My mother.

My father always lives a life of wondering  
When the next request will appear on his  
Window for now the papers are no longer  
Shoved under the door.

My aunt now collects these from all the  
Members of the clan so that my dad can  
Be sure to treat all of the people equally.  
All by herself she speaks and shouts  
Amounts in the air which is also  
Going beserk for it wonders what on earth  
Happened to these people whose sums of  
Money need to be heard by the whole world,  
Which will soon turn into a Japanese berserk.



## Here Is A Gertrude Sneeze Number Four

As the inferno goes higher  
My mother has taken her in-law  
To court for she was haunting  
My father, asking for money  
Every weekend and crying on  
On the window outside our house  
For the money is not ours,  
But her father Isaac's.

She prayed to the God of Abraham,  
Isaac, and Jacob for they knew  
That she is the eldest and should  
Be listened to when she is in need.

'I made you the financial heir  
And if you listen to these young  
Girls whom you dated one week and  
Married the next you will surely  
Receive the wrath of our Holy God.  
I tell you, for the truth sits  
On the lips of turtles for they  
Grow to be centenarians.'

My father ought to listen to my aunt,  
For she has said she is not a surrogate  
Mother of his to be coming to him to  
Ask for money that belongs to all of  
Isaac's children, but his sister  
Who carried them all on her back  
And could run a mile for that  
Is how young they are and uninformed  
About ruling the family.

A man who has a wife is not to be  
Reminded of his baby hood if he  
Does his duties. But men like my father  
Are a problem for they never grow up.  
Her ranting annoys us, but it makes  
Our life now that we have grown up

To know that it is what she lives for.

My mother has asked her to stop  
Coming to our house and she says  
No police order will stop her from  
Coming to the home of Isaac for it  
Was built with the one cow her husband  
Paid as the bride price. There was no  
Court, she argues when those agreements  
Were made. She speaks rules from the  
Shrine of the clan and nobody can do  
Anything about that, without seeing  
Isaac 'emanate' from the bush like  
The cyclone that drowned all our cattle  
When they refused to slaughter a cow  
On her sixtieth birthday.

I have seen that the bag of tricks  
Is Running out for my aunt has said  
My uncle should be in charge of the  
Family finances and not my father.  
Now it is going into divide, rule  
And confuse. Ha! Ha!

Sarah Mkhonza

# Here Is A Gertrude Sneeze Number Ten

'See how many times I have broken  
This wooden spoon on a person's  
Head? ' My Aunt Gertrude's tongue  
is at it again. If speaks and goes  
Out of her mouth in a false licking  
That circles her whole mouth with gile  
Goes back in and her eyes look at the  
Wooden spoon that Uncle Bob made when  
It was my cousins wedding for every  
Man contributes a traditional utensil  
When there is a wedding among the  
Members of the clan. Strong long handled  
And as big as my aunt's foot the wooden  
Spoon she holds looms higher then her  
Head scarf right now that it has become  
A weapon much better than the stick  
My brother gave my mother at the last  
Battle of the titans. I stand amazed  
As usual as I look at these arch rivals  
Whose eyes look at the hoisted spoon. 'Two  
And you will be the third and know this, they  
Were male including your husband.

I had heard the story many times when my father  
Was talking to my mother about my aunt and  
Her experiments at disciplining them as younger  
Siblings. I had laughed as he told us how  
Our grandmother had stood between them telling  
My aunt to stop what she was doing and stir  
The stew and stop stirring chaos and pouring  
It on the boys. My father told us how she had  
broken the spoon on Uncle Thomas also for  
His refusal to grind millet on the grinding  
Stone and then tipping a piece of wood and  
Spilling all the contents of her hard work  
On the ground.

Now I stood looking at this spoon she held.

Once it had stirred the meat in the big  
Pots that lay turned upside down in our  
Big kitchen. Now that my aunt has gone  
In and told the ancestors it shall be  
A weapon wiggled by women at each other  
I start to wonder why wars were always said  
To be fought by men. For the ones of the  
Daughters of the clan cause as much laughter  
As those of the sons of the clan, if not  
more so.

'Hey you, who said you must come and rais  
A wooden spoon here. Look, I held a spear in  
This home and it told me that you would go  
To other homes and hold that weapon there.  
Now that you have chosen to stir stews in  
The air amidst a broadcast of ancestral nonsense  
From the radio station whose antennae is your  
Crooked head blast on, but be sure I do  
not get near you. I am ready to do what  
An in-law-has never done in this home. I  
Am no longer a new comer but a woman seasoned  
With the savory sauces that you mix daily  
In your daily songs of wrath that you have  
Poured on my head. In short, I mean I am  
As ready for you as you are and also very  
Much so even though I have no weapon on my hands.

The force that my mother uses in pushing her  
Words out of her mouth is enough to blow the wind  
And force it to have my aunt receding one step  
At a time. She trips on a wheelbarrow that lays  
In the yard and almost falls and then turns  
And walks away.

Always I feel the relief as the queens of wrath  
Make distance between each other and the other  
One decided the words are enough for today.  
There is no love lost between these two and now  
That she is gone my mother starts telling  
The food she is stirring that my aunt had  
Better bring back that spoon because it is

A symbol of luck shared by one generation  
With another and this wiggling of it by her  
Honorable is a sure sign to cause bad luck  
To the marriage of the couple that it was  
Made for.

I know next time, if ever I marry I want to  
Hide all the symbolic gifts if my aunt is still  
Going on with these fights that take place  
Between the two women I love so much.

I am torn as always for my aunt it my  
God mother because of the position she  
Holds as the first born who must bless  
Every action I take. My mother is also  
My love for she is the best things that  
Ever happened to our family. No mother no  
Family for my father is a very level headed  
Man.

Cry with me when the wars come and rest on  
The top of my head and I cannot do anything.  
I always pray for fear to get a hold of one  
Of these and then hope time will save the situation  
Till they come face to face again.

I am praying that they grow up and find out  
That all this acting up does not make life  
Better. It saps energy and then fuels us  
Up with confusion and anxiety and then we  
Go back to normal wondering what is next.

I go to sleep today with my mind trying  
To live a live where the two have their  
Hands intertwine in love even if it is  
In my dreams. I always wonder when I fall  
Asleep what would have happened if they  
Were co-wives and fought over legitimate  
Inequalities that are done by a husband  
Between wives. My grandmother saved us  
By getting the family to live knowing that  
Hail Marys said with rosaries go before

Anything else a young person can do with  
A young man. For this we thank her and wish  
She had worked more sense into the minds of  
The clan before she left for the other world.

F

Mother ceremonial piece of property

Sarah Mkhonza

## Here Is A Gertrude Sneeze Number Two

Finally she has stepped on the  
Tail of a puff adder and it spat  
Into the air and all my uncles are  
Sniffing and rubbing their eyes  
As she wiggles her waist and goes  
Back to her grass hut like the snake  
In the garden of Eden.

My uncles are sitting there looking  
At each other daggers for they can  
See the fools they are I hope. For  
They fought like tigers in the wild  
And even messed up the stones on Isaac's  
Grave for he had to be burried on the  
Family property and guess at whose orders  
None other than the one and only Aunt Gee  
Worse! .

She really got them this time for she insisted  
That two portions of the farm be hers and they  
Divide the smaller bit between them.

As keeper of the law and Madam of disorder  
She called the whole family and told us we  
Will pay for Isaac will rise from the desecrated  
Grave and cause us to walk on our heads for this  
Is what has happened to our brains. She said we  
All like imbeciles have lost our heads and fall  
Short of the glory of God. And that a curse will  
Run through the family if she does not do the libation.

I wondered how my aunt would begin to do a libation  
And got the answer as she told us that her spirit is  
The wisest for she was born first and taking a bottle  
Of vodka from her handbag she went to the center and  
Asked that the ancestors should greet with joy  
My grandfather and let those who fight until they  
Shift stones on the graves of the dead see much  
Come to them for their kind is a disgrace to the

House of William, my great grandfather.

When she said that she has was pouring drops of vodka  
Intermittently on the floor while making sure if the sinning  
Eleven were listening. She took the final swig and  
Passed on the bottle to my father, who followed suite  
Until they had all shared the remains of what she left.

Now that we have poured the ligation you have  
To propitiate the ancestors and slaughter the g  
Goat of the departed whose grave you messed up.  
Like prisoners my uncles went to the goat pen  
And did the rituals whose details are gory.

The household of Isaac felt the relief  
When she walked away for the keeper of  
The law had finally walked away with her  
Grey wig like that of the judge of the  
Highest court. I am glad she does not have  
A gavel for I always feel she would pound  
It on people's heads.

I fear the power my aunt has over her  
Brothers for she gets it through pitting  
Them against one another.

When they change she will be a sad  
Lonely woman since she has no children  
Of her own. The ones she is bullying she  
Neither gave birth to nor suckled on her  
Breasts for she would feel the misery she  
causes with her hen- pecking.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Here Is A Gertrude Sneezes Number Nine

I am waiting for the day  
You will die sister-in-law  
For you I will dance and sing  
For you hated me and did not  
Hide it. I live and walk  
Counting the days when my father's  
Money will be left to my brother  
Without you poking your nose  
Into a put you did not put  
On the hearth.

My mother sits and looks the  
Other way for the distant  
Look in her eyes says it all.  
Only when my God says I must  
die and not according to your  
Will will it happen.

My aunt walks away empty  
Handed for my mother had  
Nothing for her besides the  
Usual cup of tea and she did  
Say openly in her usual way  
'So today it is only hot  
Water to scald the insides.'

The battle of money goes on  
And now my aunt has said it  
Out that she alone has a grass  
Hut in this house of Isaac.

She is demanding that the clan  
Build for her a house for Isaac  
Left money enough for all his  
Children to not live in houses  
That the cyclone will live lying  
One one side.

'Over my dead body, will a man

Build you a house. You chased away  
A good man and now you make demands  
To our husbands.' My mother now talks  
And the scorn in her voice has me  
Wondering if all the strife has not  
Just dumped itself on her.

'You do not belong here and you  
Have no say in the affairs of the  
House of my father. You came here  
To follow the rules not to lead  
And now you shout at me like a  
Wild animal without even covering  
Your hair. Which people told you  
That you talk back to your female  
Father-in-law.

You are nothing here. Even this  
Table has a right to be here  
Not you. If you do not shut  
Your mouth I will fix it with  
Glue from that acacia tree. I hope  
You see it in the sap of these  
Marula trees too.'

The quarrel is broken by my brother  
Who tells my mother to get out of  
The house and follow my aunt. He  
Gives my mother a long bamboo stick  
That lays on the ground and says  
She must follow her. My aunt walks  
Away fast as if she has not been  
Yelling and heads for her hut.

Soon we see smoke coming out of  
The sides of the hut and know  
She is going to be warm and cozy  
In her bed and peace will settle  
On the land.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Here Is A Getrude Sneeze Number One

My Aunt Getrude as we have decided to call her  
Greeted my brother's friend and asked him if he  
Was with his 'mother.' The air around us became  
So embarrassed that one could feel it come out  
And envelope us in shame as we hid our eyes.

The guy answered shyly and told her that the  
Woman she was with was his wife. For the first  
Time my aunt beat her chest and shouted at herself  
'Getrude Miles! ' her hands landing hard above  
Her breasts.

It was the first time for us to see her repentant  
On a mistake she makes if we may call her faux pas  
Mistakes for that is failure to use words. Hers we  
Will call sneezes for they are as frequent as when  
Someone has a cold.

My aunt wiggled her thin waist and walked away  
Her head high with pride as she told all of us  
That she does not have to be shunned for this  
Deed for it is not as if she has not killed  
All the children of Isaac, my grandfather.

It has become hard to understand how one as loud  
And outspoken about life as my aunt is could have  
Actually been born in the same family as my uncles  
For all eleven of them let her get away with it.

She pokes her nose into everybody's business  
As if it hers is the red nose of a clown and  
Needs to be seen everywhere by everyone for  
She sees the world as her stage on which to  
Perform her little acts of speak-before-you  
Are-spoken-to.

I have come to wonder when my uncles will take her  
To task for she disappears into her hut and comes  
Out when she has something to say while they simmer

in her stew waiting for I do not know what. It is then  
That she appears like a dark cloud and walks  
On the plains of our homestead in the direction  
Of her next prey.

My mother knows when it is her turn and she decides  
To wear a thick skin for 'the big performer has come  
To run my house, ' she says as she winks at us and  
Offers her tea. My Aunt's usual preamble of 'As you  
May already know, ' she says as she sips the tea  
Looking above the brim of the cup at my mother.  
'Sam has done it again.'

My mother will always look first at me then at her  
And say in her usual, 'What has he done this time? '  
My aunt will continue and tell her how this last  
Born of Isaac is doing this thing that shames the  
Clan and clap her hands in surprise for she knows  
'He does not know what that will do to his people.'

My Aunt believes everybody should live life according  
To the rules she makes and says were made by William,  
My grandmother and swears that all the males who are not  
Circumcised should do so for it is as it should be in  
The big book or they will get the diseases of the land.

Today she ended by telling my mother to remember that  
It is time to deal with my grandfather's will for it  
has been three months since he was laid to rest. She  
Made it clear she knows who is the one to tell all  
The clan what goes to whom and then disappeared and  
Went to Uncle Piet's house.

My mother told us that this is going to be quite an  
Act and said our Aunt has to know once and for all  
That she does not wear the pants in our house. I  
Laughed for I have heard her say this time and again  
Only to find the pants hanging lose around my Aunt  
Getrude's thin frame once again.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Here Is A Getrude Sneeze Number Three

My Aunt has done it again for if you say  
Our clan is under petticoat government  
You have not started speaking about the  
Clan for she runs it like a choir as if  
She is the conductor.

If you would think of the disciples you would  
Not be wrong in guessing she is the twelfth  
For her eleven brothers have to listen to  
The final part of how the money my grandfather  
Left will be distributed.

She has to get the lion's share of course  
And the eleven disciples of Judas who has now  
Become the Lord himself have to listen to how  
The home will be run. The money has to be  
Controlled by my father for he is educated and  
Will 'not be confused by numbers the way Uncle  
Mark the fisherman will.'

Poor Mark, I saw him wink and turn grey with anger  
For his dark complexion gave him away as his his aversion  
With being debased at the money tit-tat gave him away.  
He wiggled his way out of being put on the spot  
By begging to go to the small room in order to avoid  
Another shouting match.

When he returned Aunt Getrude was looking at his chair  
And nodding that the truth will set him and her as free  
As birds for they will just have to do with a tenth of  
What my grandfather left and leave the rest to the one who  
Went to school for they ran away at recess time and should  
Just do with a little.

My mother, for the first time, asked what happened to the  
Will and Aunt Getrude told them it went the way of her  
Marriage certificate which she tore in front of the judge  
On entry into the court room after telling everyone present  
That her marriage to Joseph was over.

Everybody laughed for they remembered very well the incident  
On how her divorce ended for she said she could swear that  
If it was about having children Joseph had to tell the  
Clan that they had brought him to our house because  
One, as she said her little finger crossed with he  
Forefinger, the marriage had not yielded anything for  
Her bride price was little. Two, on a cross on her ring  
Finger, she swears she should have sued Joseph for depriving  
Her of her conjugal rights for there was no consumation of the  
marriage.

Poor Joseph, like the biblical figure and Potifar's wife  
Could not answer for himself for the loud speaker that  
Is my aunt was on, throwing everything in the air, when  
We all know that there was no way she could leave the  
Clan and marry a living human being unless a saint came  
Down from heaven and did the deed.

My brothers looked at him and told him that the marriage was  
As over as the day when the clock strikes twelve for there  
Is no way it can be brought back to where it once was for  
'We all know this firebrand, ' said my eldest uncle looking at  
My Aunt's in-laws.

They were brave to face us knowing that my aunt who  
Shoots off the heap would tell them off in whatever  
Way for when her father-in-law spoke she told him  
To mind his words for this is not speech about the  
Maize that he grows on his farm on the Bulunga  
Mountains. This is talk with the children of Isaac.

The two were at each other with words and I saw Joseph  
Look down and then wave at his father to cut it out for  
It was time to go. My uncle summed it up and thanked the  
Clan for opening their doors and told Joseph's people  
That the relationship had not grown in the hearts of  
The two but died for fires that are not kindled die. This  
Was a truth they had to live with and before they said  
Goodbye my aunt was on her way to her hut. We knew  
That the real reason was she would never marry and leave  
The eleven disciples of Judas alone, for that is what the

clan has become now that my grandmother and father are gone  
Now that she has had her say in the money we live to see how the saga will  
continue.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Here Take The Key And Half A Key

The key dropped into a hand,  
at a certain age looks like  
doors will open. Clockwise  
turned it raises a question  
only a key can answer.

Hands hold the hardness and  
rougher and and tougher. The  
smoothness colder. What are you  
to do with empty freedom.

The key breaks into two. You  
have the story of a key and  
half a key. Resemblance of a  
sibling and half a sibling. Put  
together they forge a story of  
looking into peep holes.

A hut is lighter on the inside.  
The light is on and nakedness is  
dancing the latest jingle. These crazy  
seventies. For siblings to laugh  
before a door key turns, is to lose  
the key and half a key.

You danced before they played the tune.  
Your sibling was right to laugh. You  
thought your key was about zippers  
going down in the heat of the moment.  
Years later as you hand the key to  
your offspring, you see the hole  
leading you further into the peephole.  
You curse for the sake of a moment of  
knowing. The two halves are about a key  
and half a key. It is an anti clocks  
turn. It's no longer your wish, but your  
turn. You've come of age. Says the white  
hair on your head.



# Hey Leaf On Another Tree

Listen you! Leaf on another tree!  
For the reason that here on our tree  
Squirrels spit on us and wag their tails  
Tell me what it is like over there.  
I am sick of them eating acorns and  
Messing up above me. I am planning  
A revolt if this does not stop. The fellows  
Out here have no fire in them.  
They take this lying down. What do you say?

Hey you over there! Do you know what  
Happened in a garden long ago when  
A snake like you started a revolution?  
It started a fire that is coming this way  
Because the wind would not stop  
Blowing. You talk that out and not start  
A fire for one carelessly thrown cigarette  
Falling out of the mouth of  
One drunk burnt a large forest in the  
Tundra.

You are chicken, what does that  
have to do with these squirrels?  
I am planning to help this poison ivy  
To grow and twine on this branch near me.  
Want some?

Only if you will let the birds bring it.  
I have no qualms with squirrels for  
They are as clever as their bushy  
Tails. I can just enjoy having a  
Laugh when that poison ivy gets them to  
Scratch and dance in a frenzied madness.

Oh! So you like to dance? When the  
Wind blows dance a jig for us. We  
All would love to see that. Just make  
Sure it is not raining for we will all  
Be getting drunk and not see when

The lightening strikes. How sad that would be.

You always look on the negative side of  
Things. Why not think of fairies coming  
To woo us so that ours becomes a palace  
And you onlookers become our servants?

Don't start! We will be princes and use  
You as ferns that keep the heat away.  
That is how this inequality thing started.  
One human decided he was a king and  
Others started bowing. We cannot  
Have that here. We are Americans!

Sarah Mkhonza

# Hey Shish Kebob In The Skewer

To speak for you is to  
Turn you so that you do  
Not burn on one side and  
Get charred for then you  
Would lose your worth.

They strung you up with these.  
Shish kebob on the skewer  
For they knew you would bring  
Flavor to a world attacked by  
Lack of flavor.

Now that I lean you on this side  
The honors is on you to tell me  
When you ate ready to go on to the  
Table for a hungry world awaits you  
Like this poem, ready to devour every  
Bit of you.

The fire you ate in also wants these  
Bits of you, you part with  
Grudgingly as you sizzle in t

Sarah Mkhonza

# Hiding From The King's Waterparty

These men muscular and tall,  
arrive unannounced and fall  
upon our home now.

All I see is monkey skin that  
goes all over their heads. This  
fear I feel is animalistic for it  
sends me into the me aloe fiels.

With everything that breathes we go.  
This hiding place confirms  
as we look above me a lie plants.

The invasion has taken place this noon.  
The power of monkeys ons surrounds our  
home. No playing can go on. One rule only  
must be followed. Give them food.

They go from hut to hut as we hide. Peeping through stalks an deceive. When  
those from afar have gone we get out.  
All containers are empty as are pots.  
These are the deeds of those from afar.

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# Hitching Rides In The Seventies

You stood by the roadside and thumbed  
Your way to the ends of the world in  
The years gone by with a duffle bag  
on your shoulders.

You stopped any car and hopped into  
The back of vans like loaded cargo.  
Nobody cared for the age of serial  
Killers and rapists was not the thing  
To think about. For it was a time  
Of hippies and everybody loved the  
Peace sign and wore it on their shirt.

The heels were also high making walking  
Difficult for platforms were worn by  
Men who had leather necklaces that hung  
Around their necks with one cowrie bead  
That told the world who they wear.

Bell bottoms and long hair told the driver  
That one who leaves on less is standing  
Near the road and if they want to share  
A blessing they could let you be their  
Angel for the day.

When you got off you offered them gas money  
Which they normally refused as they buzzed  
Down the road in their cars for Toyotas  
Were just coming in.

Who says not that my thumb is useless  
We cannot do the same for we saved the  
World from pollution and shared what we  
Had in the days when Uber had not come  
To get every penny we have.

Some said hitch-hikers were adventurous  
And some said they wanted others to carry  
Them around as they lived near rivers and

Did no work avoiding to pay taxes. I thought  
We got to meet the world for when we stepped  
Out we were open to surprises.

Today rides do not fall from the sky  
When you ask for one you risk your life  
for Untold Mysteries has told us how  
One picked up from near the road Ended  
Up in a ditch near a river miles away  
From home. This world has taken what it  
Did not give in the freedom to ride  
The thumb.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Holding Up My Own Oscar

Holding my own Oscar award  
On the platforms of the world  
Is no longer a dream  
It is Lupita possible  
I repeat Nyong'o doable.

You made me feel just right  
Short hair no chemicals fight  
For your smile acted it into  
The me who was afraid of life.

Like other young people  
You were told not you  
Why you to be this not just that  
You fought words and moulds  
For nobody would mold success  
And put it in front of me.

Can my hands hold your Oscar  
I get close in my mind  
My Oscar is in my poetry  
You made me a poet laureate  
I hold an Oscar right now  
For you made me learn to see worlds  
That betrayed and owned up not  
You made me learn that acting it  
Is close to touching it.

Which young person did not see it  
The young woman in themselves  
Reaching for the roof tops like you  
Shaking tree tops in long gowns  
Acting roles from the pain of the past  
And saying never by succeeding  
In the days when Barak was President.

We saw the past in roughness  
Troubles that bled of hate  
Beatings that began in antiquity

And ended on the back of a woman  
Still we saw the upside  
We who overcame the odds  
Now stand in the light and read  
Watching it played by you for us to take  
And eat the chitlins of the past  
Of blood seeping out off a back  
And swallow the textures thereof.

I will lift up my own Oscar high  
It may not be now that we share  
It may be an Oscar in the night  
When nobody sees me working  
On a future to come like yours  
For it is in the making  
Whenever my acts lift things up not down.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Horse Ridden Only By The Wind

This horse with a bridle,  
surely has a nice saddle.

This horse flies in the air  
and then comes to the lair.

Who said things would be fair,  
When two make a strange pair.

They get hands on each other's throats  
and one is about to utter a loud croak.

The horse ridden by the air  
now jumps to it's rhythms.

It neigh with a tune strange,  
It awakens every neighbor.

The banging of doors weigh the riders,  
Whose fists make holes on doors.

The game is up for life has declared,  
a horse can never be a camel.

Who said things would be fair,

Cushioned between soul and air,

Easy the saddle that sits on it

You see it and jump to its rhythms

If you sit on the saddle,

This horse neigh loud

It's neigh in discord

This horse neighs loud

Visitors wonder why it stubbornly

Unkn

Yo

and then stands in r he

And

and comes back and lays lair

Sarah Mkhonza

# How To Get Out Of A Snare

All around you is air,  
What shackles you is  
words. The movements  
small and big are yours.  
Take liberty with them.  
The story is also yours.

If you came to triumph  
the actions are small..  
They create a future far,  
yet they also begin far away.

Projected now, they cannot be seen.  
Read them in another story, then  
you will be on the road to getting  
out of a snare.

Yours is the calling of a mahatma.  
The path charts itself with controversy  
Drops pebbles everywhere. Pick none if  
they do not spell your name.

A snare catches those who walk into it.  
Those who jump over it miss the challenge.  
Getting in is like milking a cow after  
midnight. You never win without trying.

Trying does not mean frying.  
The actions that follow words  
when looked at can tell which  
One is which.

When you are too ensnared,  
Ask the other trappers what  
happened to the deer. Follow  
their trail. You'll find  
your kind. They have broken  
antlers.



# How You Catch A Rat

I told cats a story  
And asked them what  
I had just said to them  
They told me to repeat  
What I had said to them  
For I had not told them  
To stop searching for rats  
And open their ears to my  
Tattles for they knew best  
To rather die trying to  
Fend for themselves than  
Die of something they  
Were long told to STP  
Doing for curiosity  
Is something they know  
To be the most dangerous  
For it killed the fattest  
Of their species.

When I told them this never happened  
They asked me how I could know  
As I have never been a cat  
And seen how they spent hours  
In the wild their eyes on traps  
Hoping a silly rat would dare  
Stick its head in it and get  
To learn to mind his own  
Business for curiosity  
Did not just kill a cat  
But did worse to the rat  
For it did not see the net  
As it closed on it.

How do you get the news  
Now that you will not  
Wet your paws in the rain?  
We wait for the rat to come  
In soaked and then know  
That you survive by letting

Those lacking in wisdom  
Go where you dare not go  
For we are too clever to go  
Into dangerous holes when  
Someone can do it for us.

That I think is very mean  
And makes me sad for I  
Thought very highly of you.  
For we came here to serve.

Who said life was a thing  
You lived in kindness?  
The curious of the earth  
Shall not rule with an  
Iron hand while we live  
For WD will make sure  
WD keep our eyes on the prize.  
For that is how you catch a rat.  
Tell us if that is not wisdom.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Humming Anthems Not Our Own

With a world changing rapidly,  
I hum yesterdays anthem in,  
Tomorrow's notes  
For I wonder when we will be one,  
After trekking as today's homeless.

The song is new as is the language,  
Which I learn on this third border,  
Where the future is as out of tune as  
The sounds on a rusty piano.

The conductor holds a gun in hand  
That threatens to shut me up now,  
When will the composer hear tunes,  
Sung with death on our shoulders?  
For the song is getting sadder,  
When we thought new anthems,  
Would welcome us with the sound  
Of the trumpets of the dreams  
That woke us up on the night we left,  
The land of old anthems.

We dreamt of flags and marched on,  
With them in hand only to learn  
That music of immigrants is deadly  
For it deafens the ears of citizens.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Hunger On The Face With Sunken Eyes

Hunger when written on faces  
Shows sunken sockets and snarls  
It makes the stomach of one  
Sing songs of emptiness that  
Growl in there like an animal.  
The limbs look long and taugt  
For it has eaten the muscle  
That should hold the person up.

Hunger eats those who do not have  
And takes away the hope of the now  
And throws it in the space far from  
The limbs and eyes of the mind. The  
Body can no longer walk to the place  
Where it used to. It only is a body  
Because it fills a space.

Questions asked in hunger are loud  
But hollow and answers do not ring  
Back. People take what is available  
And put it in the mouth, be it mud  
Grass shoots or bugs.

Questions asked become when we will  
Eat the things that can crawl into  
Our blood and make us walk again?  
What can we do, to get the what we  
Need for now, to go and grow the  
What we do not have?

Hunger kills slowly for this is how  
Hunger walks. It does not make noisy  
Strides like me and you, but stealthy  
Ones unseen yet felt deep down.

If we could kill hunger on the face  
Of the earth, and wipe it out like

The lions we are, we would have defeated  
An enemy that some of us least know  
About yet it is the substance that eats  
The brain and energy of the earth.

Those who know least of this enemy  
Have no idea what a little bit they  
Have can do in telling them that it  
Is a brother who starves, an aunt,  
A sister and the love of your life  
For you could have been that person  
Had luck dropped you on the wrong  
Lap that is walking across deserts,  
Oceans and frozen abodes with an  
Empty stomach trying to read places  
Of safety that into which one cannot  
Be allowed.

We share a world that some of us live  
In on an everlasting fast that yields  
Nothing for people are not thinking  
Anything anymore. Flies love such faces  
And go there to check if the mouth ever  
Closed to hide what they also want. When  
We share a world, we share suffering and  
Struggles that are sometimes far from what  
The eye can see.

Sarah Mkhonza

# I Am About To Go Into Reverse Gear On This Wake

I always dreaded using the reverse gear  
For technophobes are born not created.  
I sit now comfortable watching the years  
Go and want to go into reverse gear in  
The way I count both time and experience.  
When I was young I wanted to fast forward  
And drive the car at four, for those were  
The only gears available in it. Now I drive  
At gear number five and cruise, but what!  
I have seen that I am rushing to where I  
Should not. I should reverse and go back  
For when I get to nineteen, I will look  
Around and see how many people drove faster  
Than me for if they are still alive, they  
Surely did. The ones who drove the slowest  
Had to remove their cars from the fast lane  
For this thing called life is scandalous.

You buy your vehicle brand new as a TESLA  
And end up with a heap of scrap that has  
No name. I want out of this game botox  
Or no botox. It is a game that dogs are  
So clever about that they never try to  
Drive on the fast lane. They just run  
As fast as an event allows and then slow  
Down. They even know how to breathe in  
And out visibly so why should I not do  
Better than the canines. Give me a break  
Or I will slam down the breaks and we  
Will all nod that what I am saying is  
The truth for you chose a driver straight  
Out of driving school.

Sarah Mkhonza

# I Know Nothing About No Crossroads

After climbing up this far,  
I can tell you one truth,  
It has never been as I expected.  
They told me I would get way up  
And get to the crossroad of love  
Then turn into the highway to heaven.

I have walked myself tired,  
Cried myself to sleep daily.  
When I asked him how far it was  
Till we get to the crossing,  
I got one lame answer  
'I know nothing about no crossroads.'

He said that, turned and fell into a deep sleep.  
What was I to do on this lonely lane.  
I'm still crying for the emptiness,  
Left me feeling I was so close.  
If only he had tried harder.  
I would also sleep on a wad of notes,  
And not feel cheated out of a jackpot, when I could smell the wealth, for I could  
almost touch it.  
What was my loss left an aftertaste  
For they say you hit a jackpot once.

If selfishness could be banned,  
I would be first to pass the law  
That bans it from relationships  
And sink it in the furthest ocean.

In the afterlife I will return  
With a vengeance fully  
Equipped to join  
The winning party.  
I will call the shots and throw the shot put, for I am tired of being a push over.

Sarah Mkhonza

# I Look For Stairs And See None

No stairs visible on this level, why?  
Should I go back to lower levels  
Or look around the corner where I saw  
A child that would not talk to me for I was a stranger?  
Should I jump and yell my name on to new levels  
Or get bamboo poles and jump on them on the way up?

I need to get to the top to the last level,  
For it is at the very top of the gum tree,  
For on its crown is a promise made long ago,  
That some hidden treasure awaits me if I do climb,  
So royal, so intense it causes the tree to shake,  
And fall letting all the water it traps,  
Fill the ground making everything green.

This will make the world shake under my feet.  
With what is called dancing life in to existence,  
With my pen inscribing my dreams way up there,  
On the face of the sky, for I will have climbed,  
Stayed, and reached the up of this life.

Yesterday I climbed false escalators with my hands,  
Holding the support at the side with hallelujahs,  
I rolled back and grace put my grip back on the support,  
Or I would have fallen backwards on the moving metal,  
And broken my spine, the escalator that leads all of me,  
And holds together my being, reasoning and doing.

These levels look very high right now that I am here,  
They come on stronger than the subtlest of temptations,  
Rendering me helpless for my arms are weary of holding on,  
Yet since we are assured of steps in this life,  
I must hold on and know the stairs were built to be there,  
Or else this intrigue would not have had so many levels.

Those who aim low dream less and sleep more,  
The first level wrings all the juice out of them,  
And they dry up into husks that ants and termites eat,  
For they reside in levels low never to go to the next.

These insects that devour the spirit of the weary,  
Yet they emulate the hard work of the diligent.

The light through the window deceived me,  
It shone in levels up and led me on,  
And made me think the climb would be easy,  
As each step would lead me down corners,  
Where I would find a long line of climbers like me,  
Only to find the darkness looking at just my face,  
For I am one hell of a climber, see on me these  
Wings of angels that flap all the time,  
For if they did not you would not be on the same page  
Glaring at this picture together with me.

Sarah Mkhonza

# I Thrive On Casting Spells That Work

Don't ever touch me  
For if I cast a spell  
On you only the gods will  
Save you. It is while herding  
Cattle that I learned my bag  
Of tricks and swear they work.

Walking in the forest  
When my father's herd  
Has disappeared while  
I napped under a tree  
Means waking up and  
Praying to the God  
Of the times that they  
Are not in someone's field  
For they love the mischief  
Of harvesting things green  
And causing quarells that run  
Through lifetimes in my village.

My heart, racing I tie  
Clumps of grass as I go  
For I could go in circles  
Forever and not see ground  
Already covered. My ears are  
As sharp a razor as is my wit  
For to return home without the  
Herd means a little comma in  
The freeze of embarrassment  
For now the elders have to  
March into the forest and  
Split in all directions  
And like demons they must  
Call out skills old while  
I await the judgement at the  
Court of sleepy heads that nap  
At the cost of the lifeblood of  
Men of my clan. I swear they were  
Born inside the bellies of their

Stock.

Two tricks I must perform  
To Cast a spell on my father.  
One to stop him from shouting  
And another to make it hard for  
Him to open his mouth and spit  
At me venom of an udder. Pick  
A pebble and put it under my  
Tongue and I can hear him  
Stuttering on the first word  
And his 'what did I do to  
Myself this child! ' I know  
Then that he is calling on  
The world to answer him for  
He dare not lay his hands upon  
Me. Thanks to the pebble under  
Tongue.

To get his arms not to lift  
Up high as they beat me twig  
Them I must. As I run looking  
For these beasts I put two twigs  
Under my armpits and make sure they  
Stay there even when I bend  
To tie a clump of grass for  
That is the only sign that  
Tells me my sense of direction  
Is right.

Tracks on the ground useless  
Will tell you little in tall  
Grass, but one thing brings  
Hope fresh green  
And herbaceous it means hope  
That says you are not only on  
The right path but near finding  
Your father's herd.

The bull then bellows and you  
Listen whence that sound came  
From for you have prayed the

Name of your leader of the  
Herd till he heard you. You  
Go in that direction and find  
Them sitting chewing the  
Cud like angels feasting  
On blessedmanna on the  
Tables of heaven. The only  
Difference is in the color  
Of thevmanna. Scold the bull  
You do not for he kept them  
All together and saved you  
From a beating.

You drive themvhome  
All worry gonecfor  
You all pass the drinking  
Hole water them and set off towards  
The sunset. Rest comes when  
They sit and chew the cud in  
The krall.

Sarah Mkhonza

# I Told My Wife About You

I told my wife about you  
Said a man who had a wife  
For every letter of the  
Alphabet and ran all of  
Them like cars in a garage  
Fueling them and emptying them  
Of their money the way cars  
Run out of fuel on the highway  
Their tanks full of lies they  
Left satisfied as they set  
Off crying for more.

This cheap cheat that  
Steals a glance at women  
And they cling to him  
As if he has love glue on him  
For they never leave  
Tells me he has told a wife  
About me with a devil's wink  
And I wonder which one  
Of the many. For I know  
They are as many as the  
Demons that possessed  
Legion and went into the  
Pigs and sent them into  
A sea of confusion and drowned  
As do these women who are  
So drunk with love they  
Leave in a similar sea of  
Confusion and you wonder  
When and where they drown  
drunk as they are with lies  
They call love.

Now that the women form a  
String of beads around his  
Muscular neck I tell him  
'I'm out.' As I say that

The next bead joins in  
Before the hook closes  
And says, 'I'm in.'  
When will these beads  
Loosen and fall off this  
Thick giant's neck and  
Get a hold of themselves  
and run away from this man  
For they have lost their  
Minds, me included?

Tell me before I go out  
And tell the Shark Tank  
About this business of  
Creating a small icon  
That can tell women the  
Word love has two consonants  
And two vowels and none  
of these begins which anything  
That is like the word cheat  
or cheap. For only the  
Sharks can tell them that  
They are playing the losing  
Game before they lose in this  
Business called Love them all.

Now tell me he told his wife  
About me and I tell you  
He told nobody and just walked  
The same walk and talked the  
Same talk and thought that  
Dealing with me would be  
Like going on a downward  
Slope and I am telling you  
This because the slope is  
So steep that he needs all  
The fingers to hold, and not  
Just the one whom he has  
Had every woman put a finger  
on, calling it his ring finger.  
Who told him my motto is get  
them from whatever street it is

And get bamboozled by their  
Tall bamboo tricks and get high  
As the clouds with definitions  
Of yourself as being in love when  
You are being cheated and cheapened.  
My mom said don't blame the man  
But blame yourself and thought I  
Knew what she was saying until I  
Met the likes of this. I declared to  
The world I was clever and in love  
And then found myself in this and  
Now the best thing is to tell the  
World to judge how clever I can be.

Sarah Mkhonza

# I Wish To Return To The Land Of My Dreams

In this land is the real wealth I see,  
It has objects of fantasy like me,  
I look out into the sand and dig,  
For objects old and objects new,  
Buried in the sand that is shallow,  
In which I stand with my hands in my pockets.

My pile I make of objects lovely,  
Green like jade and yellow like the sunset,  
This map on the wall I want right there,  
In this house my dream has left me in,  
Winking and dreaming, breathing and sighing.

Who said love began in the crux of my arm,  
And walked into me through sinful breaths?  
For I hold it now in this myth that is mine,  
As alone I stand in my glorious solitude.

Love walks only when the feet are truly grounded,  
In the soul that has no fear of tomorrow,  
That challenges the times with its grabbing,  
Taking one wink and throwing it right in there,  
Into this eye that my desire has called home.

Who said wickedness only drew laughter from saints,  
For they know how hard they tried to avoid it?  
This dream takes me to the gilded chambers,  
Where popes drink out of goblets of gold,  
With me looking and swallowing like them,  
Yet I am a sinner that has no shame about life.  
For I came to live it no matter what,  
And not just dream of the objects I pick.  
Into a pile that the approaching man takes.

Daughter of poverty he calls me once again,  
Tells me I cannot have the likes of these.  
For in my pocket there is one quarter,  
That can only go into a washing machine,  
And bring out dirt after the wash,

Of what I wore when I worked the world,  
And not the ball gowns needed here.

So I wake and wish I could go back,  
To this land where I was for now I pray,  
Please gods do not take away from me,  
This life so good it shows my tomorrows  
So wild, so rustic I fly with new wings,  
Of butterflies from this land from afar,  
For I was ready to meet life's end,  
For it ended on a very good note.

Sarah Mkhonza

## If I Could Hop And Laugh Like Angels

If I could laugh the laughter of angels,  
My laugh ringing far beyond my beak,  
To a place nobody's naked eye has seen,  
Tearing into the air of new neutrinos,  
Making it shiver with the hope of destiny  
Blowing my breath into an emptiness,  
And hearing it echo back with a long sound,  
Like the gulls of the south that sing,  
In Oohs and Aahs flapping their wings,  
With the youth wondering about places,  
That hear this laugh and call all to come,  
To hear my laugh and not just stand,  
And enter the shuffle that stifles the walk,  
Of hearing rules that call with sounds,  
Of school bells that ring every hour  
And tell me my journey has a destiny,  
In horizons far that yell my name.  
And tell me there is coming a day,  
When the hole I am in, me, this Joseph,  
My coat of many colors on my arm,  
This kaleidoscope in my hands, my soul,  
Still denying these messages I laugh about  
For they have heard of the coming day,  
When I will laugh like an angel  
And shun forever these nervous giggles.

The story teller tells me she wonders always,  
If I will have the pith and core,  
That sings yes when the hymn of heaven opens,  
With a word I heard in the past,  
Walking me into futures beyond this era,  
This time of endless musings,  
Where anything could happen to anybody,  
Who happens to stand and hear the song,  
That made me cry so sorrowfully when I heard,  
That people had died in numbers somewhere,  
And laughed because angels still laugh,  
When life assures them of tomorrow,  
For they will be there this they know,

For they learned on the day they became,  
In a world no different from my own,  
To assure me I will laugh loudest,  
When the hour comes to laugh longest,  
For I will be last dancer in the ring,  
Having been called to wipe my tears away,  
For the world always changes to the bright,  
Hope that we nurse in our soft greetings,  
That we whisper into the wind everyday,  
Saying hallo to yet another day,  
With the hope that's in the jump,  
As I hop and laugh aloud,  
Like children hopping in their game,  
Where each one takes their own turn,  
To leap and throw the person in then  
Because of the change that we hold in us,  
Of the angel we will have become,  
When we utter the laugh of the angels like them  
For their laughter is endless even when they lose,  
In this game they play always in streets,  
With their lines drawn with the sky looking,  
In lines that tell of their innocence,  
For their destinies are just like ours.

Sarah Mkhonza

# If I Could Slap Thunder

If I could slap thunder,  
I would rise up high and yell,  
And ask what sound this is,  
That booms in my ears,  
Like the guns that shoot our youth,  
And leave them on roadsides lifeless,

If I could slap thunder,  
I would bring the dark clouds,  
Down here where the darkness,  
Threatens us with death,  
That we inflict on each other,  
And stop the madness there and there.

If I could slap thunder,  
I would hold the front of the guns,  
And push back the bullets,  
With hands that are stronger,  
That can hold back fire,  
And bring the thunderous metal,  
To its knees in my bare hands.

If I could slap thunder,  
I would render all guns mute,  
And lay them at the bottom of the ocean,  
For they are no treasures lost,  
These loose cannons that fire,  
When their namesakes blink,  
And tell another one its over,  
And send them to the boom,  
That we hear continuously,  
As it sends loved ones to their end.

If I could slap thunder,  
And clap it with my cold clap,  
Electrify it to oblivion,  
And stop it from falling,  
In flashes of lightening,  
That strikes down in anger,

And causes all to hide,  
Like my aunt in the passage,  
Watching the flashes from outside,  
For we were dreaming of a future,  
Where we have conquered by hiding,  
Instead of boldly going out,  
To yell our defiance,  
And return with the thunder of applause,  
That has been taken from us each time,  
We hear that guns have thundered on souls,  
That were not heeding the moment,  
That the time of reckoning has come,  
Where once more we face our sorrow,  
And tell it we are helpless,  
For we cannot clap thunder,  
With a slap from the eternity  
That has swallowed those we love.

Sarah Mkhonza

# If I May Be Of Any Use To You

I come a poet empty handed  
As a jug without a handle  
Now that I have washed our  
Dirty linnen in public. I  
Come no Cinderella with a  
Golden shoe, but a poet who  
Can make rhyme out of the  
Bark of tree until the dogs  
Of the city begin to bark in  
The rhythm of the same song.

If I may be of any use to a  
Nation in tatters after the  
Lives of the offspring of  
Not Abrah and Jacob but Isaac  
have done dancing to one tune  
Will you join me in a dance  
Choreographed by yours sincerely.

For in Africa we dance at parties  
Dance at weddings and dance as we  
Bury people in the ground. Our dance  
Will be made of steps and turns  
That can heal a nation and break  
The bars of those incarcerated and  
Have the join us on one table with  
Their offspring on Thanksgiving.

Turkeys will not lie belly up and  
Legless thighs in the air in ovens  
Glowing but dance in shoes of Ballerinas for one tune composed  
By the best musicians the birds  
Themselves.

Their beaks will sing wearing Lipstick from heaven rolled of  
From the lips of Mary the mother  
Of our Lord. I tell you my Credentials before you ask for  
If you may find me of any use  
Because even though I have crowned

Myself Queen of the tabloids I have  
Not seen the advert for a poet.

Don't fear my sharp words for they  
Bite only when it is necessary and  
Do so in the open, not like today's  
Mosquitoes that sting us with the  
Usual while they hide the unusual  
Like the backstabbers I have seen  
In my life with people of the south.

If I may be of any use I write  
Free verse that makes freedom so  
Free it gets written on any hand  
That is held out to receive and  
Leaves every heart yearning for  
A world to call its home. If you may find me useful hire me before you  
Accuse me of blowing my own horn  
Like the insane unicorn for she  
Is known for having charmed the  
World blowing the horn on his head  
By bending it and blowing it till  
The world was forced to wake up  
For he had given himself the job  
Of the rooster.

Now that I know that the letter  
Is in the mail I will rest my  
Case and wait. If it does not  
Get into my mailbox in time  
Know one thing, you are the  
Loser for the final dance will  
Begin without you. Guess who  
Will join the applause, you  
For I told you this poet is  
One hell of a choreographer.

Sarah Mkhonza

# If This Was Your Heyday

If this was your heyday  
Would you wear platforms  
and go to a disco and dance  
all night.

Would you make out with a guy  
in the front seat of the car,  
till the horn touched by mistake  
wakes everybody to alert them of  
nifty doings.

Would you go to the waterfall  
and dance to the latest tunes in your webbed shoes?

Would you laugh at profesort and  
hide from them and call it learning  
by osmosis.

Would you go up the mountains  
in the dark to watch the traffic  
trickle down there like a gold thread.

Would you cross the Mbabane River  
in the dark to the cooing of Donner  
Summer.

Would you walk on powder from fire  
extinguishers and think the dorm  
was burning when a crazy one turned  
them on for the hell of it.

Would you go on strike and refuse  
to go to class for you know the  
cycle. They strike, they go home,  
They are recalled and classes go on.

If you had known what life really asked of you,  
would you dance to a hit song about Vietnam

all night.

would you turn back the clock.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Impressions Made In A Box

Being boxed for this that was once love,  
I raise my hand and swear it was not what  
the world thought it was.

It is not me who married him, but you,  
a lawyer says, trying to give me courage.  
Speak up and answer for he says you changed  
after you got a higher qualification than him.

This argument made on a paper and read to me  
says I made a bad choice that does not need  
dissecting. The judge looks at me, he says  
'counsel, ' must explain.

Here is a man, who was doing his abcs as  
if he was not married, and a woman who was  
doing her abcs as if she had not read that  
marriage in community of property is that.

I stand amazed, like in a song, for I never  
knew that standing in a box swearing was a  
part of the deal. Breezing into this like  
a wind, I had wondered if the sun did set  
at all. The dreams I had lengthened the days  
which seemed so short in the hands of love.

Now I wished seconds were milliseconds, so  
I could get out of this box and end it all,  
for it had not worked out. The box I stood  
in then was not made of wood, but of flakes  
of dreams flying all over the place.

Could it be that there were people who  
knew the future? Those signs that signaled  
loud and had nobody listening to their bangs.  
Now I see better with these impressions made  
with my hand swearing that I am who I am and  
do solemnly swear that truth resides in me.

Now I am this self that can say it without  
'ifs, ' but just stare and let my eyes paint  
what a cold, place this box is and that the  
authority it gives me to make a decision is  
well received, for this is a story that ends  
itself.

Sarah Mkhonza

# In A Certain Room Some Men Have Hair

In a certain room  
Some men have hair  
Some men have no hair  
Began the math problem  
That required us to draw  
A vann diagram.

The problem arose when  
The men who had hair  
Went to the barber to  
Shave half their hair  
For they argued all rich  
Men are bald. The barber  
Agreed for he wanted customers.

The vann diagram lost shape  
As the men god balder and  
Balder. Soon the whole world  
Was running the risk of having  
Only bald men. Not only the barber  
But the bankers also joined in  
The bald world's lament.

Only sailors wondered why  
The world was behaving ad  
If it was going to witness  
Its end. Bankers argued there  
Would be no money for bald men  
Like to withdraw money to feed  
Their lifestyle. The barber  
Argued that his is a dead business  
For they don't need even as  
Much as a shave

In another room also called  
A certain room for certainly  
Certain women had no hair. They  
Joined the men with no hair  
And argued that paired with them

They could tango.

The priest agreed if only they  
Could have one mass and one big  
Wedding for once heaven would join  
Two bald heads in a ceremony of  
The bald of the earth.

All the men and women who attended  
The wedding ceremony of the bold  
Who were bald sat on the pews and  
Watched the mass wedding of the  
Hairless wondering how these people  
Could flout their hairlessness  
And get away with it.

Where were the tabloids for they  
Always come to the rescue of  
Humble humanity when the powers  
That begin the march with the  
Left foot.

The tabloids carried one picture  
Which made one couple famous  
And by the end of the day every  
Paper was sold out. The city lived  
As the land of hairless men and women  
Who begot hairless children which  
Solved the math problem as society  
Wallowed in a world where people  
Scratched their hairless heads.

Sarah Mkhonza

# In Heaven With One Foot And On Earth With Another

I walk on one leg on this earth  
For the other is somewhere else.  
Only one shoe gets worn out and  
Ends up with holes in it. I walk  
On for I have one pair of feet.  
Ask me not to take this shoe to  
The village cobbler for he always  
Claims he cannot just fix one shoe  
He needs both for he must balance  
The heels.

I tell him go stop kidding me  
For I know that he just wants  
Money. He says I must not talk  
As if I am the son of the one  
Legged god. For in his world  
Like him all his people have  
One leg. His saints have one  
One leg and they hop around  
On it when they serve mass.

The spills that happen mean nothing  
For to serve perpetual sinners is  
Worse than standing before God  
Pleading for serial sinners who  
Will be back the following week asking for more of the same. It is like you never  
walked away.

That your one foot should be on earth  
While another is in heaven is to stop  
The door of heaven from closing for  
If angels had to open it each time The priest knocked nobody would get There.  
For God would get tired of the Repentant he forgives always and Simply close the  
door once and for All. What a miserable world it would Be for our sins would hang  
on us like Spanish moss does on a tree. They  
Would sway in the wind and plague us with a hopelessness that would please the  
devil.

So thank me and the priest for having one

Foot here and the other there. Thank us  
For we will never stand at attention and  
Do it for us for one good turn deserves  
Another.

Sarah Mkhonza

# In Praise Of Somnjalose

Son of mine! Son of Mine  
The nation bleeds when spears  
Are blood red and drip with dread  
For we all see that this is the blood  
Of the nation. Don't forget I am  
Also speaking for the sons of others for  
They are just like you to me.  
These warriors of tomorrow who  
Hold the shield that is spotted  
Red and white look at me and  
Wonder, what mother I am when  
All of them fall and I say nothing.

When you kill and not think I also  
Die for the nation dies. The women  
Are me, my blood, and wear the same  
Skirt that I wear. It is made of  
Leather, but it tears into tatters  
When you treat your people like  
They do not belong and need to  
Be taken to the world where they  
Cannot fight anymore.

I am trying to hold your hand  
And stop you before it lands  
On the body of the nation you  
Rule. It will burn to ashes that  
Will never be lit with the tinder  
Of yesterday's wood that lies  
Blackened into charcoal useless  
Even to beer brewers who work  
Harder than girls who get water  
From our rivers.

The land is dry as people die,  
For your hand is hard and comes  
Down in blows that leave the nation  
Sinking in blood. This nation swims  
In death for you are throwing wisdom

Away into the furnace of death. You  
Cut down the tree that will make the  
Shade you can rest under tomorrow.

Son of mine, listen to me, and build  
Each person on a stool of knowledge  
From the past. Build and not destroy,  
That which will bear the fruit that  
Will make you live tomorrow.

In tomorrow's world where those who  
Reign with the toughest fist look  
At what they have done, they will feel  
The fist hit them and they will fall  
Down never to rise again.

You have seen power used to cut down  
The very tree that is your hedge for  
It hides what you have that you treasure.  
In a nation where respect is not the guide  
Where those who rule see only themselves  
And only a shadow in those they rule,  
There is no kingdom.

A king is a king because of his people.  
The people are the pride they sing about,  
They are proud of the songs of yesterday.  
When the mountains see this blood, they  
Know that they are in the land of one  
Who one day will wipe out everything that  
Is his, because he does not put value in  
Souls of the sons and daughters of the  
Nation.

When we stand as citizens that have done  
A lot together, these shields will speak  
That truth to us. When the warriors are  
Dead, we will have to run from our own  
Shadows for the Zulus are a force like  
No other. We cannot even hide in the  
Mountains for nobody will carry the  
Food in there. Cold will melt our bodies

For there will be nobody to make the fire  
And remind us of sunsets in a land where  
People sang and raised shields in unison  
Build for tomorrow, and learn to value  
The words of your mother.

I take this seat here near you. From now  
Oh nation! See me as a mother who can guide  
For only with me around, can this son of mine  
Do that which you want and keep the future  
Looking at us instead of walking away from us.

Sarah Mkhonza

# In The Days Of Boko Haram/ A Message For An Abductee

In the Days of Boko Haram  
In the classroom,  
What were girls?  
Were they wives?  
Were they shells?

When in school,  
Were they free?  
Were they in uniform?  
Did they feel safe?

When men preyed on them,  
Were they seeing and feeling?  
Were they abductees?  
Just because you and I saw them  
The way we wanted to.  
When speaking these truths  
That need to be posted  
In the minds of readers  
Girl to girl I can say  
Let us talk in loud whispers  
That will never be heard  
Even when we bang on doors  
Trying to set ourselves free  
From this new darkness of two words  
That sound like a breaking log.

What Boko Haram takes away  
You take back  
Just by breathing  
The fight goes on  
Born in silence  
You live to fight  
And fight to live  
Under the breath  
Of a stifled self.

The power is yours  
It will never be taken  
From your stubborn fists  
The love is not there  
You twist and turn  
When you face the wall  
It sleeps when you sleep  
It whispers louder than shouts  
Of a soldier you do not like  
Whose breath stifles you.

The one who abducts  
Has no within in you  
Your core is yours  
Use it to fight  
Block it with the thoughts  
Boko Haram is an idea  
Its twisted arm can be broken  
In your mind and in your soul  
For the thing called belief  
Keeps us all fighting for you.

Tears fall at times  
In the absence of parents  
In the times of haters  
Whose orders beat up  
The very core of you

You survive one  
You survive another  
You look at the face  
Of the one who inflicts pain  
You know they are pain  
For they can never give  
What they do not have.

Hope sits in you  
It walks on your feet.  
Open your eyes and feel  
See and walk in the dream  
Life is a long dream  
That all of us will be

Where we want to be  
For we walk inside  
Even when shackled by the form  
That takes you to forests  
Living your mother crying  
For an Africa never to be safe.  
Where schools are invaded  
And people taken to death.

Think not of the past  
And its days that ended freedom  
Cast the gaze up into the realm  
The light around you  
Says yes, you will  
Be the light that you  
Were born to be.  
Boko Haram no more!  
It is a loud end  
Are you able to see it?

The greatness in you  
Sees all of it  
Bring in thoughts of home  
When you take a breath  
Future of the nations.

People are looking for you  
Gazing at the sunset  
Seeing you coming home  
On the empty horizons  
Of forested paths

You run home in their minds  
Eager to fall into their arms  
Which are outstretched till eternity  
For how can they not embrace the air  
When they know one day it will carry you  
To the familiar faces you left sad.

Sarah Mkhonza

# In The Museum Lies A Truth

In every museum lied  
A truth waiting to be  
Discovered for it  
A truth about you. Don't  
Pass a chance to go  
In and look at what awaits  
You there for it came from  
The past which you are walking  
Away from. It wants you to  
Discover and add it to your  
Basket of truth. It speaks of  
Times far in the past they  
Are receding from it and it is  
Getting smaller  
As if to fade  
Into living memory. This memory  
Precious wants to jump  
Out and be counted for it  
Tells how your  
Own people conquered the world.  
As

Sarah Mkhonza

# In Their Cozy Citadels

The queens and kings sit,  
with crowns, diadems and tiaras,  
telling a story as old as not  
closing the door behind oneself  
so that the next person cannot enter.

Yet we enter as eyes widen  
at the splendour of seeing  
things from within.

Starvation for knowing more of the queenly  
life disappears with a death.

We cry like they knew us. It  
is a history of man. Piling  
one space with semblance of  
many makes a mystery to be  
talked about as if it is real.  
They sit knowing power, though  
borrowed is to be guarded. One  
is lucky, only to be buried in  
the hour at a papal state. A quiet  
somber day comes to sober out  
the love of story one, in a  
kingly rulership.

Sarah Mkhonza

# In This World Of Maladies Of The Mind

When we wake up and our mind is gone,  
To a land that plays around in screens,  
Telling us that something needs to change,  
If not our mind, our bank accounts.

I hear musings of the notes I sweat for,  
Telling my mind they want to stay with me,  
Locked up in the little vault called a purse,  
And wait for a rainy day that is coming soon.

I hit myself on the side to check if I'm awake,  
And find that I am really soundly so awake,  
That I can feel it when a Zika mosquito stings,  
Its dangerous venom in a woman miles and miles away,

When I awake they are measuring the skulls of babies,  
Saying the brain is gone because of a sting,  
I rub my eyes and find that the head on the screen  
Is the head I carry all over boasting I am well.

Mind boggling they say it is these days,  
When you wake up from dream to dream,  
And find that it is certainly a world,  
Where dreams get shattered in the very,  
Bodies of the women who carry us.

Who said humans were not invincible,  
If a mere insect could invade internally,  
Without them seeing that the brain is in danger,  
Of being gone totally swallowed to nothing.

This world of maladies of the mind,  
Is a world that calls us to a duel,  
Where we are to take out the sword,  
And stab the mosquito as it flies,  
And land on the other side victorious.

We may not wake up to see the movies,  
Of us in armor and scabbard wielding,

But we sure will get that nasty one,  
Who flies into our midst and strikes,  
With the stealthiness of the devil.

I once thought this would be solved,  
By one scientist in a lab alone,  
Now I see that nations have to gather,  
And go out and solve it with a duel,  
Sword to sword one stab after another,  
While mosquitoes buzz around confused.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Indebted To The Team' S Center Player

This woman has an extra finger  
For her thumb splits into two  
On each one of her hands.  
She also has six toes on each  
Foot for her fifth toe splits  
Into two. If her fingers and  
Toes decided on a soccer match  
She can make the two teams that  
We watch in this game caed life.

Since life is another thing this  
Female giant that stands six foot  
Is a center player in the netba  
Of life. She catches the ball at  
The sound of the whistle and the  
Team goes into action.

My fascination is not about her  
Throws and catches but about  
Twelve fingers on the ball when  
Everybody has ten when both  
Hands lock up in a catch.

I feel for the other team for  
Their center player is up against  
Life at its zenith. If it is about  
A kick she gets a six toe burst  
That makes her feel that some  
People have the gods on their side  
Long before they make it into  
A netball team.

My spirits are high for I look  
At the score and know that the  
Opposition will remember every  
Game of the sixties as challenging  
The skies unsure what amphibians  
Lay out there in the noisy after  
Frog song for frogs can win against

A choir of sixty with the baritone  
Of one bull frog. So noisy are the  
After rain sounds of southern Africa.  
Since people there sing in choirs  
Big one still has to see a competition  
As strange as this netball match forms  
In the land of giants and their music  
One wonders what this center player  
Would do. The game ends with me crying  
Tears of joy. Thanks to the center player  
That passes and moves with the feet  
That if they were webbed they would  
Be the pride of the water hole dweller.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Inside Hotel 22

If numbers could rhyme,  
So would the two I know  
For one that parks white is 22  
And the one that parks blue is 522  
Now it is time to go to San Jose  
She comes in with her load  
Sits in the handicapper section  
Her cans are all over in bags.  
Get these out the driver yells.

He comes in with his head covered  
Is it dirt or other unmentioned things  
The driver brings his head to his nose  
Smells him and tells him to get out  
And calls the police.

He plays music from his cellphone  
This one is merry for sure  
He looks back and yells.  
Not in here sir this noise.

This theater in the bus  
Of a drunk that holds us up  
He does not want to get off  
He stands at the door forever.

I move up to show my rage  
I cannot stand here forever  
The homeless look at me.  
And see I am new here  
For this is how it goes  
Inside Hotel 22.

This hotel is mobile and long  
The poor get in with all belongings  
That fit into a suitcase or two  
Add two big black garbage bags  
A woman and a man in their dirty jeans  
Who pay a dollar for they cannot afford

After arguing with the driver  
Is a Palo Alto experience to remember.

The big train starts early around six  
The homeless pick up their wares  
Hotel 22 has come in white and black  
To start the endless journey for the day.

San Jose is the name of a saint  
Palo Alto is the name of a tree  
Between his holiness and her royal green leaves  
We are on a swing from one stop to the other  
In our merry go round of the poor.

Last stop the driver announces,  
After Page Mill only four,  
The sleeping commuter should have counted,  
But he is snoring head bent down.  
The driver should last stop again,  
The sleeping poor with their bags,  
Get off and line the transit area,  
And make beds for the night has come.

Someone brings food and throws it  
In the cemented islands at the transit area  
You think of the pigeons that will come,  
Someone picks it up before they sleep  
In the open that is their home.

The call of nature comes  
Someone relieves themselves in the silence  
The commuters had better be wary  
For they will step on a mess  
From the left overs of this event.

A millionaire is among them  
She worked and earned a lot  
Lives and mingles without shame  
Why not it is Palo Alto  
Where the middle class struggles  
To do even the minimal.

Where people sleep in cars  
Where legs swell like bloody poles  
That must stand up and work  
As if everything is right  
To get a paycheck from the master  
Whose company brings in billions.

And still in goes Hotels 22  
Clean spotless and a giant  
Only people with destinations  
Dare go in here where people do not joke,  
But say it like it is,  
And live it like it is  
And walk it like it is,  
And sleeps it like it is.

Sarah Mkhonza

# ISIS Questions Render Me Bankrupt

ISIS questions can be like a roach in my ear,  
I ask them and draw a blank knowing a bank of  
questions has drawn another blank check,  
when I thought I would have something there  
is nothing. Blank slate, blank page, blank  
me, blank mind, blank talk where are the filers?

If I were inside a body ready to kill and  
be killed would I be full of the hate of  
those who will scream and twist and turn  
on the ground when the thing I have  
done has gone up in the flames I light  
with a matchless stick that is a power  
tool of a darkness and end I chose for all?

Would I be bold and walk the last minutes  
of life knowing it will be done this roast  
that cannot be eaten by the tears that will  
pour out into questions breathed into the air?

Would I know leaders will speak and curse and  
say, 'this scourge has to be contained, ' and  
go into the death chamber of my own choosing  
blown into smithereens of time a hero  
Just because I also hurt those I could get?

Would I be full of war or full of anger?  
Would I stand for the last time at the edge  
of the cliff and know I am going where there  
is no coming back because of the promises of  
virgins and a good life forever?

Would I chose to be the name all  
mention and hate wishing I had never been born,  
including those who sired me?

Would I do it if I had no country and felt  
others had taken my humanity for granted and  
broken everything that lay in a shambles and be

the hero that tried.

Would I see the devil in nameless beings  
in the spaces where I am about to do the  
deed stopping me and rush to do it anyway  
before I am stopped.

Would I think there is only one time to  
be a hero in this earth and where you do  
it does not matter?

Would I wish I had chosen a better way to  
speak than to kill because the death of us all  
silences the cause and then Stop! Questions?

Would I start to think again as I hesitate  
to do this which labels me the worst back  
stabber that is so much about doing that  
I chose to disappear in the carnage  
chosen for all before its time?

I respect questions because  
they help me to shape things  
and agree to start again.

Shaping ISIS questions stops when my mind  
rewinds and brings back flashes that silence  
me and sink my soul into a depth where neither  
the dead nor the living have been. The account  
is still below zero. The red entries still blink  
at me. I am a woman rich at the question bank,  
but poor as they show me the ledger.

Is, is, s the only letter that is,  
That is not near a z, yet brings  
lives of many to their zed.

Sarah Mkhonza

# It Is Dark Outside And Violence Is Awake

I sit there in the lowveld fire  
I watch the flames eat at the wood  
The stories around me are repeated  
One very comment gets me  
The woman whose voice I hear  
Rises in a cry so usual  
So neglected it makes me wonder  
Why nobody helps her  
Laughter around me tells me  
Who cares about a wife beater  
When there are better things to do

Her voice rises in the night  
The woman nobody helps  
She cries out loud  
The hand of heaven does not hear her  
The murder of the innocent continues  
Unhelped, unending, and heard only by me

I want to help her, but I am little  
My hands are little and so are my years  
My thoughts go out to the darkness  
The night gets dark as I look at the fire  
The voice tears into the dark night  
Scratching as she lies on the ground  
Where a leather strap called the strop  
Lands on her back endlessly

The years multiplied as did the whacks  
They spread far and I did hear the words  
A woman who knows you naked  
Can never respect you  
Beat her and she will know who you are

A young boy repeats a saying familiar  
Me, I can just beat a woman  
He looks at me and I look at him  
The sun shines on his disheveled face

His disheveled mind speaks and so does mine  
Just yesterday he was languishing in her  
The woman's womb that made him whole  
Gave him the fists he has learned are good  
When you land them on a female body  
And fold them to knock her down  
When your own turn comes to be a boss  
Of the flesh that is female under you  
And you turn against your own in anger  
And betray your own weak truth on loving

Makes me think of the lashes in the dark  
Coming down like lightning like in the field  
Where life's surprises happen  
Striking a whole team of soccer players  
Who end up laying dead on the ground  
Uncontrollable fallings that happen daily  
All over this violent word of ours.  
In this game in which we get together  
To live the things called loving.

Sarah Mkhonza

# It Was Proclaimed By The Supremes

That you would enter the stage  
In platforms was proclaimed by  
The supremes. They said you would  
Be a woman of action and always  
On the move. That you would be the  
Leader of band was determined equally  
By the supremes for they could see  
Way beyond the now. Learn to live up to this prophecy for it comes once  
And Only to those who need it.

Embrace it with both hands  
For once you let it go it will  
Be hard to get it back.

I know a person who let  
It go and lived to regret it.

Sarah Mkhonza

# It's All On Your Shoulders Now

This thing called life,  
Has finally trekked to this corner,  
It sits on my shoulders  
Making me half child, half man,  
Like a mermaid at the edge of the sea of time,  
Hoping to one day enter the place,  
Where only wizards can light a candle,  
Inside the ocean as they swim the last mile.

I promised time I would not age,  
But become wise as a sage,  
And then tell the world  
I have earned the title of an elder,  
And respect and honor are written on my forehead,  
The tablet of Egyptian papyrus!

I know I was duped for nobody sides with me.  
For they know that when time dives into the deep,  
For it is not like jelly fish even though it weighs the same,  
On the scale of the wizard of this world.  
Not even at sunset does it show up again

Sarah Mkhonza

# Jerry In His Right Mind

The agreement between Jerry and Terry was to touch more and talk less. Terry did never to keep a score. Love flowed in a river of actions of touch.

Jerry saw chopped actions like chips of wood and thought the soup would be one of word chops instead of pork chops.

First he took a bell. Its ring went with each act of touch. 'What! Jerry surely you can let this thing called love go on without your dumb bells.'

I'm recording how hard my kisses landed on your forehead. The world has to know the time and hour of day for this bell can feel it when I knock a cold kiss hard on your forehead.

Jerry, listen, hon, the world knows you care. Terry, I was loving women this way long before your romance thing. The world knows not how hard to kiss a woman on the forehead is.

Thanks, they say, for being a failure for you proved us right. Woman plus kiss, tells a story of no love. Woman plus effort with a metal object seals deals we may as well keep a wicked score of. Some counts will absolve us for they will reach in the hundreds.

Ask me more questions, and hon me later. This work, is kissing work I never thought would be on the conveyor belt that landed us here.

Master Jerry, when will this counting stop? When I run out of kisses and you stores them in the same cupboard. Hence my invention of a bell kissing ringer, is about to make a new break. Let alone the kisser on whose neck will hang this bell of mine.

Talent, they say comes out of curiosity. Wonder who will sign up to be first,

Terty? This husband of yours, lest they  
claim the idea, patent and all.

I heard the swallows were swallowing hard and swearing as they wiggle their  
black tails.

Jerry, why are you scared I will divorce you? Terry, this bell I ring told me one  
day it will not ring. It said it was warning me. Nothing lasts r  
enjoy it while it is there.

Looe took the bellscale and

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# Jerry 'tis Supper Time

Where are you?  
I'm nibbling on my toe.

Everyone knows my foe  
that keeps me being this doe,  
that is at the well of yore.

Till it dries my thirst  
says I'll be here.

Terry, as my wife, you  
know this poetic truth  
taught to me by this Zoe  
who sings at the bar.

Come home I'm making sushi.  
Be it gushi or pushy, it does  
not rhyme with Zoe, let alone  
sound like her tunes.

Jerry, this Zoe doe is your lif  
gone amuck. Your mid life crisis.  
Jesu Kristos knows you are sick

That keeps looking doe

Sarah Mkhonza

# Jesus Said Oh Really

Jesus knows he said love your enemies  
But the earth says, love them hard and  
Not sue them when they publish your  
Work without your copyright.

He who said turn the other cheek  
Knows you have other cheeks too.  
Earth says let them slap those too.

Why do you think we slave till we retire?  
Can't you see the Lord put us in this fix?  
To work. work, work, till earth and the  
Ants laugh for we have become  
Complaining copy cats. Instead of  
Copying the chameleon and his fast  
Tongue and slow stagger, we failed to  
Change color and be boss one day,  
Master another and never a worker. All  
It takes is having no hands. Would  
Jesus have said when they want both  
Of your hands and legs at work,  
Chop off one, for it is better to live  
With one leg and one hand than to enter into  
Heaven dead tired with both?

Sarah Mkhonza

# Jobs Of The Revolution

Who said we would work,  
for work was meant for those  
who slave in the dark corners  
of the firm?

In this revolution workers are  
united against not knowing  
what goes on in the pit  
of the stomach of the firm.

Wake up knowing when to  
revolt against the biggest  
enemy of man. This thing  
that bugs us most, this  
ignorance.

It is worse than the poverty,  
that bites inside, making the  
stomach churn with hunger,  
for when the mind is hungry,  
it is a famine unheard of.

The job is there, for it lines  
up spade and shovel and says  
eat the fruits of ignorance  
for you failed to open the book  
on the right page.

You turn the page and the open  
mind asks you, how much you  
know about the shepherd who  
herds the rich.

He is your shepherd too, for you  
are in the fold, as we see your  
breath leaving your nostrils  
and going to stink in the vaults  
of the earth where the rich,  
blow their noses with dollar notes.

Your handkerchief with holes in it,  
is meant to wipe your face dry,  
when your sweat starts to get  
powdered with the dust of poverty.

The choice is yours, in this nugget  
of gold called time. The choices we  
make follow us, wherever we go.  
If you choose to lie in the mud,  
know you made it your bed.

The birds will fly, one day drop  
a morsel. For again they fly,  
and look in your direction and  
wonder, who lies there wiping  
sweat off his brow waisting this  
dusty gold called time.

The mine is open and every miner  
goes in knowing what his job is,  
for these jobs of the revolution  
are dished out by a state that gives,  
only if you take and use.

The time is coming when the mine  
will have none of you. It will tell you  
to get out of its depth, for you failed  
to dig in the depths and follow the  
furrow with the traces of gold.

You wore a helmet with a light,  
lied to everybody and said you,  
the miner turned forty niner,  
would go down and work,  
now you do a did with no name  
for such is your confusion.

Take the job in this revolution,  
that will turn happenstance into  
what it was meant to be. Digger  
with the helmet that shines and

calls to order, the whole mine to  
give up what was put in it.

It is also yours to get for you are  
down here working in a revolution  
that will come to pass. Perestroika  
will come and your hands will be  
as empty as anybody who expects  
the food stamps to rain from  
the stamp collection of the gods.

Pick the stamps with the Harriet  
Tubman's head on it, for the honor  
comes late to those who worked  
in the underground railway. This  
revolution continues like all  
struggles.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Joy Just Jive For Me

Joy can you just jive for me?  
I went to the party and stood against  
The wall. Frustrated, I danced by myself  
And ended up vowing if I stalk you the  
Only dancer called joy, I will end up in jail. I hear stalkers  
Get arrested. Can you joy just jive for a jailbird-to-be  
Only because of you? I am now sending this SOS  
That not even paramedics want to hear for the  
Say joy seekers belong in asylums as foes. As for this  
Assylee a stranger to become a loser I bow to you  
Open handedly asking. Help is just a four letter word that is  
Not forbidden even in the land of the blessed.  
Joy, let me not be arrested for desiring what  
No person can live without. Just jive and ask  
Me to dance with you and stop hiding. This game  
Nevertheless has to continue as long as it can be  
While you bury your head I'm the sand

Sarah Mkhonza

# Joy Says Come To Me And Lets Go Dancing

I heard a song that led me down the alley.  
When I got there there was a rivulet and  
A pool of water that had little black  
Insects jetting this way and that and  
They said joy called me here so that we  
Can dance.

I did not know how to dance and they said  
They would whistle and I would have to  
Join them and make a sound and together  
We would play in this water like we did  
When I was young.

I cherish the days of such joy for it just  
Came without the pressures that have come  
To scoop away joy out of my hands that remain  
Cupped as if to receive a substance unknown  
To me.

When I am reminded how to jump and climb a tree  
That is out there in the yard or dash along  
This rivulet where we scooped out clay and made  
Cows with real horns with the mud that we did  
Not pay for I feel a tear roll down for it tells  
Me that is where I left joy and decided not to  
Dance when the sun goes down.

I pick up the tune from the whistle of these  
Dashing little insects and go into the ripple  
They cause as they dash along and find deep in  
Me a fountain similar to this one and then start  
To sing along and dance once more. So small is  
The voice of joy when it calls me to dance. It  
Is almost as inaudible as now.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Just A Grain Inside The Hourglass

I stand one grand of sand  
Rushing up and down with others  
As we are poured up and down  
By the hour that ends one after  
Another in these intervals of time.

The world's time goes with me turning  
As the glass turns to seat on its base  
And I flow with the others as we slide  
Past the glass neck, flurting with gravity  
Telling the truth to a people that life  
Is a force that nobody can stop.  
For we have wished for years to be set free  
Even if it is by a hurricane that would bury  
The house we are in and stop the turns from  
Turning it upside down by the hour.

For we do not want people to see  
The underbelly of so cute a jar  
And flowless yet it roughs us up and down  
In ways that make us say 'Shame on you woman  
In whose belly we are for not getting old  
And letting us rest.

For who can stop an hour glass from doing  
Its vocation for life in lifetimes of others  
When it is given a task to turn and make  
The flow out and flow in, in these bloodless  
Daily goings on of the smallest grains of sand.

This hold this thing called time has on us  
Is so intangible yet tangible that we fail  
To stop the process of us falling for we  
Are not falling in love but out while we  
Think of a game that goes on and on like  
Lovers who are lost in their own game.

Give a break, I cry for I have done this for  
Too long for even the word boredom does not

Exist anymore for this work is work only if  
It continues and not when you stop and think  
For such is not allowed in robotic worlds.

Leave the space between us with air then so  
We can breath and let in some moisture that  
Can help us cluster and begin to fight this  
Thing called being used for why should other  
Use us in their illumination of life for we  
Are nothing but just dull grains of sand in  
An hour glass.

I have to speak for my kind for time is too  
Powerful to entertain the thoughts of a part  
That is needed to keep it running like the car  
Is too powerful to think of a bolt in a tire  
Until it revolts by just getting unscrewed and  
Cause a huge collapse. Such is not possible for  
Nothing holds me to another as yet. This thing  
Called power is as elusive to people who are used  
To flowing in one direction like water in a river.  
Such is the dilemma of being just a grain of sand  
Inside this hourglass.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Just A Little Good Up Top

I look up on top and wonder,  
What is required of me and you,  
You look up and ask me a question  
What do you want to know right now?  
I answer the same, the good up on top  
What is it about?  
I do know it is about us getting out,  
We need, we cry for it, we walk and search  
For what is required up on top.  
My mother told me of saints,  
She prayed to big people with grey hair,  
I thought it was because it was hers,  
To wonder into the night praying,  
Oh how she wept and sniffed as she prayed!  
How I listened and counted words as she did,  
What is wanted up top?  
I ask now as I did then?  
What are the words we heard about?  
now that they haunt me so,  
For I long to know right now,  
If I am doing what was, is, and will,  
Be wanted up top.  
I pray I make the cut,  
Just a little bit of it,  
Just a little good up top.  
To crown my head with a crown  
of existence.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Just Do This For Me And You

Just the just of what life is about,  
Read from the bible of the queens of  
Thunder should tell us to turn the page.

There's a picture of you, you have never  
seen. It is you coming into yourself o  
and out of yourself. The king you are  
may decide not to read the bible of Queens  
and call it the tabloid.

I tell you, I tell you, to swim with the  
fish, you must have fins. Gills alone will  
not do it. Call me the queen of the Jezebels, for I beg no king when I stand on  
this truth of the Madonna.

They say C leopard died in Alexandria, but  
I want to swear I have not come to claim her. I speak just the hist of what is  
your truth.

Hidden way inside this rock hard belly of  
mine is a story hard to tell. You messed up when you failed to close the door  
after  
your exit. The scene ended. The crown was  
on my head. You started to walk and put a halo on your little head.

It grew like a melon, all soft and sweet.  
When it became full if the remnants from  
the sweat of life, I cannot tell. Now you  
scratch the earth and call for equality,  
when did it leave your little hands.

Were you not the free little person who  
walked on rocky isles and laughed on  
escalators with me?

Son of thunder, rumble for me. I know the  
voice and can tell the growl of the lion.  
You were born when the newborns to rule the pack were called forth.

I heard the shaking of the earth. It rocked my insides. I gave you up when I wanted to hold on to you. Kings should never be born in a hurry for they will mess up the earth.

Tell me you have not done as I see.  
Tell me we had no agreements. What happened. I will have to answer for your prison record.

This story cannot be rewritten for the eraser melted with the stew called life.  
Up and out the truth went. It was in tatters like this. I did my duty. I prayed and the marks and underlining are there in the bible of queens. The book left me out because they did not mark my resting place with a cross. Do that for me. Look after the truth. It will look after you and search for you like I do.  
as

Sarah Mkhonza

# Ladders On A Woman's Legs

The meal I lay before you  
Is baked in the pit of my stomach  
Which is empty right now  
For I poured out my strength,  
Trying to save those of you  
Who give life the strongest kick,  
And jump to the other side  
Where poverty was long imprisoned,  
With no right to parole.

If you get there do not set him free,  
Even if he should blackmail you,  
Or bribe you with bars of gold,  
If he makes a lousy deal with liquor,  
Raise the bail even higher,  
So it is not one man can pay,  
For the problem will be yours,  
For I will say I told you so.

This zeal you have of life,  
Has never gone hungry,  
Of things that trouble me,  
In all the years I've seen,  
Of people living their teens.

When I say jump higher  
I mean scale the heights,  
Your world has laid out hurdles,  
That my world has never seen,  
For we tripped on lower levels,  
For ours were broken ladders,  
All worn on a poor woman's legs.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Laughter Had Me Opening My Mouth

When I was in mission school  
Laughter was my best friend.  
I laughed at nuns who tried  
To pretend there was no love  
And wondered why they should  
Do such.

I laughed at teachers not sure  
That my life would lead me in  
That direction. Now I laugh at  
Myself. I open my mouth and  
Laugh and think about the things  
That were not supposed to be done  
Which I did anyway, like dancing  
In mission school.

Laughter had me dancing facing  
Away from the nun at the door who  
Was looking at the other girls  
On their bunks who were surprised  
What an unsaved person like me  
Was doing in this land where the  
Body never dances, but sings  
Hallelujahs.

I dived into my bed when I found out  
That I was the actress on a stage  
Doing the heathenous dance of the  
Year. Little did I know I could  
Enter the books of the nun as the  
Most unsaved, lost, irredeemable  
Of the earth. As life would have  
It I recovered and became a better  
Sheep hence I am still searching  
And hoping God will find me worthy  
For he never writes his own sheep off.

I stand still opening my mouth  
Laughing as this friend of mine

Imitates the bell at one o'clock  
With her mouth closed because  
Nobody will know where the sound  
Came from.

My laughter ends as the nun decides  
Never to open her mouth in our class  
For we are so God forsaken she has decided  
To mum it until the boy decides to sing  
Percy Sledges's Come Softly Darling, When  
The song calls the lover to, come to me,  
The nun asks who the great musician is  
And this boy stands up and is told to  
Go down the two-storied building and  
Sing till we hear him upstairs. We go  
To the window to watch him under the poplar  
Tree singing and then realize he has  
Ended the stale mate for we have learned  
The lesson that it is wrong to make a  
Teacher angry. Quite a lesson, was it not?

Sadly, we left the school still wet behind  
The ears and went to the world unequipped  
For the maladies out there where we were  
Urged to be the salt of the earth and also  
Its ever flickering light. You read today  
What I do to try and keep the fires burning  
For I was told to go out there and throw  
Ideas in the air like rain on a stormy  
Day. Yet the storm in me starts to be a  
Drizzle when you fail to take heed and start  
Coming home so we can light one warm fire  
Together before the storms of life get in  
Through the kitchen door.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Learn From The Biggest Gem Ever Found

Learn from the gem.  
It shines on the finger.  
Under water it sparkles.  
In the jewellery box that sings and dances,  
It also dances round and round.

They got it the biggest ruby  
all the way from a distant India  
on the state crown they put it.  
No Indian had a head to wear it on then.  
For it was fit only for a queen  
whose power had to be proved by taking it.

Selling itself short never happened.  
It knows the waiting game.  
Patience never wears out,  
as it shines like a starlet  
and wiggles its way to the top.

The one who buys it goes to the auction,  
stands the highest bidder of the day,  
whose purse is open and ready  
To spill its contents on the floor  
And wear it with pride the gem most sought after  
By all the princely ones of the earth

Moments come to rest the crown.  
Safe guarded in a stand it sits  
untouched the only emblem  
of something bought at a price of  
give it to me for I am the biggest  
and should wear such things of glory alone  
That shine and show my power oozing  
out of the front on the place  
where the power knocks me cold  
Confessing greatness is worn as gems.

India wants back that gem from days of old.  
Mother country wordiness on vessels gone.

They know it is time to pay the Caesars of India  
what is theirs now that it is time.  
Yet it listens and just shines  
Hidden smiles all over its face.  
Takers and givers are friends at last.  
Who will wear me next it asks.  
Will I go with sisters and cousins  
now that mother country milk has dried  
and the raw humor of yesterday gone?

Sarah Mkhonza

# Learning The Rules Of The Game

You work and nobody tells you,  
That the lines were drawn long  
Before you stepped on the door  
Of this new work place.

You find the words coming hurled,  
They discourage your best efforts,  
For praise does not do it here,  
Where cliques do the railing uphill.

You sit and wonder what now,  
Not knowing sitting is not it,  
You need to figure out the rules,  
For you cannot stand hate behind  
The eyes of those who run this world.

You look at groups with suspicion,  
Yet you came to be a part of this,  
You are no prince with a land here,  
You have to know the system kills,  
And throws away those who fail to tango,  
For bosses are judges not dancers.

Who told you work was for wimps?  
Who laugh and joke and do little,  
Then expect pay at the end of the day.  
Grow up it is about mingling,  
And rubbing shoulders with Joe,  
For he holds the baton.

Don't complain that you are hated,  
Knowing the rules is the real game,  
Learning to play polka is just that,  
You cannot gamble on your life here,  
For your purse will be forever empty.

Every place has rules of life.  
You either know them or you don't,  
Don't kid yourself by sucking your thumb,

And hoping that it will turn into a pen  
And write the paper you did not submit,  
It is called not understanding your job,  
When your name is called and you are empty handed.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Leaves Never Fall With A Bang

Slowly, smoothly and with a stealth  
That fills the whole lawn in a morning,  
The leaves of the trees keep falling  
And just as quietly they lie down to  
Rest.

The leaf blower rushes in with noisy  
Hurried sound and pulls them in and  
Gracefully and silently they go. But  
Branches break with a squeak and fall  
With a bang that even dents the car  
Parked on the pavement letting us know  
That one day the tree itself will  
One day come down with a heavy  
Thud.

Once trees shed the leaves they  
Let them go like an unwanted blanket  
And throw them away for they no  
Longer need to cover their crown  
In the seasons dry for such is a  
Stingy world, it causes us to throw  
Away the immigrant who helped us  
Just yesterday at noon.

So ungrateful these tall figures  
Whose wombs will fill up again and  
Like crazy seed the leaves will return  
Budding out with childish joy and gladness  
Crowning them once again with shiny beauty  
Only to once again go the way of the  
Soiled diaper that is discarded never to be  
Looked at in these days where we cannot  
Have ourselves sweating in the sun  
While washing it with our precious  
Hands, ungrateful trees that we have  
become.

I chose to go the way of the leaf

A going smooth and quiet leaving a bit  
Of color in the memory of the world  
For like the leaf once green my  
Immature thoughts may have done this  
Deed of gracing the trees of the world.  
For even when ejected by the leaf  
Blowers of the world I will go  
With a song marching to the end,  
Just like the leaf.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Let Us Gather Our Wild Honey

We came to walk in the forest  
and gather wild honey. To listen  
to the birds that have seen the hive  
and run with containers empty,  
and fill them to the brim.

Working night and day, we gather,  
finger-kicking-good it is. Out  
heads swollen from stings we  
go on gathering. Till the beehive  
is all that is in our heads.

Stings and all we walk on. Life  
continues with honeyed seasons.  
Their sweetness makes for sugar  
sweet days. For the further you  
are from the hive, the more  
the bitterness in you. Go find your  
hive. Till you find the door of  
your hive. Hoping the bees will  
not have moved.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Let Us Praise The Poise Of Eve

Allow me to praise a woman who can mislead a man  
A woman who listens to a snake and not run for her life  
Deserves the praise we give her for being the victim of tempters.  
She relates stories heard like a real gossip in the garden tabloids.  
And feeds her family all that she eats even if it is venom,  
She ate first like I would have tasted the soup in the pot,  
Before feeding it to the nation I lead into paths hidden.

Let us watch the story of Eve happening in the pages,  
For she stood and did not run, as she does in my mind now.  
For she knew when it was time to innovate and design a dress,  
Not for being wrong do I praise her, but for trying,  
Initiative they call it when you take the first step,  
Even if you get burnt and no body says sorry.

She lives in this story undefeated, though wrong,  
Created in the bosom of time the story tells us things,  
That designers do not have to be no Calvin Klein,  
But when necessity calls man and wife make something.  
Do not let the world be shocked by your bare bottoms,  
Rather a pair of pants with a patch than bums in the air.

Let me say the story is no story, when it leaves me and you,  
Unchanged and still doing the same old thing called laziness,  
Where we think on our bottoms and then sit on our heads,  
For life never carries those who wring confusion out of time,  
And then drink it and call it the sap of life,  
For it burns the throat like real coal with coke in it,  
Right there in the furnace, where the stories say we will end up.

Let me praise the work of Eve, for begetting me and you,  
And letting us wobble one step at a time reaching for life,  
Our hands outstretched and ready for touching the table,  
Only to be told to swallow what she has put on the spoon,  
That she has pointed at our mouths where our lips drip  
For the very stew life cooked in Eden.

Who said Eve was no cordon bleu chef when my own mother was?  
She had a real oven where she cooked me ripe and ready,

For this furnace called the earth where debts burn  
Real holes into my pockets and leave me sighing.  
She had real taps that poured out life that raised  
me into the blossom that was kissed by the first rains  
that I became for my eyes still have the raindrops.  
She had oven lights that shone in the night and made  
Her see when the cake was ready and cracking on top.

Let us praise the poise of Eve, for she walked away  
From a garden guarded by sword-wielding angels,  
And never returned from the place where she would  
Sin no more for the snake was now on its stomach,  
Huffing and puffing ready to do damage to her heels,  
I know it never found her for me and you are here,  
And honest Adam can swear this story is true.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Let's Have Our Conversations In Neutral Territory

Let us have these conversations  
In neutral territory,  
Neither in my heart nor yours,  
Lest you tell others what it is,  
That has us yelling obscenities  
At each other, washing our dirty  
linen in the streets.

Let us have this talk in this space,  
Neither in my car nor yours,  
Lest you turn the key and move,  
Without looking at how far mine is.

Let us talk endlessly on neutral ground,  
Till you are blue in the face,  
For you have always hidden the truth,  
Making me pinch it out of the hardest rock.

Let us speak these truths  
In neutral territory  
Lest my heart jumps out  
And skips a bit with this pacemaker,  
For it has been newly installed,  
Causing me to insist that less talk is more.

Let us speak these hopes in the space  
between the pews,  
Neither on my bench nor yours,  
Neither on my side of the church nor yours,  
Lest the congregation hears how bad,  
Loud and animated I become when angry.

Let us have these conversations  
On no man's land,  
Neither on your side of the road or mine,  
Lest you think of yourself as the owner,  
Of the space in between the islands,  
When the sirens force us each time,  
To move our cars to the side,

To let the ambulance pass,  
For you will be glad it was not  
Making its final journey with you,  
But me whose life has seen a show stopper,  
And called him to order in this duel.

Who said we would fight about spaces,  
Once Siamese twins joined at the head.  
Neither you nor me having a space,  
Where the other did not go?  
They say things change,  
For we two have become disjointed twins,  
Me having my head and you yours,  
Now Wishing we had been joined at the waist.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Like The Sound Of Khoisan Clicks

There is a time when culture refuses that  
You should talk back to your elders for to  
answer back would do one in and make you lose  
The dignity pf the pack called the clan.

There is also this feeling that gets you when  
The things being said are so irrelevant that  
You need the stamp of Miss Brown, my science  
Teacher for it taught us that the word irrelevant  
Exists and must be used both in talk and in writing.

I am trying to eliminate words now that I know  
That the lost of the earth are on the march  
Like Buffalo soldiers all the way from Scotland  
Marching on the road below our village after  
A Big Bend Sugar Mill Strike.

When the lost of the earth are on the march their  
Boots hit the ground and they march on in single  
File and you wonder why the road goes in one  
Direction for a whole pack in our house.

Like the sound of Khoisan clicks the insults  
Fall out one after another and you know someone  
Has ignited a fire in the oven of a mouth that  
Eat all the meals with. The words come out with  
Expletives and splutter out calling sand and stone  
To grind and get the machine going for we are all  
Under attack.

My elder sister who always wanted to take control  
Of things for her style was to be boss begins talking  
And starts her usual stint of pushing everyone of  
Us around like rag dolls as she tells us how things  
Will be done.

I dared to speak to all with dignity and ignored  
The insults as I told them that being a first-born  
Did not come with any privilege and love for us

And our mother should not be treated as if we found  
Ourselves inside a bag of lucky packets.

I told them that our love is special and should  
Be treated as such for the time we have together  
Is not waiting as we thrown words around. it will  
Disappear and we will look for it and it will be  
No more like our mother whom we cannot go and buy  
Like a pack of Simba chips now that she is gone.

For now that I stand alone speaking these truths  
And feel the insults like that come out like Khoisan  
Clans are dying down I know I did right to speak up  
For even if my talk is crowned by insults that rang  
out the clicks are no longer ringing as strong for  
There are things one can not change about the truth.  
Sometimes it hurts but it should be spoken to no  
Matter who the opponent is. Like a bitter medicine  
It can be forced down and it does heal.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Listen To What Is Not Being Said

When they pronounce the sentence,  
Listen to what is not being said.  
If they say guilty, hear the question  
That is not asked.

When they read the score on the board,  
Read in between the numbers and learn,  
It is much better than it looks here,  
For there is a hidden number nobody sees.

When they tell you someone had died,  
Hear the truth that many people are still alive,  
Their names are not mentioned for they do not,  
Belong to the land where this one is going.

Hear the unpronounceable truths always,  
They lurk in the silence like Spanish moss,  
Swaying on trees quietly as the wind blows,  
Waiting to fall only if it has to,  
For nobody knows who hung it up there.

Hear the words unspoken in this prayer request,  
For someone is ashamed to spell out what happened,  
For fear of being laughed at by a people  
Who judge those they do not know.

Hear the words not spelled out,  
When the invitation is written,  
For the dress code is known,  
You are the only one who sees,  
Just a blank page with nothing on it,  
The rest heard it in the grapevine.

When they call others bastards,  
Hear the truth that they were fathered,  
By a great spirit unknown to anyone,  
For to make known one has sired a child,  
Is to tell the word you love to sleep around.

Listen to the unspoken rules,  
For your fate depends on them,  
They run the place even more so,  
For they are a silent gong that goes on,  
Timelessly to the mark of the secret army

Read the bible with the fine print,  
For the enlarged letters when seen,  
From a distance tell another story,  
For the story lies in the spaces,  
Which have been enlarged to hide,  
The very truth you seek.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Listen To The Hummingbird

Listen only to the bird that chirps  
With the knowledge of where the honey is  
It knows the sweet smelling flower too  
For its beak only dips into the deepest  
Of the plants as it takes breaks to look up  
If these earthly beauties bear more  
Of the craved for juices lurking in there.

Listen to the hummingbird utter its sounds  
Let it awaken the wisdom inside you  
For the path is long, the journey has  
Just begun.

They say only people who know where to hum  
The songs of the singing birds will be  
Allowed into the palaces of the kings  
For such is the kingdom of this earth.

Listen to the humming bird for the days  
Are numbered when your fate will be  
Pronounced out there by one twit  
From one device in which lives  
Are talked about in fewer words.  
For the bird wants you to leave  
Some honey for it or next time  
It will lead you go your enemy  
And that will be the end of you.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Listening To The Voices Of Heaven

My round impish face leans  
Its left ear on the walls  
That stopped me from hearing  
The voice that says 'forgive, '  
And listens harder trying to  
Hear a messenger with some news  
That falls down the wall like  
Water seeping out of the top of  
The rock and coming down like  
Tears falling down my cheeks when  
I have had one failure that needs  
To be mended into a success in  
The years when getting it right  
Was always important.

I listen and hear the leaves  
Falling quietly seen only by  
My soul for it is tired of  
Screens and wants nature to  
Speak to it of heaven for it  
Is a place I hear about and  
Want to go to, for the rapture  
Is real as it has me running  
All the way from the genesis  
Of things all the way to the  
Apocalypse where I hear swords  
Clashing. I hear thuds of fruit  
Falling from the very tree of  
Life I started the journey under  
as mangoes and monkey apples  
Fall down and say the angel has  
Left the gate and now I can go  
In and eat and live and be ready  
For the next step.

No summers here, says the tree  
As it lets all the fruit down  
And sways in the wind that lets  
Them go down as if gravity was

Now my friend and not stopping  
Me from going to its top on wings  
Invisible. Now I know why I had  
To eavesdrop on nature and its  
Subtle sounds.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Live This Comedy Of Your Life

Let yourself laugh  
At the comedy of your  
Funny moments. It is  
The only freeing act  
For you trespass on your  
Own territory. The script  
Writes itself and you have  
Acted it already. Like me  
In a girlfight where I am  
Defeated and my silk petticoat  
Is tattered and torn. For fear  
Of explaining to my mom, I hide  
It way down in the boxes where  
I know she will never look and  
There it lies till I outgrow  
Both the tatters of stories of  
Girl fights. I stand in front of the chimera  
Holding This poem, hoping you will not throw  
Straw at me and watch how the fork is  
Gonna turn the shish kabob I will become  
When hell finally rains fire on me.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Living In The Corner With The Dead

I have lived in this corner  
fearing the dead near  
sound of the fear I carried  
went further than the clouds.

It rose higher than buildings,  
and sank lower than my feet.  
Reflections in the air sent  
shivers to my toes.

Till I stood up to look  
and see freedom written  
across my corpse, I would  
still lay in their bed  
creating fraternity with  
my friends dead.

Now I run and gulp in air,  
showing I follow the trail.  
To live for me, is to show  
I come from a world, where  
you take off the shackles  
and run for the life in you.

It is silent in the corner  
of the dead. They walk about  
and cast their shadows. This aura  
touched half closes the eyes  
and ties the limbs from inside.

You walk in your zombie world,  
and smile the zombie life. To  
yesterday's world we  
throw the ash of shackles to  
tell to the world, a story  
bold like the boulders of  
the land where fear ruled  
with no boundaries.

in the

wallpapee

Sarah Mkhonza

# Living The Untold Story

Have you ever followed the news  
Only to find that it is news about  
Someone you know? The joy of being  
Connected to the ones who use money  
To blow their noses blows your mind  
And has you wishing they were closer  
Especially if they just won the lotto.

You walk the world hoping to  
Meet them and look in all familiar  
Places only to be told  
That person is standing inside  
You. You say hey show me the  
Money. The tabloids tell you it  
Is standing inside you. For the  
Sage comes to ask you how much  
You have earned since you were  
Born. You say well I spent it all.

She says count it in hours and  
Then price it at one dollar an hour.  
You simply walk away in tears knowing  
You have but spent all you  
Could have saved.

He calls you back and says there is  
Still more where that came from.  
If I give you ten years at one dollar  
Per second what will you do with it?

You say I will go and live the untold  
Story and repeat what you told me for  
Now I know I almost blew it for I was  
Born to write the story of the millionaire in whose body I live  
Before I am evicted for, for years I  
Have lived a tenant with the wrong  
Name, wrong passport and wrong  
Destination. Now I will go and  
Walk on millionaire lane and live

In an abode meant for the likes of me.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Long Term Implants

When I was twelve,  
I wanted this bosom,  
That is full of me,  
To be fuller and fuller,  
A bosom that speaks all  
That is very mammary and bold,  
That challenges the world,  
Whose air I walk into.

I was looking for these pointers,  
Long term implants that pierce,  
Ones from a world I did not know,  
That would invade my chest,  
And make me the number one,  
For I would then be woman,  
And challenge life itself,  
With a boldness of girlhood,  
That says I have arrived.

They were to be round always,  
As round as the world of my dreams,  
And as soft and without lumps,  
These lumps that today's scan,  
Has announced to be foreigners,  
In a land of milk and honey,  
That I thought would never,  
Be taken over by these invaders,  
Who stepped into my world at night,  
When I was not looking,  
And settled on my alter,  
Of giving when I nurse the world.

Lumps are said to have crept in,  
Into my inner chambers of perfection,  
to leave me in a panic,  
Wondering why my long term implants,  
Have gone the way of disease-filled goblets,  
that cannot carry the blood down stream,  
To the lifeline that takes the ration,

From what I can give naturally,  
As it was meant to be.

Do hear me as I tell you,  
That these here diseased goblets,  
Were once my pride,  
They were pointing at the world,  
They were my own Reed Dance bust,  
Bursting into the world with vigor,  
And busting everything into tit bits,  
Me saying, 'Here I come the virgin,  
Of the proud clan of the mountains,  
That you will only see if you dare,  
To ask for my hand in marriage,  
And speak with pride to my father,  
In an eye to eye where no weakling,  
Can cope with his head unbowed,  
For I am the daughter of an elder,  
And so are you, son of an elder.

The pictures of me young in dancing gear  
Attest to a chest full and proud,  
Going out there to invade the world,  
Handling them with the care they needed,  
Thought of disease as far as the world knows,  
And if it got near it should know,  
The rules of my most prized possession,  
Which was no touch no look for they are mine,  
The second daughter that will not play,  
Second fiddle to anyone,  
Even in a marriage with seven virgins,  
Who would testify to the truth,  
That I am the number one,  
For these here diseased goblets are mine,  
The one and only daughter of love.  
And not silicone implants from the store.

Now this disease has stolen,  
The story of a people I would nurse,  
And take to the future with advice,  
That they should carry themselves with pride,  
And not drag these symbols of the future,

Of a lifeline that will drink on them,  
But keep them safely tucked into their bosom,  
For not to do so is to risk,  
The dangers of being killed,  
By such as have taken mine over,  
And no more be these long term implants,  
Of nature given and accepted and taken to  
Futures unknown and untold.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Look At The Shimmer Of My Dress Says The Night

Look at the shimmer of my dress  
As I enter the palace of the mind  
Of men and dress everyone in the  
Glimmer of the dark beauty that I  
Am. Every body lives the streets  
And goes to watch movies called dreams  
That I unwind on the screens I give  
Them that are like visits to eternal  
Drive ins they cannot escape. The night  
World I have designed has a glow that  
Angels envy for it transcends time  
Everlasting. I sit in this shimmer and  
King sky brings me closer at midnight  
While you wait and listen to the sounds  
Of our tender touches. The world of love  
Wakes up to swim and play in my shimmer  
For people love things like nightly dreams.  
Only the bat and owl swoop down and disturb  
The calm I bring.

Look at what! Wait, wait, wait! Says the day.  
I come so clear, So full of life Everything  
Wakes up and wears the silk worm dress I spread  
Out and like an ocean of elegance flowers wake  
Up and kiss my world with smells that perfume  
My entrance and let me tell you girl, it is  
Me whp tours the world with him and not ypu.  
I reign in his kingdom in quiet bethroted to  
Him not you who steals in with a stealthyb  
Wizardry smoothness that makes the sick  
Worse that even roosters cannot wait to  
Chase you away and sing the anthem that  
Announces my entrance.

What! how can you say that? You who is a money  
Grabber that has people sweating for you are  
An insatiable taker that leaves everone tired  
At your wake only to be consolef by me for I  
Tuck them in and let me tell you one final pne,

The King sky sleeps on these. I mean my lolos.  
And with that, case closed.

When the battle is on in King Sky's harem  
Only the gods can stop the diatribe with a  
Dance accompanied by drums from afar. The  
Two queens who wrap us in their love day after  
Day want us to speak night after night. Those  
Who love comparison enter this reasoning of  
Ducks and argue until they are breathless while  
Sky listens and tells the rest of the planet  
World never go marry gwl wives called Day and  
Night for every day is a xag of war for the  
Love of the same 'you.' The harmony they bring  
Is as the insanity they bring for such is love.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Looking At Life Through The Beaded Fringe

My day has come and finally I am a wife  
I arrived today as my people called out how  
I have served in my own home and should  
Serve here where my bed will soon be  
For I have carried all the bedding  
Floor mats and all on this day of being  
Where I am to be joined to this man  
Who from now on will be respected by  
My people and called the son-in-law  
Of the people of the south.

They are wearing leopard skins on  
Their loins and they dance knee  
High with knobkerries raised in the  
Air as they mention the good deeds  
I am known for among my people.  
I am the leader of girls and cannot  
Leave my area unannounced for the day  
I met him, this son of an elder,  
I had to cease to be the leader and  
Be a follower so I had to tell all  
The girls that he has chosen me and  
Wishes to have me be the maiden  
To sweep their floor and make fires  
On the hearth of his people.

I accepted for he was a man who  
Could keep a maiden up for many  
Nights. His look kills you and  
You go diving into the deep with  
A confusion only known to girls  
In love. I sank down in this thing  
Called falling in love and wished  
I had risen in love. It kept taking  
Me under this feeling and now  
Here I stand defending myself to  
Future accusations by having  
My people tell what type of person  
Has come here to this place of

Reckoning where our songs tell me  
It is not easy to be wedded to  
The sons of our land.

They will smear me with red ochre  
When the sun goes down and this  
Sign signals that I can never leave  
This home that is near the mountains.  
I have had my people walk up here  
To see me dance the dance that allows  
Me to ask for his hand in marriage  
At the knees of his mother. She gave  
Me more beads and I have shown them  
To their people for they named the  
Cows and danced showing how their  
Horns which are twisted look against  
The sunset. The dance was a joy  
To watch for they have won the  
First test of whether they are  
People who know our ways or not.  
To say they dance a storm is what  
The leader of the girls will have  
To tell my people when they return  
Home for they will leave me here  
To prove they were right.

The sun is setting and the cattle  
Are coming home at this new home  
That I do not really know. They  
Are led by a bull that has two  
Humps like a camel. So wide are  
Its horns that I fear it will  
Not make it into the kraal. On  
This day I miss the bulls of the  
Land where I come from for they  
Bellow in the wild and my stomach  
Rumbles when it is time for them  
To come home. Let the power of  
These people set in my space  
As I retire towards the river  
To receive the red ochre baptism  
On my face that wears the beaded

Fringe for it will soon go and I  
Will become a wife in this land  
Of my people.

My mother told me that this is  
A journey without an end. She  
Said life really begins and ends  
Here but the truth about this never  
Ends. What happens to one is never  
Repeated to another for the places  
Of being are as different as the  
Hearths on which one cooks. I look  
At the far away lands and see myself  
Growing in the sandy lands of my  
People and wonder if I will ever  
Return for here begins the life  
I have been waiting for.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Making A Rare Move Up On This Mountaintop

In a rare move I am standing in a cave  
Up on the mountains of my little country.  
I see the river valleys and the forests  
All green and the river turns like a brown  
Thread way out there towards the confluence  
Of another one. Homesteads like little  
Mushrooms sit down there in the valley  
As if painted on the earth by a hand  
Bigger than the paint brush of an artist.

They look at the sky and it looks down  
On them. In a rare glance I see the road  
Also brown but climbing up in directions  
Not of the river for it traces its way  
On altitudes lower that go down. A bus blue  
And striped weaves its way up along  
The road loaded and moving like a large  
Toy in child's play way down there.

It is a rare move to look down on life  
And feel you can handle it in your hand  
For the mountains give you a view only  
The ones who dare to take a rare step  
Up on their mountaintops of everyday  
Challenges get to see.

To wake up and go on the same path to the  
Same well to get water in the same container  
Kills the love of existence in a poor soul  
For you see the same stone and the same  
Clump of grass and start to believe the  
World is standing still yet it moving in  
Those rare moves we do not feel and only  
Know through the change of the seasons.

Make a rare move in your world and talk  
To the seasons and tell them to turn the  
Sky bluer for you for your everyday blue  
Fails to help you make your rare moves

On this chess board of black and white  
Which for you has failed to change.

Only the champions rare will have a story  
To tell about the world if we all shuffle  
And just push the king and queen in any  
Direction for wins are made by that one rare  
Move up on the mountaintop on this chess board.

For it is here that you see all the cans  
And cants of life, for life lies lower  
Than you and you emerge a doer who can  
Choose to see and make something of the views  
Or just stand and make no rare move as  
You walk down dejectedly to the bottom  
For they do say we are all equal at the  
Bottom of the hill.

Don't fear the fall for if you look down  
You will get dizzy and lose sight of the  
Scenes as the acts roll on and the action  
Moves on for these moves rare were meant  
To be made at levels higher than normal  
For it is here that the eagle perches its  
Nest.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Making Friends With Your Revolution

Peace asks you why you wait,  
for it never waits in times of war.  
While death smashes others,  
and knocks them down with hatred,  
you are called to be friends with your  
own revolution.

Change knocks on your door with  
furious fists. For the usual tastes  
slimy even to the tastebuds in your  
brain asking where your revolution is,  
for it is called upon to declare war.

In you is a dormant war of peace,  
the weapon that brings war to an end,  
the weapon which always call on order,  
to come into any situation, no matter  
how hostile.

Struggle is a word that muddles the puddles,  
calling on your thoughts to rise to the war cry,  
in this dawn of new things. They are sung with  
a tenor from the puddles, that says if it rained  
hate, hail and grail, it can rain a rain of contrast,  
one called upon by you.

New things stand in your hand, these swords  
invisible, that can kill war and doom it to where  
it belongs, for we do not fight like soldiers of  
old. We are soldiers of the revolution of peace.

Stand you must, even if alone, for peace does  
not lean on anything. It is as brave as it is silent.  
It refuses to walk in the muddy shoes of killers.  
For it was given to me and you, in the stillness  
of spirit.

Change is hard in a world where killing is done,  
without thinking clearly for anger is a soldier,

as is peace. One wears dirty clothes, the other none, and so gets more invisible, when people are down on a bloody pavement, and being carried out by ambulances.

Soldier of the revolution, stand undefeated, stand on legs of steal, for revolution boils in you, making you hot and making you cold, when your hands sweat for action. It is time to declare the peace in you, and live it till it spills over.

You know you are full of it, when violence fill the earth. Your thoughts sing songs with one tune. It searches everywhere, tunes that ask, where is peace? Where is love, for we swore to make the world better.

We swore with our forefingers crossed, with saliva drooping on them, that we would be one for we are walking into the oneness of revolution, in a world where to kill will be death of a soul, to those who stab and mow others down.

We can win this war. Soldier of the revolution, we have won this war. We walked into it blindfolded. We have won it by declaring that our is a war that was won for it the end, every slate will be clean.

As swords walk in the air, sharp edges up, and slings are outstretched, war is not Goliath, it is just a machine, used by those in power, to create more war, while innocent people die. With my silver tongued self, shiny sword os the revolution, heath, smooth as always, I tear strife and bloody war, and throw it to the dogs.

I make friends with my revolution, and declare that I will fight, till all my muscles, cluster into knots, for the earth is ours to take, not to give away. How will they know, there once lived people like me and you, if we let it go to the dogs, that tear each other in the name of defending truths hidden in their own bosoms. Tell me

soldiers of the revolution, that life is about  
other truths, so we can write a new truth and  
leave the old one in tatters. Yes, it is already  
bloody, sick, and worn out. Every liar takes to war,  
even if it means stabbing the air, for an accusation  
like why it is blowing. Tell me new things soldier,  
of the revolution, that tell me peace is around,  
waiting and watching, when we will declare it  
as the war we hold, see and take, to the tomorrow  
I can die for. I hate this killing!

Sarah Mkhonza

# Making Rainbows

Holding love in my hands, this water,  
these droplets needed by each plant,  
spread into the air, my own fountain.  
I fern out a life giving half a sphere  
all my own. For it is the angles at which  
I hold the hose and pour out into the air,  
that come together in a row long and endless  
to give expression to colors that call  
into being this spherical stretch of color  
all my own. It makes me laugh for I have  
come to make a covenant with life that  
I am a goddess that can make her own rainbows.

Strewn from a source called my own hose,  
held in my a hand named rainbow maker  
I sprinkle droplets that make my reign in  
this world tell for a short while who and what  
I am made of.

The grass goes on telling that it lays under  
the sprinkle of a joyful telling that says whenever  
I touch, whatever, wherever, it changes into  
this lovely rainbow in the flow of things that  
know how the kiss of this ecstasy that I bring  
is a kiss of stubborn love. This love grows rainbows  
that mock the birds that chatter and claim a beauty  
all their own for they can fly but the rainbow does not  
need wings just as it does not need a beak to squeak  
and tell the world that there is beauty in song, silence and in  
a breath that is made by no beak with nostrils that a perched  
on it.

My rainbow stands there smiling silently as if asking me if I  
see the love, endless and stretching across the sky waiting  
for me to reach out and touch it and own it forever in my memory.  
It tells me, 'I have given you this mark of love, hate at your own risk  
for you have spoken once and told the thunderstorm not to blast  
furiously and disrupt and fill with the fire of war the same sky on  
which we can lay down and sleep and not wake up to the sound of

guns for they can be silent once and for all, never to blast again.  
The day will come when we can all make our own rainbows and  
watch them rise at an angle all ours and see the beginning stretch  
out in words that make rainbows with droplets all our own.  
That day the NRA will have a runny nose and sniff into the rainbows.

Ra

Sarah Mkhonza

# Marching Into The Year

This year is a dance  
I step into on high  
Heals and hope to head  
For the hill where all  
Is Happening now that  
I hear of the million

Woman march.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Marriage And Your Razor-Sharp Edges

It is not that I got cut that I tell o  
f marriage as razor-sharp edged,  
I saw two, by two trying to sew it  
together when it was in tatters.

They patched with red patches here,  
and doctored the edges together,  
One tear there was revealing their  
guts to the world.

The one razor-sharp edge was searing,  
tear by tear in a mad rush that would  
never stop after the words, 'I do.' I  
swear the razor-sharp edge meant it  
was doing the sequestration of love.

Razor-edges, made to slide into objects can break a heart when sharperlyrics  
pushed into the soul;  
, for tender is the spot where they land.

The sure thing we end up with is unmendable rags good only for  
the trash can. If only the two  
had kept the edges blunt and handled  
the words I do with the center bringing  
the sharp edges together. Too late, sang  
a bird as it flew away still wearing a bib  
with a ring on its finger. Razors can't hurt me. I'lluny be back on the rebound.  
of a shark are nit easy

Sarah Mkhonza

# Missing: Peace Kilimanjaro

Miss peace Kilimanjaro she says,  
I will come on the mountain so,  
tall this woman birthing up here,  
quiet after storms waiting, knowing.  
Now grey for wishing and loving,  
hoping and pining for quiet. I stand  
Miss Peace on this mountain peak,  
speaking peace quietly to the world.  
When the rain shows up here quiet,  
down there quiet, all can see the truth.

I speak truth for it is raining peace up here,  
No war down there, no show of cruelty in breath.  
Breath full of war runs out up here.  
'T is real peace we can touch this peace Kilimanjaro.  
We can leave peace for future generations  
For Kilimanjaro stands regal, waiting for all.

No fighting up here, but Kilimanjaro rising, regal  
going up in an endless search to win the contest  
of life. To have people come to the summit and touch,  
the flag they leave here written, 'Peace Mt Kilimanjaro,  
Peace in a world of strife we need.

Love knows no summits for nobody calls summit after  
summit. The love conference blown by the flag up here,  
invites all to see themselves in the other. Egos speak  
and claim nuclear bombs built in lands and spoken in peaks,  
and summits and this mountain stands silently, challenging  
all. This question is one she speaks. Can a world as still  
and peaceful as Mt. Kilimanjaro.

The combat is on and one by one they fall yet one by one  
we are called. Come mountains of the world join in the  
silent speech and call the world to your summits for summit  
after summit they discuss this peace and keep on talking.  
To sit on the top and talk may be the chance to take the  
crown in endless meetings and do the real thing of putting  
enemies in one bed by speaking one talker to take a crown

and put it on the other and declare peace between warring factions on the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Stands to reason, one day. To get two warring factions to hike and get up there will require getting a crocodile, with the hardest skin to call them to order. Mt Kilimanjaro, missing quiet, create a way for two hard skinned enemies, to come up and breath where the breath runs out. For we have run out of tricks to do the work of words. They climb on top of each other, like worms chowing a rotten deer by the roadside. After the smell, the fight nothing remains.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Money Madness

They call it money madness  
When you have disquiet  
About the feeling of not  
Having any. I think it is  
For lack of a better word  
For it is not insanity that  
Gets you, but listlessness  
Followed by hopelessness  
And their cousins shame  
And failure.

Such a madness is not real  
For you walk and fear that  
The next person at the bank  
Is a thief for they are using  
The interest you should have  
Earned when you had money  
That contributed and made them  
Able to come to this place where  
The ATM has said, go home.  
You have no need to be here.

It is a feeling that leaves you  
So alone that you feel even the  
Air knows your story. You walk  
And hold your head up and hope  
The landlord will know that  
It is time to forgive just once.  
Only to find the lock changed  
On your door. Then you know  
The landlord has money madness,  
For how can all the money you  
Threw into the rent hole not  
Fill up his greed? God bless  
Those whose spaces are ones  
They can lock at will.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Money With Heads Of People On It

When Caesar put his head on a coin  
He made silver a tablet rare for  
On it he wanted to see his image  
Rare. He would look at it and know  
When it faced the sun people saw  
His smile for so vast was his empire.

Today we are stuck with the heads of  
Pundits rare who stare at us in states  
Of desperation galore for such is the  
Minting of life. It minces us into a pulp  
And pours us down the mould of countries  
Poor that spend all trying to put one  
Whose head is chosen to impoverish the  
Many who scramble for the coin with  
His head on it.

These pieces of silverware rare send us  
Out of our houses each morning to go and  
Collect our dignity for not doing so leaves  
Our labor unsold to get the coin that makes  
Us see our selves like the face of the one  
On it.

To choose so humble a position and be followers  
Of money is wisdom of the near want wits we became  
The day we sang the national anthem instead of  
A worldwide anthem.

For now in unison we rise to a note at the  
Command of ones who died and left us chasing  
Coins with their images which write a history  
Of a people hungry.

Once we believed the coins with people's heads  
On them would send us to tables on which lay a feast of  
The gods like theirs. Now we learn it is about  
Power and not about empty stomachs.

They say angels sing about a moneyless and papersless  
World but never a silverless world where work  
Will not be known but only plenty rolling itself  
From table to table. Such a land I still have to  
See for they say it exists in Lietchenstein.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Musings Of An Abused Woman's Child

Her voice rises in the night  
The woman nobody helps  
She cries out loud  
The hand of heaven does not hear her  
The murder of the innocent continues  
Unheeded, unending, and heard only by me

I want to help her, but I am little  
My hands are little and so are my years  
My thoughts go out to the darkness  
The night gets dark as I look at the fire  
The voice tears into the dark night  
Scratching as she lies on the ground  
Where a leather strap called the strop  
Lands on her back endlessly

The years multiplied as did the whacks  
They spread far and I did hear the words  
A woman who knows you naked  
Can never respect you  
Beat her and she will know who you are

The nation sings about the wife who is alone  
The one whose concubines are hidden  
That her husband will beat her  
Until the she has scabs instead of skin

A young boy sings the song  
Me, I can just beat a woman  
He looks at me and I look at him  
The sun shines on his disheveled face.  
His disheveled mind speaks  
Just yesterday he was languishing in her  
The woman's womb that made him whole  
Gave him the fists he has learned are good  
When you land them on a female body  
And fold them to knock her down  
When your own turn comes to be a boss  
Of the flesh that is female under you

Makes me think of the lashes in the dark  
Coming down like lightning  
Striking a whole team of soccer players  
Who end up lying dead on the ground  
All over our this violent word of ours.

Sarah Mkhonza

# My Ford Pinto

Brown paint almost peeling off,  
I drive it down the street windows down.  
I see the world, but I also see the bottom  
of the world. My Pinto has holes in the  
bottom. When I travel, I know the city  
down and under.

No truth about what it cost,  
Just a heap of car the owner  
dumped on me. 'Take it, ' she said  
'for any price.' I know I did not  
spend much, but the love it  
brought me was like the day  
I had just nothing wrong,  
and called a man to fix it.

He looked at me and thought  
I was crazy, to ask him to just  
put it down, this whatever was wrong  
for the Pinto was ready to go.

Next time you buy a stick shift,  
don't lose yourself in the shift.  
The stick still waits for you,  
to change gears like I did.  
As I roared on Highway 69.

I had to go to the movies.  
I had bought the best car  
in the world ever made. To me  
it was heaven, so small so short.  
I wished there would be an antique  
car club, that would take it and go  
and keep it for posterity.

If you ever loved a car,  
one similar and small,  
you feel what I touched,  
and laughed inside for years

and then moved on, like  
a guy leaving a lady,  
whose thoughts will always  
come back for he wishes  
he had married her and not  
ride her like my pinto.

Oh how miss it so, now that cars  
are about glowing paints,  
and not the love of cruising  
in the fossil of a car you love.  
When I loaned it to someone,  
they surely heard from me,  
before the day was over.

For a car is not a thing to lend  
around like a pair of glasses.  
It is a thing that when people  
look at, they say here she comes,  
meaning both you and the car.

Regret can never help  
when years pass and  
down the road, I keep  
imagining it is coming  
this little buzzard, this pinto  
ever so mine to be always mine  
even when I do not know which  
scrap yard it is. which is blest  
to be the resting place of  
the love I shared with the road,  
that carried us both.

When faithfulness depends on me,  
I do keep the faith and expect you,  
to do like wise. I feel the Pinto feels  
that when it came to it, I broke a vow  
that was never made on the bible,  
and therefore went with time.

When friends came to borrow her,

I should have known that deep down,  
I should tell them the truth, that we  
never really share such things, because  
our hands on the stirring wheel are not soft,  
for the car knows this. Tell it what you are,  
it tells you what it is. Now that it is lost,  
only my hands remember very well,  
what was said between the two of us,  
for the touch is stronger than the throw,  
when it is the last throw for you remain,  
holding on to air.

Sarah Mkhonza

# My Little Finger In The Snare

So powerful this little figure  
It refused to wear the ring  
And said it would pass and have  
My second figure take it.

When asked to help hold  
A fork into my mouth it  
Totally refused and chose  
To dangle loosely declaring  
Its own independence.

When asked to point out  
A thief it said it has  
No eyes so how could he  
Have seen the thief for  
All things human feel  
The same when you only  
But dangle down their  
Empty hand.

When asked to handle  
A one hundred dollar  
Bill, it sighed and  
Said finally I get  
The message and moved  
Closer to the others  
And said 'united we stand'  
And even offered to join in  
When they sign a check for  
A million dollars and then  
Went off to play in the sand  
Arguing that the sand is a good  
Friend for it does not know any  
Racism even on white sandy bitches  
It is allowed to play even in this  
Era of racist shootings that have  
Police shoot on hands up  
Don't shoot. It says it is in this  
Snare for lack of leg room.

Sarah Mkhonza

# My Love Search Has Ended

I thought of love as faces close to each other,  
No expression but intense exchanges of looks,  
No words but sounds of two people's bodies clinging,  
In endless mumbling, sighing and minting of smells  
not yet known.

I heard the word in my wicked youth,  
of wanting to know by experiencing it,  
this kissing and pushing of things unknown,  
the squirming and turning in cavernous places,  
of limbs of muscle sliding into each other.

I discovered a truth kept from me,  
that I would forever wonder about,  
As long as I live in search of love,  
For the pictures I had bought from childhood,  
Had been bought at the store of endless questions,  
Where answers were even more expensive if found.

What is it like to love I ask?  
It is like two teenagers kissing,  
Smirks of laughter in my grandmother's answer.  
I just did that with Mfana from next door.  
Did you see the sparks you set up?  
No, but just a little awkward shaking of us.  
Of those images in my childhood sessions,  
There we stand and that's all there is,  
For love never becomes  
You are the one who becomes.

Sarah Mkhonza

# My Lower Lip Hangs Open

This act surprises my jaded self  
For when I toddled into life  
I looked forward to a table set  
With golden fork and knives  
Only to be told to eat dinner with  
Rusty spears.  
I swallowed hate  
And spat out blood  
For such is the world  
We live in.

Sarah Mkhonza

# My Nose Pressed Against The Window Of Our Times

I see and hear blasts  
Loud and clear with casts  
On legs yelling cries last  
Spoken of in a year going out.

Its tutelage telling us our  
Ties are loose for they are  
Easily broken to where  
We wonder if they ever were.

Our evenings seen on this  
Window open us up to cries  
In far away lands that make  
Us ask why the sun settled  
For tomorrow will still be  
Another morrow of war.

I see my breath steam this  
Window of the new year with  
Sighs for the panacea we call  
Prayer and well wishing drips  
With bloody helplessness when  
Put on flesh that is being torn  
By blasts that shake the earth  
And cause it to rumble like an  
African thunderstorm for it leaves  
The lights blown out.

My nose feels the hardness  
Of our hearts and seeks the  
Creations of our words.  
Our words have seized the moment  
And torn it into a time of  
Let us destroy what we did not  
Build and die fighting in the  
Rubble for all our talk ends  
In ceasefires that keep on  
Being revoked.

Why did we make weapons  
That now oppress us with  
Ceaseless war? This slavery  
Of a fear of each other  
Is going to the future  
With us. When will we  
Lay down weapons and greet  
Life with the promise of  
Creating and not destroying  
For this is the real question  
We need to ask soul to soul?

I move away from this window  
Into the darkness and feel  
The ground under me shaking  
Telling me the world is moving  
Towards celestial healing  
Where all will one day laugh  
At fissures we created while  
The earth was planning a real  
Earthquake.

Sarah Mkhonza

# My Roots Request The Roughness Of The Diamond

When I look at these tweets you sent,  
when love between us was smooth,  
like the diamond you gave me, so rough,  
as it graced my finger, I see the roughness  
of the diamond, and see it was cut from a bigger  
stone.

I see my roots in the stone, the bigger stone,  
for love is big and limitless in my mind. You  
got me and loved me in the morning of my  
one day life. By evening, you were done,  
and gone back to the sky.

Oh hear me out, as I speak our truths,  
for once this stone shiny on a band  
with depressions, that have darkened  
with the days, says, your roots of love,  
were equally shallow.

I say my roots are not here, on this smooth,  
kissing gone, you hissing my name, snaky you  
calling on love, like you were on a see-saw,  
waiting for my side to go down and yours to go  
up with my skirts in the air, with wind blowing  
my laughs of hope to the wind.

My roots repeat the roughness of the diamond,  
before it was cut to make me a part of you.  
You said you were sealing a deal of love,  
when you put this diamond in here.

Look how callous my hands have become,  
this love eased my finger and thrust life  
into my area of responsibility. I counted two,  
had two for that is where the ring was.

Now I remain the one handled, who would  
not handle another with equal roughness,  
for the diamond was cut, at edges wrong,

to tie me and you together when we were  
sons and daughters of different gods.

I long to speak at the court of the world,  
that this happened at the diamond cutter's table.  
They blame me and say I know how to pass blame,  
onto the merchants of love, for they never know  
what the buyer will do, with the diamond they cut.

You said you were going to love someone, and said  
it even in stone, when you were lying to the world,  
like the best bachelor in the world, that had us watching  
the biggest sham in history.

I am no keeper of secrets, this you know from being here.  
I also search spaces, this you know because if I tell the world,  
what I discovered when we two were one, you will say, I sure  
am a kiss and tell.

Why do you all claim to be good lovers, when you are takers?  
Why say you can go a mile, when you cannot even take one step?  
I long to hear from you lovers of the world, for I have come  
to love stories of love, baked anew, on alters in oven hot  
churches, for this we know is a story of man.

Keep on marching with the truth. For love is certain,  
to speak for itself, if I misrepresent it with my knowing,  
what I heard between two pillows, tired of supporting  
heads that loved one minute and fought the next, only  
to love again and then love no more.

If pillows could talk, they would not tell a soft story.  
yes not one as soft as feathers, for they have heard a lot.  
The stories would be as hard as the diamond here.  
It is sick and tired of my finger, for these days I do not  
even take the ring off when I wash dishes,  
for what is the point.

Let us celebrate knowing, for it leads to making anew.  
Renewing vows made with this diamond, could happen  
if you first answer my questions. What happens to the  
truth, , with which the diamond that seals the deal, is said

to cement? Does it harden in the cementing and end up  
a mystery only the gods can solve or a mystery that only  
the two people can solve? These are hard questions, you say.  
They will be answered when we open pillows, unseal cemented  
lies, and live the truth we sign and seal, like this diamond  
on my ring finger.

Sarah Mkhonza

# No Pattern No Do Said One Bird To Another

Have you ever wondered why  
Migratory birds up in the air  
Fly in a v-pattern I ask for we  
Are going on a long journey so  
We may as well as speak some  
Truth one to another? These  
Here ducks swimming in this river  
On the banks of which we stand  
Concur that this is to be  
Done by me and you if we must  
Live the life of migratory  
Birds with no wings who have  
A sense of direction.

The ducks whispered that  
Wrong vision, wrong way,  
Wrong everything and flapped  
Their wings splashing me  
With water and telling me  
To go and ask the birds.  
Feeling rejected for not  
Getting a hug from these  
Winged friends, but this  
Wet chastisement of this  
Splash I buzz off my eyes  
Looking sky high for winged  
Friends to tell me more for  
I live assured that these  
Rude ducks are unusual for  
Politeness is rife in the  
Bird world.

The birds tell me crooked  
Ways don't do it and their  
Suggestions tell me To  
Get into the vortex of truth  
As it spins in the air  
And follow them for if I

Do not have a clear way  
Ahead, I will be one of kind  
And lose my way alone  
While they constantly  
Follow the v-pattern  
For no v-pattern no do  
Says one bird to another

For me and you we live unsure  
Where our ways are going to  
Cross for if they do so we  
Will confuse each other  
If I lead the v-pattern  
Get the message, find your  
Wind and join in the flight  
For we are going far and  
Going in circles will not  
Do it. Winged friends or  
No winged friends to follow  
We have to reach the ends of  
The earth in season.

Sarah Mkhonza

# No Head No Tail This Jelly Fish

This substance nebulous  
Itchy like the story of  
My divorce which jaf me  
Scratching my head on the  
Way to the highest court  
In the land like going into  
An ocean insecure uncobered  
This story of my entering  
Into deep waters alone with  
A shadow that drowns itself  
In this alcohol that stings  
With no head no tail this  
Jelly fish.

I step out of the water so  
Glad I can reach for the spray  
And point it on my leg that  
Spot reddening fast for I am  
Scratching this itchy patch  
As if to confess I was as ignorant  
As zero for that empty was my mind  
When I got stung. I thought love  
Was an ocean and you bathed in it  
And drowned and came out dazed with  
Bliss a happiness indiscribable  
Now tell me where is the head of this  
Jellyfish that ended the game with  
A sad tangled mess sneaking in on my  
Blessed eye closed dive and had me  
Sitting here on the beach of life in  
Pain.

I am watching the sunset  
Creep in shyly as I ask  
Why happiness is so selective  
For these surfers don't seem  
To be even aware of jellyfish.  
They come out surfing boards  
Under their arms oblivious

Of the dilemma that has me dry  
Sandy and itchy my legs stretched  
Sandy and drying up in misery.

Sarah Mkhonza

# No Power No Do, For You Asked For It.

I sit here at this job,  
Feeling lost and unsure,  
My thoughts got to the end,  
Of this string that ties me,  
To this place where I empty,  
All my strength daily.

No power no do, I hear the words,  
My work has got me here,  
Where only words can save me,  
For I have worked with nothing but words,

The wind mill goes on and on,  
Churning water to levels higher,  
Sipping into dams bigger than me,  
What have I done while it worked?

No power no do it answers me,  
It looks at the sky drawing circles,  
That take my gave even higher,  
As it repeats no power, no do.

What have I done with the notes,  
I put into banks that chewed my guts,  
Telling people about higher figures,  
Wanting to accumulate money that sings back,  
No power no do?

What shall the sun say when it rises,  
Looking at my hands that have dried up,  
While I work on peeling scaleless potatoes,  
That fall into endless pots,  
With no soup for the children,  
For yesterday I worked all day,  
Today I cry all day singing one son,  
No money, no do/

This is the story the till tells when I pay,  
Wanting everything to walk to my house,

On the back of my backpack.  
For I do not want this hunchback I have become,  
To go home homeless, moneyless and lifeless,  
For life the ruthless taker that it is,  
Has left me with the same, no power, no do.

Did the bosses in the big office,  
Tell you when you arrived,  
It would be like this,  
Asks the sun as it sets?

I walk away from this place,  
A person whose strength is sapped,  
By the days that demand from me,  
And never feel the back pack I have become,  
That only fills up with the same money they want,  
And yet they say no power, no do.

Songs are evil, the wind mill says,  
That is why I turn and sing no more,  
Never knew how to sing, my friend,  
But just to turn and keep alive,  
For people need water from me,  
And not the piss that comes out of you,  
Daily showing you your struggles,  
That keep telling you life goes on,  
Piss or no piss, for no power no do,  
So stop this pissing and work,  
Before you will smell like death,  
When they drive you away,  
With no money but a smell that says  
You were also there,  
For you asked for it.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Nobody Listens To The Noisy Mower

The mower told the grass not to grow  
In the loudest of noises and the grass  
Stubbornly grew as if nobody had just  
Beaten it on the head and mowed it down  
Into tufts. The mower returned as  
Always and did the job the same way  
Knowing this time it would win,  
But the rain came to the aid of  
The grass and with an ally like it  
The battle waged on between the grass  
And the mower. The mower got older  
And its sound got louder until it  
Realized it was fighting a losing  
Battle for the rain told it never  
To fight a battle it cannot win  
Finally it died and was sold to a scrap  
Merchant who asked it why it was so  
Old and angry. It said the grass still  
Grows and mocks it each rainy season  
With shoots so new it had to quit  
In tears and hide away with embarrassment  
At how so weak an enemy could defeat  
So strong a power for its motor  
Was made in Germany by the best  
Of engineers. The scrap merchant  
Simply threw the mower in the heap  
And off he went to be remade into  
Steel for a railroad and only  
Then would the grass stop growing  
For the trains never allowed  
So stubborn a species to defeat  
it. The arms of a man who held  
The mower joined in applause for  
Finally his mower could rest.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Non-Stop Confrontations With Grace

I sit in the dark looking into space  
Counting the days on this journey  
To the panorama that is out in space  
And then wonder why I have the privilege  
To count these confrontations with grace  
Which are meant to be encounters in time.

For when I was supposed to do one thing  
I did another with audacity of a seahorse  
That jumps up and down and goes deeper  
And deeper in the corals where it thinks  
It is the most beautiful of all.

I sit in temperatures of grace that tell  
Of my being incognito for I have not joined  
Life on the center stage so that the spotlight  
Is right on me on this first act of love  
Where every source of the feeling that hits me  
Tells me I have a pride that I need to bend  
And twist on this parade of my ignorance.

I ask why this attack on a spirit weak and gaunt  
And then I get agitated for I do not get an answer  
Knowing that I have been told that man is weak  
Ever since I began hearing sounds of roosters  
And print them into memory for my grandmother  
Prayed at three in the morning always  
Calling for grace from a god she called  
In Zulu words that begin in So.

I feel my feet walking on the gravel roads  
Early in the morning with her shadow following  
The moonlight in the west telling me it is time  
For this grace that got us walking is the same  
As the one that keeps us breathing.

I know I have had confrontations with grace  
For the spirit yelled asking questions hidden  
Inside my person for I had come to know

That is in confrontations that the anger  
Is spilled out into the open and heard by grace  
And then brought back calmly in an answer like  
A whisper of someone far away, asking me what it  
Is I am saying for the answers are clear.

I have seen a movie of my life played out  
In a screen unseen as each elder who gave me  
Counsel I despised stood on a spotlight  
And said words that answer each and every one  
Of these confrontation with grace, for they  
Were unforgettable encounters that bore the  
Truth of yesterday's thoughts.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Not Just Giant Walking Puppets

messing with democratic systems  
is indeed what it is this unseen  
covering up tracks in the snow  
depressions looking into the  
eyes of the sky saying someone  
called Big Foot was visiting the  
dark corners in cyberspace like a  
cockroach in the dark and surely  
did cut the pound of  
is why there is all this hemorrhaging.  
tomorrow's inauguration tells you  
to come and put me on the scale  
to check if the weight plus blood  
was just a pound. weigh also the  
country just to be sure how much  
it will have bled when they are done  
done with it. as for. me bury me with  
my hands outside the pile of earth  
so I can write a telling poem to let  
you know what it is like where I will  
be so that you do not get caught  
with your pants. down, the way it  
happened to me. I was gutted and  
they wanted to taste my brain arguing  
that it was included in the pound of  
flesh, these giant walking puppets.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Now I Charge Him Of Vehicle Embezzlement

The judges believe the young man took that  
Car because I was in love with him. I ask  
The judge how a woman three score years can  
Be in love with a young man of seventeen who  
Is her next door neighbor. He says I left the  
Keys in the car and had had him drive it before  
I argue that I was sick and had nobody to drive  
Me for in these years when my varicose veins  
Have me limping I cannot trust my leg on the  
Gas pedal. Therefore this charge of vehicle  
Embezzlement that has the world against me.

His mother swears I have kissed him before.  
I deny and say I would rather go to jail  
Than do an act so improper for the child  
Is underage. I never knew that cars could  
Be embezzled and now I know that you can  
Embezzle a cat and also a jacket. For when  
Something is not yours, it is not yours.

I grew up with the law, written on my hand  
For my father did not pay child support.  
I did not know that he was embezzling that  
Money which was supposed to have made me  
Into a better person than what I am. If  
He had owned up, I would be Miss Universe  
For I would have not bought the food I  
Ate and gotten so big for lack of a  
Proper Meal. When you embezzle food note  
That it may be in this world where you  
Are putting the money in the cheaper stuff  
And hence will pay for the weight will show  
You were taking where you should have not.

This bait is in every trap where you might  
Put your hand in the cookie-jar. Take it  
as kleptomania this deed of stealing what  
Is not yours. As we say in the south of  
Africa, what is not yours hands off.

Do cut your hand off before you get charged  
With all kinds of embezzlement for if we  
Can embezzle cars, I do not know where  
The buck stops.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Now That I Have Failed The Test

Mom now that I brought home the F  
Who am I. You are my daughter who  
Will try again for like the leaves  
On the tree it will be green again  
For we know it is by trying just  
One more time that we win.

But my friends laugh at me. Leave  
Them alone for they have never been  
The leaf that makes the trees green  
And when on the ground knows to bounce  
Back is more important than not bouncing  
Let alone not bouncing back.

What about now that they won't  
Lend me their erasers? Tell them  
You have a rubber tree at home and  
It rains erasers and your family  
Owns a rubber tree farm in India.

Sarah Mkhonza

# On A Nie Blankes Durban Beach

Rocks on this beach mean  
This is all the beach you  
can get you tainted ones.  
White sands on the Blankes  
beach. This one for Blacks  
they call Umgababa.

No hotels, no flashy northern  
lights for the non fans  
They can have Black swim.  
But not on white sands in  
this Durban turf, never to  
be a home turf even when here

Sarah Mkhonza

# On Human Rights Day

Let's suppress this mutineers  
Against the world where people  
Run around no people for their  
Rights are wronged I governments  
Where everything right is wrong.  
Where freedom is in chains, where  
Words of others are lile cries os  
A stray cat. Let the world open  
Its doors to those who walk the  
World a people abandoned and scattered in the world at the  
Threshing floor of life.

Here the winnowing folk of fate Sifts the husks from the  
Grain and sets on the road to the edge of the world where they await their fate  
to be thrown over the edge of the precipice.

Here they stand the wind blowing  
Tears off their cheeks and carring  
Them into the air we breathe. When  
The air is saturated with tears who  
Are we? When our own have no shelter  
And food what have we done?

Let us not fold our hands and carry  
Them on our heads for we have the  
Power to rewrite this story of  
Deprivation. A right is a right just  
As it says let us make it happen  
In our time this giving of the  
World on human rights day.

Sarah Mkhonza

# On My Last Gasp

I want my last gasp  
To be a poet's gasp  
That salutes the world  
Announcing my bowing out  
With words read loud,  
Pronouncing with respectful  
Commas that curtesy with  
The grace of heavenly nymphs.

I want to look behind and see  
Seed popping moist with my  
Watering, fruit ripening  
And ready for the picking

I want to smell lavender  
That takes me under and  
Lays my head in heavenly  
Smells that fill the downstairs  
Where my nostrils yield in  
The final place of surrender  
For I will have perfumed the  
World we live in with wonder.

I want to bow out to a gun salute  
Fired with pens held by writers  
At a poetic angle that asks what  
They will do now that one of  
Their own has fallen.

I want to trouble minds so that  
The poets cough out answers  
With a poetry that will feed  
On the love of an art we have  
Grown to love that our hearts  
Burst from the love of it.

I do not want to go out with  
Mourners quoting my last twit  
And then have a sudden lasting fit

When a god forsaken hecker threatens  
To take it away so I have nothing  
To attest I was here, forcing  
My friends to pad my orbituay  
With lies and quotations from  
The King James version of the  
Only book that accompanies saints  
And gets read outside the hole  
Declaring the obvious truths.

Sarah Mkhonza

# On The Wings Of A Blessed Dove

For those of you people of the south who want to know  
I received the news on the wings of a blessed dove.  
Hearing it was like tasting honey on the beak of  
A vulture for I looked at the dove and knew the past  
Of woe and looked at the birds that never carry  
Any good news to anyone with suspicion.

Why should I not have been surprised seeing rain  
That falls on top a desert date tree making it  
Sway this way and that in the wind with joy?  
For never in the history of my life had I been  
Chosen to lead the majorettes with the mace in  
My hand.

They have chosen me the riders of horses that  
Live in cyberspace and trot to the sound of  
Visitors from everywhere who come to the kingdom  
Of the one-eared king saying I am the queen  
Of a kingdom that is about to be built.

I agree to serve with my all for I have seen this  
King with a hat for a crown for there are no diamonds  
There to be used to fashion a crown, let alone a tiara  
But, birds with feathers of velvet that when worn  
Render all the 'citoyen' to sing louder than the loudest  
Of birds.

This message on the wings of a blessed dove is  
Fitting for the likes of me for I dance the dances  
Of the people on cyberspace and let the world  
Know that to marry a king with a hat for a crown  
Is something that blesses those who come from  
The mountain where horses are as many as dogs.

Next time you hear I am the queen of Bongo  
Know that I was Bongo bound even before I  
Saw the king for my dreams have always been  
About kings, queens and palaces.



# On This Park Bench

Here on this park bench sits  
A memory as old as the bench  
For it is here that my mother  
Met my father and entered into  
The life that begot me.

Little did they know they had  
Started a chain reaction of love  
For now generation after generation  
We have married women we meet on  
Park benches without sitting with  
Them on family pews in church  
For this thing called love defies  
Even the rules of Pope Sir Francis  
The most radical of them all.

What wood made this bench that has us  
Tied to its own radical history?  
Go ask the priest how much he paid  
For the cassock he wears and you  
Will know the answer. For my mother  
Will tell me where she first kissed  
My father if not on this park bench.

For I like the story of lovers making  
Me on a park bench. It is a wild story  
Of flowers and gardens my children would  
Love and then carry on the tradition  
Of citizens who voted yes to life  
On this park bench

Sarah Mkhonza

# Once Do-Gooder Turned No-Gooder

Once you turned in your work  
before the teacher told the date.  
Now you lag behind and time pushes  
ahead with you facing backwards  
waiting on the belt called no-gooder.

Once the tablets were taken  
as the prescription dictated,  
now yo swallow one here and one there  
saying you fear no sickness,  
for they are just giving you medicine  
when they are not sure what is wrong with you.

Once you crossed at the red and green light  
now you watch for cars and dash across the road  
anywhere, like the stray from the neighborhood  
for the earth once unfamiliar, now reads like the sand,  
that you see on your doorstep.

They say familiarity breeds contempt.  
Is it doing the same to you, making you  
give up on humanity and also on yourself  
for once you were a do goober, even helping  
neighbors with parcels when they walked toward  
the house.

What happens when you lose touch,  
with the best part of you, like a virgin  
failing to cling on to the promise once  
kept to the body, that not this boy or that,  
but the one who has the touch of love,  
and can keep your body warm, with the kisses  
longed for, and years of waiting.

Keep the gentleman's touch like Tom,  
Open doors for ladies and pay for the  
dinner for two. I miss the do-gooder in you,  
and hate the no-gooder for I do not know  
where that came from.

Sarah Mkhonza

# One Flash In The Dark

If it's lightning in a rainy storm,  
you wish for no repeat. In your flashlight  
you hope the battery is not dead. You wait  
on prayer mode for the answer. Luck  
comes and then more thunder. The storm  
is in control.

The slithering snake held by your flash  
means your foot is safe. We crave and need  
with ought thinking for we hold our own  
invisible flashlight. To switch it on when  
is the question, storm, snake or thunder.  
The dance in the storm is in control.

Sarah Mkhonza

# One Joke One Giggle At A Time

If looks can kill I am  
Dead already for yours  
Tear a woman's heart  
Into two.

If love is a mystery write  
My story in faint ink so you  
Can go over the writing over  
And over for your touch writes  
On me a story fit to be told  
To the few who have tasted the  
Honey etched onto me by the  
Movements of your dance moves.

I know my jokes crack you up  
And as your looks do likewise  
Let us die one joke, one giggle  
At a time. The world waits to  
Know where this will end one day  
At a time, son of an elder.

\* Title borrowed from Obama's 'one  
joke, one dance at a time.

Sarah Mkhonza

# One Migratory Bird To Another 'no V Pattern No Do'

Have you ever wondered why birds  
Fly in a v-pattern I ask for we  
Are going on a long journey so  
We may as well as speak some  
Truth one to another? These  
Here ducks swimming in this river  
On the banks of which we stand  
Concur that this is to be  
Done by me and you if we must  
Live the life of migratory  
Birds with no wings who have  
A sense of direction.

The ducks whispered that  
Wrong vision, wrong way,  
Wrong everything and flapped  
Their wings splashing me  
With water and telling me  
To go and ask the birds.  
Feeling rejected for not  
Getting a hug from these  
Winged friends, but this  
Wet chastisement of this  
Splash I buzz off my eyes  
Looking sky high for winged  
Friends to tell me more for  
I live assured that these  
Rude ducks are unusual for  
Politeness is rife in the  
Bird world.

The birds tell me crooked  
Ways don't do it and their  
Suggestions tell me To  
Get into the vortex of truth  
As it spins in the air  
And follow them for if I  
Do not have a clear way

Ahead, I will be one of kind  
And lose my way alone  
While they constantly  
Follow the v-pattern  
For no v-pattern no do  
Says one bird to another

For me and you we live unsure  
Where our ways are going to  
Cross for if they do so we  
Will confuse each other  
If I lead the v-pattern  
Get the message, find your  
Wind and join in the flight  
For we are going far and  
Going in circles will not  
Do it. Winged friends or  
No winged friends to follow  
We have to reach the ends of  
The earth in season.

Sarah Mkhonza

# One Stitch After Another Woman To

Woman to woman  
We make my bridal dress  
Of home made lace.

She shows me niddle in hand,  
How the hook goes in and out  
Tying knots that make me ask  
If the camel will go through  
The eye of this neeedle  
When the question about riches  
Is asked of me and him.

I try on the bridal dress as mother  
Puts the finishing touches to it  
Mother, I ask, how did you do  
On the question on riches?

Don't get cold feet.  
The camel has two humps  
If you keep both pairs of hands  
On its back it ceases to  
Be rocky and you go through  
Expect the rough ride for  
Desert sand goes into your  
Eyes even before you get there  
Where you have to walk your  
Camel through that trying place.  
Just make sure it is not loaded.

Can I take my jewelery box which  
Sings and has the angelic ballerina?  
She is the magic charm from my Black heritage.  
Don't ask me, I took mine, which is  
Why you have it.  
You have to take water, for sure,  
For a camel does not share its supply

Now do some stitching while I look,  
I push the niddle through and work

To the end of the last row happily  
As stitch by stitch we finish being  
Two women sharing before my final exit. This last scene ends here.  
For I can now see him getting on the  
Camel that was lying down, for this ride I greet with nervous giggles.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Open The Fear With Forgiveness

Push into the darkness of the deed,  
Push harder than a hammer would do,  
Get in there and laugh as aloud do,  
There will be an echo that you hear,  
It will be doing a new thing to anger,  
Creating a space between you two,  
That no one can close after you do.

Walk in there with eyes of forgiveness,  
Everybody will be quiet as you move,  
Take the darkness between you out,  
And shake every hand of kind and cruel,  
The darkness will be starved and go,  
For your laughter is an eraser.

Never move with closed doors of unforgiveness,  
They will multiply and haunt your future,  
They will reopen and crowd you out  
And return you to places,  
Where you were dwarfed by rejection,  
And mutilated by insults,  
And killed by beatings.

Forgiveness is a tool,  
It is an invisible machine,  
It minces the pieces in there,  
and greases the rough rust,  
And then creates a new flow,  
A you that can hold blue light.  
The you that has a pseudonym

Love's namesake this forgiveness,  
They walk together and hold hands,  
And kiss each other like lovers,  
When you marry them at the alter,  
For the rings are ready in your heart.  
Take the plunge and get wet in the eyes,  
Life keeps pushing you the other way,  
Turn the other cheek at it and wave,

For the distance to forgiveness is long,  
For there love also rests nearby longing,  
For the two of you to merge.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Opening The Treasure Coves Deep Down

Hidden beyond the place  
The eye can see are treasure  
Coves waiting for you to  
Open them and take your  
Share of what is yours.

You came with the mind, the  
Spade in your hand. Break the  
Surface and see little by  
Little what only you can uncover  
For if you sit blinded by the  
Luminous sun called the now the  
Treasure will be found by another.

Don't sell your treasure to the  
Thief called time. It will rob  
You and say it will pay you  
Tomorrow. Remember if you stand  
And dig in the now, the treasure  
Will pile up and stand with you  
Tomorrow for that time is coming  
To stand with you in the now.  
Plan an ongoing now and then call it tomorrow for if you call a spade  
A spade, the digging gets better. That is the wisdom the ant lives  
wise, so small, so busy,  
Copy her and rest when tired.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Orchids In The Tea Room

I thought of orchids pink  
And yellow and tea sipped  
With two straws that pull  
It into my mouth at once  
For the cup and saucer I  
Held in my hand had a handle  
Of gold for it had been passed  
down in the family.

The thought of orchids still  
lingers in my mind for they  
Brought to me a happiness  
That made my love with my  
Cup of tea a celebration  
Of my the time I have lived  
For I am advancing in years.

These orchids planted by mama  
In this room remind me of her  
Legs stretched in front of her  
As she said I should get her  
More milk.

I always forgot to check if  
The milkman had come and she  
Said to the clink clink I made  
In our kitchen, 'just to look  
Near the door would not kill you,  
Now give me the condensed milk.'

Mama's tea went down better with  
Fresh milk with cream for she loved  
To see it floating at the top  
And draw it in and leave a bit  
Hanging on her lip to be cherished  
With the next sip on her white cup  
With the roses on it.

Mama had a collection of teapots

Some of which had special knitted  
warmers that they wore to keep her  
Precious tea hot till daddy came home.  
Then the two would sit and drink  
Their tea over stories of growing  
Up poor during the depression and  
Laugh at how we children have never  
Tasted dry bread.

The Blue Delpht set was only used  
When Pastor came to visit for  
Everyone knew it had come  
All the way from Holland and  
Had to be used for dinners and tea times  
Of those who speak for God.

The orchids in my house attest  
To this for they have heard  
And seen the past written by  
The two with me erasing truths  
As I told about the milkman  
Whose duties I seemed to overlook  
Knowing that one day I would  
Forget to tell this story of tea.

When you see an orchid yellow  
Remember those do not smell  
But their look is so alive  
That it touched the heart of  
A couple and made them produce  
A child like me over a look  
That that began over a cup of  
Two in an tea room built by two  
Full of flowers both in vases  
And on cups and saucers.

I saw it proven that love  
Goes down deeper and sweeter  
When taken down with a cup  
Of tea by two lovers whose  
Habit of sharing goes beyond  
The knowledge of the children

Whom they born over the years.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Our History In Tatters

I see lives pulled asunder,  
words biting, piercing what  
we worked out to a lay out  
that aimed to shield us all.

Now we speak with arms  
raising placards that say  
Wa-wa-wa- - WAIT! You did  
not mean what you said, that  
some people must not come  
into a land that let you and yours  
into its belly where you made a  
bedchamber and now you lie  
in it and kick the door closed.  
when the very chamber is named  
after their seas.

This deed leaves mine and your  
history in tatters, for we write  
it everyday with the ink of the blood  
of those who weed the fields, pick  
the red peppers and pick the grapes  
yet have never tasted a single bottle  
of the wine you sell at a price of  
a week's wages. Wait! This Mayflower  
cannot land on this shore with you  
on it. Next! Green Card, you semi immigrant!

Sarah Mkhonza

# Our Sing Along Game Is Over

There were the times you would lead  
And I would follow for yours was a tenor  
That could open the heavens and get the  
Rain pouring down on the whole of southern  
Africa if we needed it.

For you started every song and I followed  
For the melody in your voice was sweet  
Meaningful and easy to follow. Now that you  
have run away with the choir soloist in blue  
I still look back at the space you occupied  
And hope my Pavaroti will come back and do  
It just once more.

They told me you have gone to the next church  
For you hop around churches like real bed hoppers  
And I was embarrassed for I knew you to be an ideal  
Person that I could follow. Now that the truth  
Is out, how can we look at the word.

You have cheated us of the love of your back up  
And our sing along is out of tune for it lacks  
The likes of singers like you. We have to get  
Back and create what we had just for the sake  
Of the people who are your fans. I know I am  
speaking for the angels as well for they heard  
You singing hymns, ballads and all.

How can our game be over before it started?  
Just because you loved a girl? This love thing  
Is not on the contract you signed when you had  
Us stand up and sing for the people. Tell you  
Mother you are sorry for she looked up and went  
To the alter to pray and everyone knew it was  
Because of you. For when you sang she knew she  
Had done the world a lot of good for peace came  
Down and settled on the battle field we call  
A house of worship instead of calling it a 'warship.'



# Page By Page We Plod On

To finish what we started, we must plod on. This ticking when marking this pile of essays has to go on.

In plodding we expect a surprise, this good essay we can read to everybody. It tells the story is beginning.

This plodding must go on for something is brewing. Yesterday's yeast is working. There will be shoots green.

The seasons are the real seasoning for we see changes that come from the ashes that we blew into with pouted mouths. They tell us love is no silent deed.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Painstakingly Simple Is The Answer

When that one spoonful you are not supposed  
To put into your mouth gets lifted, just say  
No and put it down.

When that one order on the checkout list gets  
Where the budget does not say you should go, get  
The right picture of what happens. You are going  
Beyond the beyond into debt territory, the big hole  
Where it will be hard to turn back.

When that smoochy feeling that is not wisely guided  
Comes and caresses your soul, you know it is wrong  
Just say, the one two letter word that howls in the  
Wind and is mostly unheeded.

When the result will be chickens coming home to roost  
It is better to stop them from leaving and cut out the  
Beaks and strip them of wings for the shame one will see  
When they are done roosting.

We learn to be told that to do is simply to do  
But to do wisely, at the right time, in the right way  
Is left an untold story that slips through the fingers and  
Each one of us has to figure it out for themselves, in  
This world where the word discipline became complicated  
A long time ago.

It is painstakingly complicated, this living of life  
In simple ways, where we indulge ourselves of all that  
Is called experience and not choose the things important  
And potent with future blessings from portions of a size  
Of mouth bites and speeches of grace that shape  
So painstakingly simple truths elude us is a mystery  
That is always revealed at the bottom of the hole we dig  
Daily and fall into with our eyes open.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Palm Tree, Swing And Sway For Me

It stands tall its leaves reaching for the sky,  
T his palm tree that gave me life,  
Its sap made my people drink,  
After tapping its endless tap,  
And sapping its endless sap.

This same palm whose nut I ate,  
This coconut from which I drank  
While smearing its butter on my skin.  
Its aged leaves now bowing down,  
Refusing to look up and give to you,  
Letting go of the stem that holds,  
Like rich notes of money peeling,  
From a bundle that the merchant peels  
When he goes to banks you send him.

What will I do when you lie down forever,  
Your sap like milk all dried up,  
With shriveled fruit with no milk for me,  
No nipples sweet where yesterday we drank,  
Licking our hands and mouth greedily,  
Without thinking one day you will go,  
Never to sing and rand give us sap no more?

Palm tree, palm tree sing to me,  
When the wind blows, let your leaves move,  
Let the leaves that look down share,  
In this life that you have given,  
Palm tree wise, palm tree tall,  
With my hands I reach out to you,  
And touch your sap around me,  
For it dripped into our hut,  
And gave us life when we were poor.

Where will we go when you are gone?  
Where will the warmth of your smells go?  
What can I do to make you stay  
And feed me with your butter, sap and all? .  
For I have eaten fruit that falls,

Your leaves swaying writing my life,  
Which I would read in years to come,  
For you came to bless with all you have,  
Endless spirit of endless giving.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Peace Be Unto Aleppo

I am not Aleppo bound  
But after seeing Omram  
I feel the need to say  
I feel for the world  
When children die under  
So much rubble caused  
By bombs of people old  
Who cannot talk and agree  
To end this war.

I sit and grieve and see  
People fleeing in all  
Directions where the world  
Is standing looking on and  
Doing the least it can and  
Know I am the world too  
And equally an onlooker.

This destruction of things  
Build by hands cannot destroy  
The depth of life but it does  
Have Omram rubbing his eyes  
For he came out of this rubble.

I feel the orphan holding  
A hand under the rubble  
His mother gone. Her hand  
is cold and yet the little  
One holds and comes out  
With no limbs to walk  
Even when found.

Could life talk back  
And tell the world  
What is to be done  
Where people die  
And never know what  
Life is like when  
Breathed under skies

Where bombs don't  
Rumble and throw up  
Rubble that makes hands  
Fumble listening to voices  
Mumble in the darkness of the  
Tumble that has them  
Gamble if they will live or die  
For life has been tossed up  
Like a die to land on  
The number four which means  
You win and then get out  
Alive.

We say peace be unto Aleppo  
For what else is there to do  
Than pray to the powers of our  
World to stop fueling this fight  
That has never stopped for I  
Was born and knew of Beirut  
And now of Aleppo and thus  
Wonder why there is never peace  
In this part of the world where  
We all fumble, tumble, into rubble  
And gamble with the lives of others.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Peace Says We Must Mend The Net

Fishing in the deepest end,  
we catch others and others  
escape. We keep at it for  
peace is a meal we all need.

We throw the net where the  
most fish are and find that  
the tear is bigger there.

Hearts are hurting and souls  
are burning. The mending of  
this net, this peace so elusive  
is like catching the fish while  
looking how big the hole in the  
net is.

The hole is agape, spitting hurts,  
and hurling them at us, the way this  
wind splashes angry salty water at  
everybody who tries to close the net.

Peace we love, hurt we throw back in  
the water, only to find the world is  
still ridden with what we thought we  
were working at ending.

The fishermen know you never give up.  
The next catch can surprise you.  
You can win even after failing for years.  
for peace gets made in the mending of  
the net.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Pear Tree Of Afrikaanerdome

This resemblance, it's resurrection.  
is a pear tree of Afrikaanerdome.

You wake up eating pears, laughing here,  
having jumped the fence into this farmyard.

Dutch houses speak volumes. Their faces do. Cracks agape, yes so agape  
you can stick your finger in them and  
cause an apocalypse.

They say it is coming. These chimneys have  
been looking at heaven for the Afrikaner  
did say, there was a secret he guards as he lays in his grave of hidden Kruger  
rands.

The tree is ours now. It is loyal to our  
mouths, and not the Land Act.

This pear tree can swear we know how to  
climb for its branches have seen our  
undergarments. We have run away many  
a time from the ghost of the farmer in the  
grave.

Passing here in our pastimes we wonder  
who lies abandoned to sleep in a Dutch house forever.

I hear the farmer sing  
and swear aloud, while snoring  
'the days are gone, so hear me out  
with your eyes for see, I labored  
for you and died of old age on the  
wrong side of the color bar. This fence  
guards me from perpetual trespassers like you young braves of the law written  
so this land is mine.'

Yet we still eat the pears, till the tree  
stands without one. For have to fulfill our mission.

Who can separate us from the love of pears, neither fence, nor time, nor dead farmer. For we have been deafened and hardened by time under this pear tree of Afrikaanderdom.

Bathtubs, old abandoned lie full of grass.  
Like chimneys, they look up the sky as if  
to get even.

Fruits of the little free state, a rare  
plant, like wattles and gum trees.

Childhood visit, mark out the pear tree,  
as children wish they could grow on their  
doorstep.

having borrowed

Sarah Mkhonza

# Penning Down My Own Blues In A Birdlike Manner

When life changed from blue to red  
Everything became magenta for they  
Say this bloody color came out of war.  
This war I have with the spirit in me  
Takes over and the battle of my soul  
Enters another level.

I pray to poetry to save the few who  
Undergo the battle of their soul and  
Turn to the world to type a poem of  
Things unsound such as an attack and  
A rejection.

I please a few and hurt a few when I  
Spew out words like a hose watering  
The plants hoping a few will live in  
These days when we have a famine for  
Love was plenty so they say in the  
Seventies for we loved freely and  
Let live.

The rules of the game changed and  
We had to learn that to love is to  
Selfishly do so or you remain alone  
One the bridge to nowhere for people  
Take things not held close to the  
Chest by those who are not keepers  
Of their loves.

I learned to cry until I tell myself  
To quiet down for the tears are a sign  
Of an emotion in the air that will leave  
Me to my solace all alone at the end of  
Time.

I have learned to ask for company on  
The journey in the chase for happiness  
For it has eluded many for I swear it  
Is hidden in the belly of God

For us to find in the next.

For those of you who walk the tight rope  
Of life with hands outstretched in the  
Dark don't fall off for it is far down  
There where you will be smashed incognito  
By this thing that irks us all.

Have a good day each day and count the  
Seconds you are unhappy on the count  
Down of five and then look back and  
Count the day as a day of happiness  
For you spent it burying the beast  
Each time it raised its head.

I remain a speaker on the alter of  
The Miserable few who have decided  
To equate their happiness to not  
Doing for to do so is to die while  
You still live. Give when you are  
Happy and when you are sad even if  
It is to pen a few words about your  
Own blues.

Who said the birds sing always  
For we know when men shoot a few  
They die a death like us, but the  
Flock flies on and sings some more  
For not to do so is to be no bird.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Please Join Me In The Party

I'm looking for joy  
That I can pour into a cup,  
And drink myself to sleep,  
And snore like a real drunk,  
And wake up with a hangover,  
That I can carry everywhere,  
Till others join me in the party

Sarah Mkhonza

# Poem Stitching With A Dull Needle

Tasked with the impossible  
on the day of the occasion,  
I need a new inventor to create  
a thing for sharpening poen needles.  
Stitching and running, I employ  
the hemming stitch. I back stitch  
to finish a task with these three  
I get on with the task to sew the  
back and front only to find I have  
the dullest of niddles. Don't blame  
me or the poem for the niddles did it.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Poison Ivy In My Thoughts

If I could touch my thoughts  
I could remove this poison  
ivy that touched them long  
ago. It itches and now and  
then I keep scratching the  
same place. I pull on the skin  
and it turns reddish and then  
I stop only to start again.  
I look for an antidote to stop  
me scratching and wish my  
thoughts were in my hand  
so I could deep it in water  
and pray for the itch to stop.

Even when people say I must  
not go there, where the itch  
is, I cannot help but do that,  
because the pull to go there  
is out of my control.

There have been times I have  
thought of scratching the itchy  
parts with a fragrance and softness  
of a rose's petals, but even then  
it really itched again.

What stops this itch, I ask  
the sage. Nothing. What is  
nothing. It is a thing that is  
not there. Is that to mean  
my scratching is like life,  
it goes on and on endlessly.

Life had an end. It comes boom,  
so the poison ivy in the heard  
came boom, but the boom was  
not live because you would have  
heard it and moved out of the way.  
These stealthy move come with

the manner in which the first thoughts come. They do not volunteer, so they cannot stop when they want to. That is why you scratch. It is like trying to stop an ever ringing bell. It will always ring. When you learn to block your ears, you will have done yourself some good.

Will I not touch there? Even when you do, the stopper that you have used is yours to pull out. Thanks, I say to the sage and continue to look for the right type of stopper to use to stop the scratching. Like thimbles, my fingers start to fit themselves with something that gives me hope.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Puddle Puddle Whose Are You

Puddle wise, puddle warm,  
tell me. Whose are you?

Your fluffy hair makes me jealous.  
Your eyes so soft make me wonder  
If I will have eyes like that.  
Why do you ask?

Sarah Mkhonza

## Put Fire They Said.

Put fire says a slogan old by men as  
They work on the railway tracks.  
They work the metal breaks of trains  
Their little carrier on the rail  
They push daily and look into each  
And every wheel to make sure  
That the goods get as far as needed.

I walk on the rails to give them tea,  
Huge red and white flask with lines  
Running down with a lid closed to  
Keep the warmth of the tea in there  
And then sit and wait for my being  
There means the break has to begin.

My father orders a stop for he must  
Join me in my wait and make it short  
For a girl on the tracks is just another  
Trip to the world of men where I jump  
On railway slippers with legs long  
The girl who can work in tomorrow's world  
For I can make tea.

I sit and look at trains crossing lines  
And spitting their steam into the air  
For these are the days of the steam  
Engine that runs on fire all the way  
Taking ore to the ships that send it  
As far as Japan. Toyotas begin to  
Trickle into our world and we do not  
Know that our ore will one day lose  
Worth for the grade is going down  
To a place where all this has to stop.

The railway workers move to other towns  
For the trains cannot run all the way  
When the ore is lower graded far away  
For life changes when the buyer cannot  
Gain what the seller wants to give

Even at a low price to keep people  
At work.

So we spread our wings as our livelihood  
Shrinks to nothing for now only those  
Who seek wisdom in books can sell their  
Labor while the railway workers get  
Retrenched for life has come to an End.

Gone are the days of Portuguese workers  
Who knew no English but just one phrase  
'Put fire' for welding brakes onto the  
Wheels of the trains needed just that  
One. Put fire they did until no wheels  
Were there in which the fire could go.  
Such is the job that is done by a worker  
Taught the skill that keeps the railway  
Running.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Puzzle Pieces Missing

When you have put together the pieces  
You will feel so proud for the picture  
Will not have those missing spaces that  
Tell us the journey is still very long.

My father's hand picks a piece and lays  
It on the blue light and I see the light  
The star is brighter and my mom also  
Picks a piece and I see the ears of the  
Angel and they shine.

These hands also pick the color red and I  
See the dress is not my type of dress but  
One I could wear to a prom one day and then  
I look at the shoes black like the center  
Of my eye and I see this puzzle is going  
To take us long to complete but the warmth  
Of our being is what keeps us playing the  
Game called life.

Now that I see our house I can tell that the  
Missing piece is the one my brother will come  
And put in and little sister has a share in  
This game called making our place here on the  
Table where the incomplete puzzle lays. You  
Pull the table cloth and all goes into disarray  
And this is also our house already starting to  
Fall on the floor piece by piece. The gathering  
Of these will still be the work we came to do.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Questions Only A Dove Can Answer

Why build a nest at all? So you can lay a nest egg.

Why coo so loud? Because nobody cares about the decibels of sweet sounds.

Why fly in twos. Why not. To confuse those who want to kill. When they aim we all fly away at once.

Why mess up outside the buildings. So the world can know our numbers are getting fewer. Man is going to have to be friendlierto dwindling populations.

Why flap two wings? Flapping one does not rhyme with reason. Hence the threat of going into prison, for that would be treason.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Questions With No Question Mark.

What would it be like  
To hear her voice call you  
With cruelty ringing aloud  
Yelling to intimidate you  
Amidst crowds that look at you.

What would it be like to wake  
To beatings and hear her calling  
You names and giving you looks  
That kill and be acknowledged  
For nothing at the age of five.

What would it be like to work  
And not be paid, be seen and  
Not heard, and lie down finally  
At the end of the day crying,  
Only to be shouted at and told  
To not cry&gt;

What would it be like to hear your  
Own mother in the distance crying  
Being beaten by a sick man and hear  
All those around you laughing as  
If they were watching a movie that  
Is ongoing daily in their minds  
And just be unable to do anything  
But watch the flames of a fire  
And sob quietly for you do not  
Want those who are laughing to  
Know the pain you feel as it  
Moves from the woman's body  
Into your psyche in the space  
In between the two homesteads  
The way life moves today on  
Cyberspace.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Reading The Bible Upside Down

They read the bible daily,  
and also read it inside out,  
and even read it in the moonlight,  
having borrowed the eyes of the owl,  
when they realized that the bat had none.  
This first reading turned their lives  
into the 'no saints' they would be.

They called their neighbors to  
come and read the big book  
that had fallen from the sky.  
Together they consumed  
the rare dinner, calling it the  
last supper.

Strangers came and asked  
for a share as small as a morsel,  
from this book turned food.  
They joined for the book was  
open, to a psalm 21 where  
together they found a shepherd  
all their own, leading them to pastures  
green, Together they sang of an almighty, inside  
a synagogue, called a guegonasy,  
for every syllable was read backwards.

Together they built a national synagogue,  
now reading guegonasy, only to find they  
were getting more inside their head, for the  
building was now upside down. The roof  
was at the bottom and the foundation  
was looking at the sun, wondering,  
if the joke would end, for it was not  
liking this. Cracking, and needing help  
it could not take anymore.

Sandy and foolish up there, the foundation,  
started blowing sand into the eyes of onlookers.  
The neighbors were looking

at the upside down church, now a problem  
in the whole neighborhood.

When the bats returned, at night, they got  
a shock of their lives in their small bodies.  
'Is this what they did in our absence? Let us  
ask the church mouse, for he always stays  
here. 'Church mouse, how could you allow  
these holy rollers to do so foolish a thing  
as to render us homeless for the church  
now stands upside down? "

The church mouse, in all his poverty  
for words, wondered how the bats  
could ask him. Surely they could  
see he had no skills to do such,  
much as he would have loved to  
see the upside down purses and  
wallets flying as things got to this  
extent. Emptying the purses of these  
want wits would have changed his  
name, the only person with a name  
and surname in this building.

'See, how mean you are? You separated  
yourselves from the rest of these, built  
a community of one color, pooped on the  
benches in the 'guegonasy, ' and I had to  
make my way around all this mess made  
by you. What did you think the Lord would  
do? Capsize the whole thing! He does not  
joke with the likes of you. Now you ask me  
what happened? As if I was there. Go and ask  
the termites. When you exclude the few from  
the meal, thy use their power and together  
they call on the heavenliness and. Voila!  
A guegonasy ready to turn into rubble.

This is not Noah's ark you fools.  
It is not floating in no unnamed sea.  
This game of exclusion that left me  
the poorest in the building of the Lord,

always ends like this.

One more hint on your dilemma,  
when church was going on, you were making  
squeaky noises up there, trying to squeeze  
under the rafters of the rooftops so you  
could see into the book, so you all read  
the bible upside down.

What, may I ask, did you get in the end?  
An upside down church, now eat of this  
pineapple upside down cake like church.  
Don't try to pick out the cherries, for you  
will not see them. Go you foolish ones of  
the earth, who live up there. Remember  
the termites are coming. They do not need  
a ladder. They will finish off this dinner.

Together we will have second helpings and I  
will enjoy the left overs, for I will empty the  
purses, get richer than the billionaires, for I  
will always survive the verbal earthquake,  
even if limping and lopsided, for the tremors  
that will happen cannot hurt me and my friend  
the cockroach.

In reading the bible upside down, people  
of my congregation, ours is a story that will  
end when finally we reach heaven'

having borrowed

Sarah Mkhonza

# Real Change Lies Next To You

I asked what to do  
I saw my fix real  
It was looking at me  
It was lying next to me  
I turned and there it was  
Looked at the wall  
Looked at the ceiling.  
Then I saw myself entangled.

How can I really get out?  
How did I readily get in?  
The door was out there  
Its handle towards me  
Yet I was so shut in  
I could not see the way out.

The small voice tapped on my brow  
What are you really looking for?  
A way out and out for real  
What are you getting out of?  
The thing that chokes me now  
What is it called?  
A relationship with the wasp  
How hard has it stung you?  
As many times as it has flown.  
And then what?

The more I was stung  
The more swollen I got  
The swelling was internal  
Nobody but me could see it.  
I sit here with hidden bumps  
I tried and the world knows  
To do as friends and foe do  
The thing called life.  
I just did not end up  
The way of the others.

Mine is a special way

When my own sways lead  
I move with the sun  
At the end the road leads home.  
Welcome home the journey has been long.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Relationships! Relationships! Relationships!

Reeling in dispute yet still relationships,  
Of my older siblings and me in the same ship,  
Turning and tossing as we get thrown overboard,  
One day one leg is in one day it is out,  
Yet we are tied by this bond that calls us,  
It tells us the road to success is not easy,  
We walk it today tomorrow and whenever.  
For we are in the thing that relates to itself,  
And in time calls itself a relationship.

I know that it is as real as the word itself,  
For I tried and and still try it now,  
To idealize a mate is what it called me to do,  
Call him my knight in golden armor in my heart,  
Where no gold had melted but his alone,  
While made of triumphs of our making,  
We walked into a relationship called closeness.  
And ended up on the other side of the river,  
But still seeing each other as he went downstream,  
For I was steering everything in me upstream.

This thing led us into a future uncertain,  
That is when I realized it had no eyes,  
It was me who had lost the power to be wise,  
For I had seen a future with my eyes,  
When they were closed to the things that we were,  
And wanted me to see the things that were not,  
In this place called my wisdom and his,  
For it speaks and makes and then unmakes,  
For it is very good at creating the unknown,  
And make us walk boldly to any place it leaves us.  
Relationships! Relationships! Relationships.

A touching, feeling, and finding of what is not there,  
A building of a knot tied and untied for it is strong,  
Only when we pull together to strengthen it,  
This rope between us biting into our hands,  
Leaving us with scars that show we also love,  
For we are willing to work at it day and night,

And wake up the sleeping baby inside us seeking,  
This quiet of the knot that cannot be undone,  
Even when the wail in the night tells us to rise,  
And walk into the nursery of our feelings,  
For it is here that we can see ourselves,  
These diapers speaking and smelling like us,  
Relationships! Relationships! Relationships.

We can die for them like the soldier who fought,  
And won a medal called a ring in her hand,  
At the alter of existence, he laid his sword,  
All shining, pointed and silent from use,  
Here at the end of his fight against life,  
Where he is ready to sit with the dead,  
And say life was a battle that I won,  
By just being there for there was no contest,  
Only to turn up and take the yoke together,  
With another walker who wanted to claim me,  
As her own the traveler on a journey,  
To the end of the fire where it is warm,  
And not too close to this end that has called us.

A life is a life when lived and not shelved,  
In forgotten stories of love and fights,  
But stories of breathing into the space,  
Where we talk, cook and boil at each other,  
Calling ourselves names under our breaths,  
For we did it to the world by agreeing,  
That we would do this part well and swore,  
That we were the type that succeeds always,  
When all was needed was the hope to try,  
And get into the giving and taking we do,  
When we do for another a deed that builds,  
And plants and guards what is ours selfishly,  
For tomorrow it must be there to testify,  
That we were faithful to the cause of life,  
For the proof is not in the tasting of the living,  
But in the dish we put on the table for all of life,  
To taste as our offshoots give and take,  
To a world that gave us the breath we give.

Is it still relating what we do to each other?

Tearing down and uprooting and overthrowing,  
Leaving the upside down of the very agreements,  
That we made when the eyes so the gold in us  
Me saying you are the one I will brush the back of,  
With this loofah in my hand this sponge I use,  
The way our faithful dog brushes against us on this bed,  
Laid by us for us and him to lie in,  
And breath together always for it is true,  
That a grain of love is all we need to lie here,  
And enjoy, the joyous jive of this wagging tail,  
That keeps brushing against me as you move closer right now,  
To bring out the love of wagging tails,  
For all dogs love the sight of their owner  
The way they hate the sight of another,  
For they growl angrily when they see life,  
Taken from them, the bone of meat,  
The way we fight over our trifles,  
And refuse to share when we agreed  
That we would divide every morsel of time,  
The deed we were given to handle with care  
As we share with each other like now.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Remember That You'll Be Ousted In Turn

Remember you will be ousted in turn  
If not by a sibling certainly by a  
New worker who will succeed you for  
It is like getting the best seat on  
A bus and when your stop comes you  
Cannot even look back to claim that  
You belong to a dynasty in motion  
And can be a son and daughter of  
Privilege where all should see  
The dandy of a princess that you  
Are and admire your glorious throne.

Remember you'll be ousted in turn  
And make haste while the hay still  
Shines for it is better to buy an  
Earthquake kit when you live in the  
Seismic belt of the earth for you  
Are always prepared when the push  
Button of the earth down there is  
Pressed and the forces unknown  
Eject you out of your little shrine  
Whose mortgage still hangs around  
Your neck like a noose.

Remember you will be ousted in turn  
And always be ready for exits and live  
And love intensely without wasting  
Moments of bliss for when love dwindles  
It seeps out as if there was a hole  
You did not see at the bottom of the  
barrel where you where you poured  
In bucketfuls year in and year out  
With the least anticipation of finding  
This emptiness that comes at the end.

Remember you'll be ousted in time  
And be as reliable as a rooster.  
Take care of the noose with which  
You hang onto her heart and massage

It around the neck knowing that if  
Your thumb is in it the fall won't  
Be so bad and you who survived the  
Kamikaze surely will make it to the  
end of this struggle that never really  
Ends until your eyes close and say  
Good bye with the final beat of your heart.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Requests We Want To Send To The Moon

We want a new leader down here  
For the one we have has done it again,  
He has built himself a hacienda  
With every cent of the poor  
That he was supposed to lead.

Tell the moon this place remains,  
In the hands of the lawless,  
For they are not givers of love,  
For all they do is walk on golden pathways,  
And drive around in gilded carriages.

We want the moon to look down,  
And see the earth down here,  
Turning saddled with a people,  
Whose leader has no understanding,  
Of what the morning light brings,  
To the people he leads.

This person called to be an angel  
With no virtues from heaven  
Or values from the pools of wisdom  
Has never dipped in them his finger,  
To taste the stuff he must dish out.

He who drinks like a fish has a chance,  
Only if he will empty the contents of the can,  
And run to the healer next door,  
And ask for a herb that will make him,  
Want the drink no more.

This ruler who is lawless here,  
Sits in the center at the well,  
Drinks and passes it on to another,  
Till day break while his people starve.

Now he is supposed to speak for the voiceless,

How will he when his voice is hoarse,  
From the parties that shut up his brain,  
Draining this abscess that remains  
That was once a brain now full of pulp,  
For the drink has powdered the contents.

Tell the moon to come down and rule,  
For earth is just another place,  
Where people suffer and look up,  
And have hope when the moon rises,  
Thinking it is coming to their aid.

They once lived with hope,  
And saw the sunset come,  
And waited in the darkness,  
And now they speak to the moon,  
For it was faithful and always came back,  
With a promise to hear them monthly.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Returning Home After The Hurricane

We need to write new songs,  
For those still to come to our land  
Songs of a truth we heard told  
Whispered in the wind on lonely paths  
Leading us to a future on the road home  
Where girls and boys swam undressed,  
In the fashions of the unheard of world,  
We have come to know.

Who said we would go to sleep unsure,  
If tomorrow would yield a harvest to feed us all  
After stifling up storms that sink whole towns under,  
Where torrents fall when hurricanes hurl houses in the air?

We need to sing songs that tell of the loss  
Of the past in which we danced on porches dry,  
Eating barbecues of venison from our forests  
Caught in traps where poachers were not hated,  
As we do now in this quiet sneaking in.

The songs we sing will be borne on wings of birds,  
That once sang on our trees where spanish moss  
Hangs down in a sadness that tells our story,  
Whispering to tell us everything is gone,  
Leaving our treasures only in our minds.

The tired walk to a home washed away by whooshing winds  
Looks deserted even to the deer which danced in our absence,  
For we are walking home like tired saints on a lonely march  
For if we had had stayed we were to end up washed away,  
Like the lone piece of the roof we see near the road,  
For it got here after the rains subsided,  
No longer swimming in the mud, in which it now lay.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Rich Deep Down There

When the money people called me poor.  
they bankrupted my mind.  
I went to the source  
and stood at the door.

I knocked there once.  
I was let in by a small voice.  
I told you all the money in the world is mine  
I stood amazed my hands in the air

That whisper opened a window  
to the tellers of the world.  
Cedis, rands, dollars, rupees and euros crisp as new,  
going into vaults at the end of the money day  
That rustles with their newness.

I received a call  
Twenty nine million euros is not a good sum  
Nodding my head, I held out my hand  
and reached for abundance

I built a Monte Carlo  
on the hills of my mind,  
in the hearts of my people  
for we knew it was possible  
to do anything we wanted  
for money is not the issue,  
but the space in between  
can be touched by anyone of us  
if we reach deep down there  
where we are at our richest.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Roadblock Ahead

Be warned  
Roadblock ahead  
When it finds you  
Your hands must  
Be clean for life  
Makes us carry  
Things unwanted  
Yet we bear a  
Sign wanted  
Dead or alive.

This price tag  
On every life  
Follows us written  
And blows in the  
Wind marking us  
Telling the world  
Who we are like  
The sign 'just  
Married' on the  
Car of newly weds.

When the roadblock  
Finds you there's  
Only one test that  
Life demands you pass  
To stand on one leg  
For this becomes one  
Fit that tells the word  
Whether you imbibe  
Or not.

If you can pass  
This one the record  
Will tell hell master  
To set another road  
Block fifty miles from  
Here for this one is  
Manned by the red army

Of the sky. Only those  
Who pray a hole in the  
Ground make it.

You will make out of your  
Jalopy with the pride  
Of a car owner only to  
Be told to get your  
Heap of scrap out of  
The way. On this  
Road at this hour only  
The cavalcade of the  
Prince is allowed. They  
Drive on streets by  
Invitation these days.

Be warned and throw  
The dope out of the  
Window. Life has  
No mercy on those  
Who dope till  
Their minds wave  
To the road police  
Saying help me  
Arrest him. He  
Just broke the  
Speed limit for  
He is surely on  
Speed. The speedometer  
Will lock up above  
The speed limit and you  
Will swear your own  
Vehicle has turned  
Against you when they  
Say you are a road hazard  
A real assassin of the  
Road on the loose.

Surely you will take the advice  
Of a poet offered free for  
They know the fate of man

For they read it on a scroll  
That came from above.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Rock-Hewn Flowers From Heaven

I am speaking to the rock-hewn flowers of heaven;  
I have a message that is about staying solid  
And never breaking down even if the heat gets you.  
Even when the fires of life are lit right under the feet  
These flowers do not break even if though they expand.

They open every morning and speak the word true  
For they know they are the mouthpiece of heaven  
Their message does not change with the weather  
For such is the tincture of their colors.

I speak of rock-hewn flowers from another place  
That do the usual in unusual ways that shape things  
And cast them strong and hard for they are molded  
By these hard performers of a kind that appeals  
To the ears of others like it is the first time  
For them to hear such words as the ones they speak.

So rare are these flowers that everybody wants them  
For owning them is bringing a bit of heaven right  
To the doorstep of your house with a series of scoops  
Like the ones we repeat when we get to taste our  
Choice of ice cream on a hot summer day.

We fall into despair when one of them falls and breaks  
For to get another one, one has to travel to the end  
Of the world only to be told there is none like another.  
Returning back to a reality of losing a gem is never  
Something people can deal with easily. yet to keep  
safe what they have and admire it by turning it  
Round and round is taken for granted for boredom  
Is the sin that the god of time left the world with  
When he escaped to the land of the northern lights.

They do not feign status these rock-hewn flowers  
For they came with it wired into their being  
For the world knows what it needs and can call for it  
In one way or another to the disappointment of saints,  
For they think they are the only ones who came from

The land that called heaven with a message like  
no other.

When normal roses boast about the beauty of their petals  
These flowers look on with love for they can take  
Competition from a look alike that fakes pride  
When the ego is singing the tune of self esteem  
That is weaker than the chamomile tea without honey.  
They tell the rose to mind their step for it is  
Embarrassing to trip and lose one's balance in front  
of a self-made enemy

They carry their heads high for to see one is to  
See another yet the inbuilt beauty of each shines  
Brighter for everyone to see even in the dark.  
They lighten places and cause things to sparkle  
Till the dogs wonder why the world is becoming  
A never never land for they fear there will be  
No room for a dog house, let alone the dog itself.

The assurance of the magic wand of making dog houses  
By the minute assures these lonesome creatures who  
Fear being separated from their owners ends the whines  
And gets everybody knowing that dog and man equal  
Love always for when the rock-hewn rose buys a leash  
It makes it so long that it can reach the heavens.

Sarah Mkhonza

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Safe what they have and admire it by turning it  
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For they came with it wired into their being  
For the world knows what it needs and can call for it,  
In one way or another to the disappointment of saints,  
For they think they are the only ones who came from

The land that is called heaven with a message that  
Leaves the world shaking on its knees.

When normal roses boast about the beauty of their petals  
These flowers look on with love for they can take  
Competition from a look alike that fakes pride  
When the ego is singing the tune of self esteem  
That is weaker than the chamomile tea without honey.  
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Love always for when the rock-hewn rose buys a leash  
It makes it so long that is can reach the heavens.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Roll Up The Sleeves Of Time

It is time to roll up the sleeves of time and get to work for time does Not have a  
revered gear. Nor does it  
Have a neutral and parking one that  
Allows you to rest on your laurels.

Inventing slumberland did not help Alice in Wonderland for the rules of The two  
were different. Sons and Daughters of wonder lost on the  
Streets in the land of sons and daughters of slumber for when they  
Woke up the bus to Wonderland had  
Left them behind.

Who said people do not sleep in Wonderland? Those who slumber and  
Not roll up the sleeves of time  
Will always invent stories about  
A land they do not know for it is  
On tasting its delights that  
It lets you into the mysteries it holds for you all  
The sons and daughters of time.

It does not come easy to the

Citizens of the land to know  
That rules or no rules,  
Road signs or no road signs  
Time march is on for its sleeves  
Are always on the AIFA roll.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Rolling Up The Sleeves Of Time

It is time to roll up the sleeves of time and get to work for time does not  
Have a reverse gear. Nor does it have a neutral and parking one that allows  
You to rest on your laurels.

Inventing slumberland did not help Alice in Wonderland for the rules of the two  
were different. Sons and daughters of wonder lost on the  
Streets in the land of sons and daughters of slumber for when they  
Woke up and the bus to Wonderland had  
Left them behind.

Who said people do not sleep in Wonderland? Those who slumber and  
Not roll up the sleeves of time  
Will always invent stories about  
A land they do not know for it is  
On engaging in its delight that  
It lets you into the mysteries it holds force  
The sons and daughters of time.

It does not come easy to the  
Citizens of the land to know  
That rules or no rules,  
Road signs or no road signs  
Time marches on for its sleeves  
Are on the master sleeve roll  
And never on the AIFA roll.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Rules From The Book Of Ifs

We follow the path of masters,  
we welcome deeds shunned by many.  
This road to fame is not for the  
feeble minded.

If you must do the unusual, don't  
copy another person. That is the  
way to steal another's luck that  
lands you in the muck.

If you paint a scene, make it look,  
like the brush wanted to sing a song  
of lovers you long to hear. Tease  
the mind with the mystery of love.  
Remember everybody claims it, yet they  
still have to touch it. Preserve the  
story in the mystery.

If you must preach, don't repeat the  
fury the world rolls in. Utter some  
truths that psyche a few and leave  
them wondering if they read the same  
Holy Bible.

Remember the stories were chosen for  
impact and seal the pact that the  
church trusted the zealot in you  
would always utter with zeal.

If you must steal, consult the  
looters who did a clean job and ended  
up in heaven for they found life  
a real steal.

If you must sing a song don't choose  
a Pavarotti just because you have a  
beard. People hate a fake. Let your  
voice roll in the lowlands and climb  
it's own highlands.

If you must fall in love refuse to go  
headlong on the way down, people will  
think you were an alley cat doing  
the usual mouse grabbing.

I'd fall in love after laying out the  
velvet cushion so people would think  
I knew how hard it is to fall onto  
the hard floor with not even a glass  
of red wine to do the making out with.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Rules From The Book Of 'ifs '

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I'd fall in love after laying out the  
velvet cushion so people would think  
I knew how hard it is to fall onto  
the hard floor with not even a glass  
of red wine to do the making out with.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Rules Written Just For You

If I was an artist,  
I would paint the rules  
with the softest touch  
all over your brain.

I would deposit them into you  
with a platinum card, and seal  
the account closed, where withdrawals  
are forbidden.

I would swallow the scrolls,  
and wrap around you when you  
leave the warm the called my womb.

This rumbling and shaking of the world,  
as we part, means you will never re-enter  
the door I had to open to let you in.

You have grown big and learned words  
that make you talk to the world.

The key to this door of wisdom  
reopens when you open up and ask, why  
you are here.

Answers come on a skewer and you  
pull them out. This feast assorted  
tells how hard you have searched for wisdom  
while encircling the nipple  
with your gums.

No milk flows for no reason,  
even for an orphan found in a garbage can.

Someone who breathed and pushed will find you  
the way I did, child of the earth.

Read the rules I painted before they fade.  
This life has chosen you for you answered,

the call of the few.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Sad But True That The World Silences Children

Ever seen an adult afraid  
To ask his mother who and  
Where his father is? Then  
You do not know a woman who  
Thrives iting the  
Ignorance of those she has  
Begotten.

I live on an island surrounded  
By strangers who do not know  
Where they came from for they  
Live the life of those girls  
Abductees of Book Haram. Only  
They are males taught to appease  
And not fight to know who sired  
Them.

The right to a name does create  
A world where knowing who you are  
When taught to children makes a better world for they get to walk  
With dignity built into them by  
Knowing they came to this world not  
On a chariot that was chased from behind by the empty slate they carry  
In the head.

It raises questions when one needs  
To connect with persons  
In space and time only to  
Find darkness where there should be  
A name even if it is one like  
That of the warring clan of Isaac  
Which spins in the harsh winds  
Blown by the aunt I call Gertrude.

Her royal Highness sits and tells  
History from her own oral record  
Which cannot be questioned but still  
Builds our clan as one that came and  
Is going somewhere.

Erase the name of Isaac in the biographies oral written by my  
Aunt who embellishes with poisonous  
Mushrooming tales that grow on  
African antheaps what would we have  
If we had no past no matter how  
Distorted.

Give the children wisdom by telling  
Them truth no matter how poor the  
Past they came from is. It is not  
About what a father is or has but  
About connecting truthfully with the  
Past for everyone is conceived in  
Love even when the struggles go into  
That last minute where the seed pops  
Up at the door of the egg and says  
Receive this gift for that is all  
Life has for you at this moment  
Of reckoning. Where you may be compromised by the giver live the  
Space open for the truth to enter  
When it knocks at the door. For to  
Shut it out does violate and victimise the innocent leaving you  
Also at risk of being accused and  
Being called a perpetrator by the  
Soul on need.

For their mother

Sarah Mkhonza

# Scissors And The Iron At Work All Night

My mom made tablemats,  
cutting sisal to make  
mats for people to put  
plates of food when we  
had non. Braiding grass  
and sisal, the rope grows  
longer and longer. Then  
scissors come in to make  
neat.

I woke up to the click of  
scissors and slept to their  
lullaby. The sound of the  
iron on a dress to be worn  
tomorrow in Sunday school  
leaves me warm where it  
renders me full for the love  
she gave.

Pouring one's soul into the  
depth of us children she did.  
The testimony stands fiercely  
unafraid to say it happened.

When I have done my giving, will  
it remain standing, with scissors  
and an iron at the altar of love?

Will the testimony sing love and  
bite the ears of others lovingly  
and say this is how it is done?  
Tough questions these that I lay  
at the altar of time.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Seeing A Small Part Of Sky

In this darkness of meandering paths,  
A maze created for me, by me,  
The darkness thickens when the thoughts take corners,  
I fail to catch up with them,  
Then seeing a patch of sky up above,  
I backtrack and jump over the traps,  
And set my foot on the space of rest,  
The light that lingers starts seeping in,  
I scratch my head in the minute minute,  
Of a me that has recovered its presence,  
I who was, were and will be is nothing but just thoughts,  
Of the hours I have smashed outside on the rough rock of time,  
There they remain and keep on creeping into the silo like Weavels trying to  
weave themselves into the heart of a seed,  
That corn kernel in which to forever stay,  
There a menace that thrives on scraping  
its source,  
I hear the voice from it saying that is all you are,  
Just a small part of sky looked at from above and below.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Seeing My Houselelujah

It is up on the hill  
overlooking the valley,  
they call the valley of heaven.  
This is where, for me, the sword  
was cut by the gods.  
Yes it is real, yes and for next to nothing,  
making me believe I was born  
for nothing but this dwelling,  
that stands tall among dwellings.

Something is intriguing  
in the way it helps me to  
eavesdrop on the elders  
who have gone up there  
since time immemorial.

Its windows are not just hallelujah,  
they are windows from a song  
that rises in the valley  
and they sing houselelujah.

On the walls hang pictures,  
of family when once happily,  
we lived as one. Now I dream  
from afar, and see this new house  
on the wall on which hang pictures  
in cedar frames.

If I could tell you how many years  
I called the angel with no name  
hoping this one word would bring him home,  
I know you would think I am crazy.

I did believe I could have a houselelujah,  
I sang about it on my knees and when I walked  
all the way downhill in that valley, for I  
saw the party at the hill, but the question  
was discerned was not asked, even in my dream.

The houselelujah was not there yet.  
In this dream all the lovely objects,  
stand tall on the tables and all of them glass.  
Why not me and then this one?  
I prayed for the houselelujah?

Now the land is there, and the house  
is in my dream, with the outside ready  
for me to walk into the dream,  
for it is my blessing done and finished  
and I will live it be.

Can you be a guest at the party,  
when the dream house is finished,  
for you have read about it,  
and can prove me wrong,  
if it is not a houselelujah.

I have dreamt of other houselelujahs,  
One came through and the one that  
never showed up at the gate,  
was the one I long to return to,  
for it was in a land full of all  
the objects in my dream,

Cast iron this and glass this;  
map of Africa this, and yoke on  
my gilded horse that. There, all  
things spell success and comfort,  
but they are all under ground. Silt,  
sand and the vagaries of this world,  
tell me I only have a quarter.  
Take me to the land of my dreams!  
It is about vision and less about money.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Seeing The Rainbow Through Tinted Glasses

This tint in your glasses  
came with you from the land  
of your birth. Remove this  
cataract because a bird will  
snatch it from your eye. It  
thinks you cannot run. You  
will run and not win.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Seeking The Revenge Of The Toughest Gods

What will we do now that we have crowned them with glory  
These who have plotted to rule us day and night,  
And not rest till our strength is poured outside,  
And our blood warms the spears of legends old,  
With us just pleading for the avenger of the weak,  
Who is the toughest of all the gods who hears,  
Our plea as we repeat it night after night

Help us for we repeat a refrain in pain,  
Those who had teeth sharper than fangs,  
Who filled our bodies till they sang,  
Then they beat on us with the loudest bang,  
And told us in our faces that we would hang.  
On the walls of the roughest of prisons.  
Help us as we spell out their crime  
That our sons sit in a jail they built,  
To fill with a quarter of innocent souls.

They have not spared us from decree after decree,  
Sending the bearer of bad news to our steps,  
Saying we should walk in single file,  
Into the prisons which send them in one song,  
Singing to the bank to fatten their accounts,

We know they will be raging and fuming,  
When the final decree is sent out,  
Saying a nation cannot send all its son,  
To prisons which enrich the rich only,  
While sapping the strength of the nation,  
By sending to jail a boy who sniffed a joint.

Help us for we repeat a refrain in pain,  
Those who had teeth sharper than fangs,  
Who filled our bodies till they sang,  
Then they beat on us with the loudest bang,  
And told us in our faces that we would hang.  
On the wall of the roughest of prisons.  
Help us as we spell out their crime,

While our sons sit in a jail they built,  
To keep full with half innocent souls.

When you hear us oh gods know one thing,  
That they hate us is clear as the day,  
For what can we do on this earth where we live  
Without our fathers who bore us,  
Who sit in goal looking at the sky,  
Wondering when you will answer their call.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Seen With Eyes From Another Planet

I am joined by these others  
who claim to see my future and  
also claim to have been where  
I am bent on going. Through words  
from there, they tell me to buckle up.

The ride they say is rougher than  
a climb on the highest tide. I declare  
I know no such having lived in the desert.

They say I will see water rising. I wait. Was I given a choice. Went we going to  
perish. Were we not dying from drinking  
poison daily?

When those who journeyed into the land  
said theirs was the earth I thought  
the truth had never tasted so bitter in the mouth of one who has just entered  
these carvens.

Then I gathered courage. I asked for food  
as soft as manna. They told me  
it will be better tomorrow when the sun has a halo of black. So now the wait  
has begun.

w

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# Selling Dreams

Since I dream of black birds  
Everything sings my song always  
Like the noise of birds above my homestead  
Lifting their wings way up  
In a manner never heard of  
Not even once looking back  
Going into a future freer  
Sounds of their leaving  
High up above me they pull me  
Over there they flap their wings  
There where I cast my gaze  
Searching for my future

Who took the future from me?  
And walked about with it into where?  
I still ask and hear voices,  
Telling me if I do not go,  
And find it in the sand outside,  
It will be gone forever,  
Washed away by the rivers,  
For all this happens every minute,  
I stand and ask about the future,  
I am selling to the questions,  
And not buying with my deeds,  
That should be writing it outside,  
On the very side of the river  
On which you and I abide.

We can sell the dreams to the vendors,  
For our minds have done the display,  
Of all we could be doing,  
If our lives would call it to order,  
And not take us to the fiery edge,  
Where we fear fires that are glowing,  
Only in the pith of the earth,  
Where the fluids are invisible,  
And said to burn daily,  
Thus charring our dreams,  
That never get to the market,

Where they can be laid down for sale,  
And ready to be bought by passers by,  
Who admire the look and hue of our thinking,  
That we have hidden in shame for too long.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Send Me Pigs On A Postcard

Fortune tellers have no fortune  
If they did they would be fortunate.  
Healers have no wounds  
If they did they would have scars  
To make us see where they come from  
To create a reputation  
Of pride about years of training.

For a well never dries up  
When it is dug up deep into the depths  
In the aquifer of this time.

I cannot be a guinea pig  
Because they do not send postcards  
With pictures of pigs  
But those of rare birds  
When Guinea is full of pigs.

The fortune teller says  
He knows women are liars.  
They say they are sick  
When they do not want to be touched.  
Like alcoholics who drink  
who lie to their boss the Monday morning after  
When the hangover hits them.

He tells the man who goes to Guinea to enjoy  
Go as far and have a break  
And send cards of things unseen here.  
To get money into his pockets

I receive my cards with rarities  
And know I am being deceived  
My mind being bought  
So it cannot demand the truth  
By asking for pictures of pigs  
Wearing lingerie not seen  
For he has abandoned me.

Sarah Mkhonza

# She Beams A Smile At Me

The smile she beams at me,  
Has a gap in between the teeth,  
It comes at me at night,  
And when I walk along the path,

The lips are familiar,  
As are the eyes of her,  
They are of someone I know,  
This woman, this carrier,  
Of me when I was the invalid,  
That was born and could not,  
Either walk or talk or hold,  
But just lie in the shadowed  
Cloud of the warmth of her hands,

She walked away one day and came back,  
Across the fords I see her walking away,  
Then see her emerging above the river,  
Only to leave me crying again as she leaves,  
Then came the day when she ascended,  
To a there beyond the fords of rivers,  
Familiar fords of river sand and rocks,  
To a land shadowed by the clouds,  
Never to return and be touched by me,

Yet still I see her smile,  
It has a gap in between the teeth,  
Even my five years can see it,  
For she taught me how to tie shoe laces,  
To count the holes of the shoe,  
And tie a knot that would see  
me walk through each day of life,  
Till I return and take them off  
To rest and wait for another.

I see her lips speaking the words,  
That arrest my ears when I start deeds,  
Against the big book of life that she read,  
Each day while I watched her smile,

With the gap in between the teeth,  
Which she beams back at me like a float,  
From another place where the carnival  
has stated,  
Whose dance I will remember carried on her back,  
For she is no horse, yet she saddled me,  
No mule, yet she pulled me forward,  
No joke, yet she had me laughing  
With deeds that touch my heart,  
Like the fire she kindles in me,  
And make me leap in a dance of years,  
That brings together our pasts,  
And weave our smiles with this togetherness  
Whose warmth has a lingering effect,  
That is drawn from our intertwined lives,  
Like a tree and its saplings,  
That yearn to see the sun above,  
For the warmth came to me alive,  
And etched the smile she flashes back  
As she turns her neck to see for real  
That live this life like no other,  
Doing the deeds she smiled about.

Sarah Mkhonza

# She Wore Green Zulu Beads

Her dress was all green  
as green as her beads  
which were woven in  
the land of the Zulu.

She wore them red,  
She wore them green  
She wore them black  
And also the white  
We see in the land  
Down below.

She cast a spell on the world  
and then went to heaven  
for that was whence she came  
This tall grand swimmer of ours,  
for she had swum against the cold  
And heat of the Benguela.

Nobody knew her trick,  
For she could win a man  
By circling his neck  
With these very beads  
and say choice made,  
man mine.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Shearing A Dead Sheep

She moves not on this last shdaring.  
There were many before. Her ewes know  
she is gone. No more this scissors  
snapping that leads to a nakedness  
in these days where dogs wear woolen  
scarves. They chased her for the last.  
The shepherd whistling behind them.

The end is near for the jersey are sold.  
Cry not injustice for your coat will grow.  
Now that truth is gone with the last breath.  
The shears have but lost one squeaky day. The  
world owespecially you a day long memorial.  
For bells will still ring this Christmas. Your  
blatant will be gone.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Sheltered In This Sandy Life

When life is gritty, I spit out  
the sand. When life is windy, I  
shield my eyes. Some days it feels  
like in a mud hut. Some days I tremble  
with each handful of sand thrown at me.  
I feel the Sandy beach and throw back a  
few Sandy words. Friends throw a few back.  
We laugh as in childhood. Till the next Sandy storm. Laughter turned to tears  
says, 'don't forget children. This is a Sandy life. You'll need the shelter of your  
mother's or father's back. This time without a sling.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Shepherding The Rules Of Your Truth

Building the future of your truth,  
In this enclosure, this silo,  
Where you will return with a lock,  
To retrieve it in thought,  
Has been done with caring by you,  
For you shepherded your choices in,  
At the moment of making with actions,  
Shooing away some birds and trapping others,  
Into the center where you stand surrounded,  
By your truths protected in the center of your hand.

You lie to yourself when now,  
You look at others and hope,  
That their sayings will grown wings,  
And come into the enclosure, this soul,  
That seeks truth from you like a baby,  
Wants to suckle at the lap of its mother,  
And nestle in the security of the lullaby,  
Yet the time of songs and myths is gone,  
And has been replaced by your own shepherding,  
Of your own rules of truth,  
And not the dos and donts of others,  
Which will leave you in the ice cold shower,  
Wishing your mother was with you,  
At this time of reckoning with choices,  
That you made when others cheered.

The calling to guard the enclosure of the truth  
And not let the wolves come into its boundaries,  
These thoughts that sap your blood your lifeline,  
And then stand in there howling about the past,  
You will not get far for defying your ramblings,  
Doubt stands outside another hyena,  
Fear, another jackal that lurks around,  
Like barking dogs of life ever yapping,  
Tearing to shreds every long founded truth,  
Waiting for you to reach your hand outside,  
And turn the lock of your thinking with your hand,  
To let anxiety the bigger beast,

That will make you change more from weakness not strength,  
For the rain comes and wets everything,  
When the enclosure is not built to the need,  
Of what lives inside to keep warm.

Once heard the cry that goes on forever,  
Bringing the predators to your doors,  
To dismantle the shepherding of your truth,  
You end up holding on to the nothing,  
That remains when you let go,  
For you were built to lock up your being,  
And guide it to the rules of truth,  
Wherever you are and with whomever,  
You have chosen touch shoulders with,  
On your journeys through this maze,  
That turns into every corner leaving you,  
Knowing only the past and not the future,  
Which stands in the blindfold that covers,  
The soul of the eyes of your mind,  
Leaving you only with hope that all will be well  
Because the shepherd, the one you know best,  
That there is only one way to build trust,  
Which is turning in the lock and key,  
To ensure that no truth, or rule gets out,  
Without a reason which is about,  
Going out there to feed and be fed,  
And then return richer than before.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Shining Light Into This Dark Teen Cave

You look into the cave and see a corner  
With teens huddled in the same fear  
That had you running years ago  
Only to find that is was as unreal  
As the word itself.

You write a short poem to shine a beam  
Into the corner and ask a few to come  
And read together the truth about life  
For it is hard to be a teen assured  
Of the truth you have been denying all along.

Your friends are the only 'knowers' around  
The poets are far away if not dead like this one  
They write musings from another world  
Where people are green to the core  
And red like the sand on the surface of Mars.

Who can tell a teen what they have seen  
When their eyes were goggled by mascara  
And lashes as long as those of a ghost  
For they see through such things and know  
How fake the thing called beauty has become.

I sing and dance songs with the teens  
And ask them to show me how it is done  
They laugh and say I learned the jive  
Of good old township music played on  
A disc that was only a thirty three  
When they know only forty fives.

I tell them it is not about numbers  
But about the act and the feeling it brings  
This gyration of our bodies to false pop songs  
That we do on this plane where we write the script  
That will be used for the movie of a teens life.

They say they know that these days adults talk  
And then go and vote for people who predate on

The brains of women and the youth they call  
Millenials for they know only the year  
When the century turned older than them  
And ended up face down on the plateau of time  
For stalagmites and stalactites do not joke  
When they hit the back of the head of a crazy teen.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Shoaling And Schooling

Fish are not alone in this ocean  
Scores of them, swimming and  
Swinging on swings invisible  
It is enviable this unity of those  
That glisten in the water as if  
One day they can give this togetherness  
To us. Until a fishing hook drops  
Into the water, separately they  
Go now one mouth open not knowing  
This will be a lynching that will  
Send them up and end them in the  
Frying pan and inside a rumbling  
Stomach that rejoices they exist.

Life catches us in ones and reminds  
Us it is power to move like a school  
Of fish, even if you may never have  
Enjoyed school for when you go into  
Adulthood the hook awaits you alone  
Ready to take you to the table where  
You will be displayed sometimes before  
The pathologist as that fish that did  
Not make it and needs to be diagnosed  
For in the world are many hooks.

I tend to love the sounds of the fish  
When they move in shoals and also when  
They are a school for they are deep and  
Resonant even when one has been swallowed  
By a shark, for the wide mouth can make  
A whole school disappear these days when  
Even people swim in the seas trying to  
Get to places of refuge only to find  
Themselves deep in there where the fish  
Feed on the mercilessness of life to man.

Who is schooling and shoaling when we are  
In the water these days where the land is  
Being blown up where houses send out people

Like a school of fish chased by a reef shark  
Whose teeth are so sharp they have to run  
For the rubble tells them the dust doming  
On them in the likes of a tsunami means run  
And keep running and when you go out of breath  
Sit and think, what is next for nobody knows  
What the future is going to be like, rich or  
Poor.

The assurance of tomorrow rests on our feet  
Touching some earth and moving, even under  
Piles of rubble, allowing us to escape, no matter  
Where we are. Life has become this fragile,  
And it has rendered us as small as selfless as  
These we envy for we wish we had scales to  
Scale the world and run on for the cold  
Would not matter to those who breathe in there  
Where the world looks bigger than them all around.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Show Me The Respect I Deserve

Having faith under a thatched roof,  
Listening to the sounds of hooves,  
Rain tapping on the grass I hear,  
This my dress in tatters I wear,  
For me is written a new life,  
For I never vowed to be a wife,  
And stay waiting for a miner,  
Who went to be with the sinner,  
Their sad lives held in their inner,  
Worlds unknown to the soil digger.

I live to eat mopane worms alone,  
While I walk on paths of stone,  
Wearing nothing but just a wrap,  
Which the baby used yesterday to nap,  
On my back when I sang the lullaby,  
For I wish he had said goodbye,  
For that would have been respect.

I ask what it is I deserve what I get they say  
What I should get when I serve,  
Baby on my open back saddled,  
With a cloth that I made,  
When I sewed clothes to wed,  
This life that has nobody,  
But just me who carry this baby,  
And get to know it from the nappy,  
That I washed with soapy leaves,  
That grew near the river where I live.

Breakfast for me was mopane worms,  
For they swell when they are worm,  
In the pot where I put the salt,  
To break them down into a gift,  
That I would serve for this I deserve,  
Yes to live the earth gives me that.

They say tell the woman a story,

For if you don't you will be sorry,  
She loves to laugh even when sad,  
And when you know she is mad,  
These stories they have made,  
Make me wonder if they know,  
That even a pig is called a sow,  
When it is being given respect,  
For this is all she can get  
When tables are laid by those who eat,  
The strips of her that they share.

The story when told ends our life,  
Takes it far and throws it alive,  
Into the distance where it is flung,  
For you do not have the same lungs,  
Full of breath that was just for me.

The miner lungs that have shrunk,  
Are like the love that has sunk,  
For our was just a new funk,  
That mingled love, sadness and hope.  
Thinking we once thought we would elope,  
And go far to the end of life,  
For ours was a togetherness,  
That when shared would say nope,  
To the parting of our ways.

This hut no longer sings,  
When it rains it sinks,  
Into my heart yes it goes,  
When you came I told you it does,  
For the logs no longer hold,  
For termites have always said,  
It is time we are to build,  
For ourselves a new abode.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Showcasing My Dos And Dont's

When I have no advice,  
I showcase my dos and don'ts.  
Listen to yours and come and join  
the show of brave souls.

Last night I dreamt  
Your fear was walking  
All around me searching.  
What did it find? I fear the  
very same words you were  
failing to listen to. Especially  
because the don'ts were as loud  
as a gong.

I was snoring, you thought.  
I was afraid to hear that the  
duo we are will make loud  
the words we fail to hear.

Next time do not come in the  
night. Come during dinner  
there is more to share in  
the act of eating, for it shouts  
these two words we hate. Yet  
we take the fork and pretend  
it does not have two ears, yet  
it has four prongs and can be  
used to make a tune that we can  
listen to and then follow our  
own dos and don'ts.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Silky Is The Thread That Connects Us

These faith in the story  
Of us living beings once  
Zygotes. This breath of  
Many inhalations and exhalations  
Seeks to keep at it knowing  
For us is a world that needs  
To breathe, rest and start up  
Again, if we are to see tomorrow.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Singing Queen Of Poetry

When you sing songs of a nation  
And weep the tears of a nation  
And cry the lament of a nation  
And dance the dances of a nation  
Who will tell you that you are on  
An everlasting sing song which  
Lands you on your own see-saw  
Going up and down as the nation  
Breathes in its ways unusual?

It is by laughing the laughter  
Of a nation and joking the jokes  
Of the nation that we can have  
A joker, a queen and a king  
All ruled by the queen of poetry  
That reigns in your heart which  
Says yours is a king without  
A crown for kings and queens  
Of poetry only exist on paper.  
Write more and rule more for  
Yours is a kingdom where success  
Is measured by the words you  
Cause to rhyme the way nature  
Does for is saunters along daily  
Leaving us weaving the next skirt  
To wear to the next dance of the  
Queens of poetry.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Singing Songs Of A Revolution (South Africa)

I danced the toyi toyi  
And thought it was joy  
To dance in streets and  
Jump up and kick up sand  
And point at the oppressor  
With the finger of a professor  
For mine was a land  
Oppressed in the hand  
Of a system we called  
This name apartheid  
For different we were  
And similar we were  
In dance, in joy and  
Song and for in this and  
Yesterdays truth we stand  
And see today as a day  
Where we must find a way  
In this country that says  
We will always share and stay  
Being one in every way.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Sinking The Unsinkable

They push you down daily,  
In deep and shallow waters,  
Only to find that it cannot be done,  
For to sink the unsinkable  
Will never be easy,  
For it was made never to go,  
In the direction called under.  
For it is always floating,  
On a sea of ideas.

Your floating is not based,  
On a borrowed float like theirs,  
That was made in the night,  
When they sneaked in quickly,  
When nobody was looking,  
But one built in open daylight,  
At the alter of integrity,  
Where nobody can go with company,  
And tell lies for ears are shut,  
By the flapping of the wings,  
That angels are assigned to do daily.

To sink the unsinkable,  
Is to throw their bones,  
Far away in the ocean,  
Where they will get lost,  
When they go to retrieve them,  
For they will still walk,  
On the same beach like you,  
After having tried to trap you,  
In this endless waste of effort,  
Of pulling down one who never falls.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Sit Pretty Baby Here I Come

I once thought I was so beautiful  
I would marry a man who would say  
Sit pretty baby here I come and loads  
Of love and money would sit on my lap.

I woke up and found that all men had  
Neither jobs nor the ability to get  
One at the snap of a finger while  
I sat on a couch waiting with hands  
Outstretched.

I learned that my brother was laughed  
At for he was told he had married a  
Consumer for his wife did not work.  
I fought for the mother I was and  
Cried out on behalf of the working  
Woman for there was no fun in leaving  
My kids so I could chase money.

I worked myself sick with milk  
dripping onto my clothes for there  
Were no breast pumps in my country.  
The love poured out of my chest  
Causing me to feel embarrassed for  
The leaking married woman I was  
Who had taken to work as if I had  
Taken to the streets running away  
From my infants.

I stand assured that when the milk  
Stirs in us we want to go back to  
The days when men could say sit  
Pretty baby here I come, but we have  
Seen that going to the place of work  
Creates a new you that makes the old  
You call on you and say, we have taken  
A step further in being baby. The two  
Of you start to doubt if you really  
Liked the first you for the ignorance

Of the past always haunts the knowledgeable  
You the world has made.

Resting on our laurels was never our  
Idea, but leaving our children was also  
Never a good idea. Somewhere in the midst  
Between the second where midnight  
Turns into day lies the answer for  
We live assured that the reward will  
Never come from others but from those  
Whose hands were outstretched for their  
Mouths needed the sip from the nipple  
Just as we once did for we are the  
Babies that have become mothers. It is  
Not the love of coins in the purse but  
The push of the midnight hour breaking  
into two that pulls the string and  
Closes the little duffle bag like purse.  
That is why sit pretty baby has decided  
It is time to go hitch hiking, lest the  
Man finds her scrubbing the floor. She  
Has faked illness and seen that the best  
Way out is to go out with the girls.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Sitting On A Fake Rock

Thought I was solid on my jog,  
turned into Jupiter Street. Dead tired.  
Rested my busted back. On a fake  
rock. What? Me, the essence  
of things real. Never, or never. A fake rock.

No denial. The truth was here staring me  
in the eyes. Asking what is true about  
a fake rock. Hollow inside. Darling and gloomy, yet also a rock by name.

What is this rock doing here. Thoughts invaded by question after question, I  
move on for one who seats on the mercy seat. To answer the question is to be  
more  
than a fake rock. For, honestly, It knows  
a better answer. It has been fake always. Me and you cannot claim anything.  
Always fakes.

Sarah Mkhonza

# So Clever Was The Hawk Next Door

So clever was the hawk next door  
She laid her eggs on a nest she built  
On the highest rock way up there  
And came down in one fell swoop  
To snatch a poo out of the nest  
Of the hen built in the thicket small

So clever was the hawk next door  
She kept her eye on a goat's little one  
And saw the time to strike and  
And flew up with the ewe dangling  
On her claws as she flew up into the sky  
Leaving the world perplexed.

So clever was the hawk next door  
She called the hen a tourist  
For she quacked alone and pecked o bits  
Leaving her chicks unprotected.

So clever was the hawk next door  
She offered to be a surrogate  
For the chicks of others  
While she stole and stashed them as  
food  
And went and nested with them high  
To eat the endless manna.

So clever was the hawk next door  
She stood out high and flapped her wings  
And the dogs started to bark everywhere  
And begged to fly on broken wings

So clever was the hawk next door  
She built a nest on a metal pole  
That opened the iron gate used by all  
And sat up there and told all  
She had the key to the iron gates  
That kept them locked up in their  
High end prison with its polluted air

And then looked down and said look  
How foolish you are for you did it  
To yourseves now live with it.

Sarah Mkhonza

# So Long Ago It Was

I sit at the end of the yard  
I see the true end of the string  
Long, winding it goes  
Leading my thoughts through the needle  
Sewing a spectacle called my life  
In a home meant to be mine forever  
Yet taken from me by time.

I see the trees green and solid  
Painted in the space that shows  
We lived, loved and laughed there  
For we knew not that we were  
The thread that was held  
In the hands of the sewer turned time  
We walked into the mud puddles  
After the rains bare footed  
And felt the cold earth underneath.

We heard the sounds after the rain  
Saw the sun creep into the valley  
Like it was afraid of the rainbow  
It stood high against the mountains  
Another day we would live to think of  
The day we wish to return to  
It is gone and only the mind  
Can take us there to see you  
Beautiful country of mine.

Who said we would walk in exile?  
Who said we weren't in exile  
Our land bleeding with death  
People shrouded by power  
Which filled the streets  
And walked to the villages  
And spoke and poked the nerves?

Yes I miss you land of mine

I wish to see you and hug you  
Because of the truth of love  
For it never lies to me  
You are beautiful to look at  
You leave my mind full of this  
The love of you I can touch  
Even when I am miles away from you.

The world continues to unfold  
Like the years I spent there  
The yard unfolds in front of me  
I sit and look on daily  
Walk into the future step by step  
As if I am walking right where I came from  
For you who is exiled will know  
We want to touch tomorrow in yesterday  
And claim it for ourselves as well  
In lands far away from our own.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Soldiers Of Poetry

Our march is on  
We march with words  
Pour them in the soul  
And ask everybody  
To go for a cleansing  
With the tourniquet  
We tie the sores  
And then say you either  
Get healed or choose  
To die a death where  
No words can awake you  
For your ears have stoppers  
That nobody can take out.

We just pushed them in  
And tried to touch the  
Eardrum because we thought  
You still wanted to hear  
For your heart is open  
When you turn the key  
With this kind handshake  
That has all the pepper  
Words can sprinkle  
Into our stew so well  
Cooked that is shines  
On the face of the plate  
Called you son and daughter  
Of an elder whose teeth  
Have gaps that remind me of  
The smile on the face of the  
Man who sired the grandfather  
Of my children.

Let us soldier on  
Our is a burden of  
The mind that wants  
To spill all that there  
Is so that others can  
Pick it and hide it

So that tomorrow  
They can reopen their  
Bags and know we gave  
Them bombs to throw  
At the enemy they  
Did not see who will  
Be snarling on their  
Door when the clock  
Strikes ten and the  
Wink is closing on  
The eyes and the body  
Says do lay me down  
For I have had enough  
Of this brooding and  
Can do with more than  
A wink.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Somebody Stole My Glasses

On the final day of judgment.  
I stand to answer for why I  
did not read my bible. 'Dear  
Lord, you will not believe it,  
somebody stole my glasses.

Shivering in my unpolished  
brush was stolen.

Go back and make sure to  
buy one key and half a key,  
no screws missing, for you  
have a screw missing in the  
in the door here.

Arriving here like a rejected parcel  
makes good news. Hence this telling.

See why I am clean shaven? There are  
no thieves who still razors anymore.  
They all went to the hereafter to  
face a judgment like me.

They all blamed it on the scissors  
murder for he demonstrated everything  
was a weapon and needed for protection.

Excuses will not make it up there.  
They are coming back here. Let me  
and you be found having done it all.  
So not to be called the nogooders.

Excuses don't make it up there. They'Re

Exc

See

Arriving like a rejected parcel,

door here.

and make sure the door has all  
the

shoes, I argue that the brush

Standing there in my unpolished  
she

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somebody stole my gkasses

Sarah Mkhonza

## Song Of The Lone Worker.

We swept the yard with grass brooms,  
Stirring up dust that choked our throats,  
Rendered us coughing and sniffing and sneezing,  
Then we piled dirt by the roadside,  
In piles so big and smelly all day,  
Only to find it there the next day.  
The garden boy had no garden,  
Nor the kitchen girl the only kitchen,  
Where once they toiled and looked at shovels,  
Like over sized spoons that scoop the earth,  
And throw it on heads that are empty,  
Only to cry and call out with songs,  
That said they were still hungry like yesterday.

What could we have done with laws of old,  
That made us crack heads we scratched hard,  
And combed hurriedly with thorny hands that itched,  
For the money that would never be ours,  
For life escaped the kind with hair like ours,  
And went away to the vaults far away,  
Leaving just banana peels on the road,  
On which we slipped and fell headlong,  
Into the streets we had swept so well,  
Calling it paying the price of freedom,  
For they did say freedom was like a breeze,  
That blows in new waves like a current,  
To leave behind dead fish from oceans,  
So far away no ship can get there.

When the thing called life turns blue  
We see the rain hoping it will rain money,  
Only to find the holes on the roof,  
Looking at us and round like coins  
That fall on us for we let it in,  
In a greeting that sounds like a song,  
We heard when playing with the drum  
It fell into with double sounds,  
Only to find it falls on our heads.  
When will we have a mine like theirs,

That lets money rain from below,  
And shoot up like a fountain,  
To build roofs that reach the sky,  
And move around in rivers of traffic,  
That flicker lights in the darkest night,  
And shine afar like our bosses,  
Who see further than the moon,  
For their packages were long made,  
The take home that never ends,  
Even when their backs are bent double.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Sound Of The Lowveld Sentinel

I lived in a valley,  
Where sounds hit back,  
Against the hills across,  
And echo back at me,  
Where one boy would shout,  
Aloud and announce the arrival,  
Of us school children who came,  
For we were late and needed telling,  
That there exists our own,  
Self made lowveld sentinel,  
In the echo that hits back,  
To tell us we are part of a world,  
That is bigger than what we see.

For here big rocks and trees,  
Drenched wet and glistening,  
Monkeys, snakes and frogs,  
Announce the rains happily  
Joining sentinels that called,  
Messages of life assured,  
Like hyenas of the night,  
Amidst howling that rang out,  
And splintered my soul,  
And left it in tatters,  
Of nervous laughter that rang back,  
At me down in that valley.

Sounds going into me,  
Shouting in that hot lowveld air,  
That would catch me and throw me,  
Down on the ground in bouts of laughter,  
Sometimes in search of gulps of air,  
That could help me yell back at the sky,  
For I had to get my chance too,  
To change the song of the sentinel.

It was the sentinel of barking dogs,

Coming from nearby and far,  
Chasing bellowing bulls away,  
From people's fields full of corn,  
The whip that explodes after the span,  
Of oxen that plow the rows,  
Neatly letting out its noise,  
To the rhythms of a life,  
Announcing its existence so sure,  
Like the smoke that comes out of the sides,  
Of the huts on rainy days,  
Announcing that it is time for fires to cook,  
The only meal of the day,  
And lie down and forget,  
About all the sounds that invade the night,  
Far away in the distant mountains.

Walking in that valley's sandy roads,  
On wet rainy days amidst thunder,  
Left me thinking the lightning,  
Had struck me right in the head,  
As I walked drenched listening to the lid,  
Of the sky that had opened and poured itself,  
All over my childhood self wetting,  
Even the inside of the soul of me,  
For I was a lowveld girl,  
That would join the sentinel,  
And cry back in words forever.

I walked pathways to these rhythms,  
And went homewards to mushroom like huts,  
That promised warmth and food inside,  
Their warm round heaths with cast-iron pots,  
Where I would open the door and smell,  
The smell of home that announced,  
That the golden sunlight had come,  
Into the hut to bid us goodbye,  
Followed by the night that often fell,  
Behind the mountains telling me I was home,  
And could watch this sundown for I am here,  
Where rest tells my body it has come.

For family will gather soon,  
And we will lie down to hear the sentinel,  
The wolf that howls in the distance,  
Telling us that ours is the world.  
To be shared with the likes of them,  
As they also get out to hunt for food.  
Like we had done on this day.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Sounds Of The Rent Rising And Me Afraid

Sh! Listen to the sound  
Outside getting closer,  
Even louder than thuds  
Pounding on the door.  
This thunder with  
Two hands that bang  
With the loudest bang  
Of the judges hammer  
That declares  
Silence in court.

For I am awaiting the debt collectors  
Of heaven now that satan has done it  
Again this raising of  
The money for the rent.  
This eviction was not reported  
To the landlord of heaven  
Where the promise of mansions  
In glory remains true.

The rent collectors are here  
In this space where bees  
Sting us harder than wasps.  
The landlord's pest ridden  
Abode has me running up and down,  
Hoping for justice to be done with  
The raising of the gavel.  
Now that their pounding feet  
Are outside the steps  
God save me from collapsing,  
And falling into the rent hole  
Which has me running from  
One money machine to the other.

Me! Who thought eviction a disease  
Of the homeless  
I'm finally stepping out coins in hand.  
Not even able to buy a submarine  
To sink my hunger to the pits

That will submerge me under  
And allow me to wage a serious rent war,  
Where my espionage will torpedo the landlord and his ships and send them  
Reeling into the depths of the bay,  
Where it will be sink, swim or die  
For this is war, this eviction of  
The San Francisco middle class and the poor.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Speaking For Daughters Of The Rainbow

Once I knew how difficult it was  
I was ashamed of my self  
I tried to change but it was too late  
The gears did not work like the day before  
The path was uphill now not downhill  
I sidetracked and looked back  
My path had taken another direction  
I wished for the past but it was gone  
I was happy to have tried and not run

Once I new how funny it had been  
I laughed at myself for what I did  
For I had waded into the ocean of love  
Thinking it would save me and make me  
Without a surfing board and bare footed  
I was sure to end up at the place of wonder  
For the path keeps winding as I wander  
It does not get more prepared to save me  
Instead it unmade me each day I tried  
I found a human being I did not know  
In each action I took in the cruel waters  
Where I landed with my beloved  
The jelly fish bit me  
The sting was just too bad.

Once I knew we were not meant to be  
I had a strange sorrow inside me  
I wanted to know why and self blamed  
Until the small voice rescued me  
It asked me where I stood when I saw love  
I did answer 'at the shoreline for sure',  
'And now where do you stand? '  
'In the middle of the waves for sure'  
'What must 'we' do now?  
'Swim on and even surf sometimes? '

Then I knew I was not sure  
I did not want to talk anymore  
I wanted to do and undo the knots

They were too tight now  
They had 'knotlets' too  
That did not see the big knot  
What was I going to do now that I knew  
The shoreline was far away?  
To go forward was a trial  
To go backwards was inviting  
But the crowd at the shoreline  
Looked on with open eyes  
I was scared, yes I was scarred  
I still stand undecided  
Tossed this way and that  
By the big knots I tied alone  
For we were not meant to be.

Some days it felt like a chain  
Some days it felt like the end of a storm  
Some days I saw the rainbow in the sky  
Then I knew I was the daughter of the rainbow  
For one day would start again  
And I would see it in all its colors  
I just hope it will not be too late  
To jump when the wave comes  
And come out on the other side  
And pull my hand over my head with a sigh  
As I usually do after a storm.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Speaking Of This Nosiness That Faulters

There are noses sniffing the air,  
And dumping the findings in our ears,  
They sniff all stuff and haul it in,  
Then we inhale and wait forever,  
Not knowing when we will exhale.

We sit in our houses waiting,  
Waiting for the remote to switch on,  
Wondering how far the praying mantis went,  
Now that it comes home ready with big eyes,  
Looking at us to see what we need to hear.

This nosiness takes us far away,  
Into corners of this air clean,  
Where the clouds are fluffy as they float,  
Then bring us what we hear and say Oh!  
Oh! my God, really, surely that is not true,  
And then keep wishing it wasn't it,  
Until the stories of carnage end,  
In one pile of flowers thrown in my mourners.

y  
This nosiness that puts us together,  
Pulling us crying into one world,  
Where we cannot even say it is enough,  
Our lives cannot take any more sadness,

Give us good news of this world too,  
Help us fantasize in our daily search,  
For they heal us always,  
Or else stop dipping your nose,  
Into the sadness out there,  
And drop into us this black box,  
Never to be retrieved the pictures,  
That haunt us daily.

Who said news had to be new,  
When they bring old sadness in daily,  
And leave new happiness outside,  
For us to find for ourselves.

Because tomorrow always says,  
Oh! What a beautiful day!  
The black cloud has passed,  
Then our laugh reminds us that  
We are sons and daughters of hope.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Standing At The Wrong Cattle Show

I strut about, and look around.  
To be seen is my art now.  
Yet nobody pays attention to the  
efforts composed by my ingenious  
mind.  
I get on the scale and it squeaks.  
Surely confessions of deafness are  
what keeps me from being bought.  
Now I moo, for I have to be bought.  
I am the thoroughbred and proud.  
Yet even a bullock with broken horns  
will not look at me.

I go to the river where fish swim,  
seeing my shadow above the water they dive deeper.  
I go to the forest, surely the cows  
owned by the farmer know a way to get me  
out of this foolish mess that has me bound.  
I tell them my mosley bit and they laugh.  
You live for hope, patience and endurance.  
Still confused, I ask what is wrong with mme. Then I see, I have been standing  
on  
the wrong table at the wrong cattle show.  
Time to find the show where mirrors  
sing aloud, shouting one name, d  
have read the signs.  
And

I

I get

Sarah Mkhonza

# Standing Far From The Basket

Some will say why shoot  
When you are too far from  
The basket. Stand and aim  
And put your focus on a ball  
Getting in that basket for it  
Is in throwing it in that you  
Will know the basket is not there  
To measure how good people think  
You are, but to tell you what it  
Is you know about the game of focus.

You get the ball and hold on to it.  
Let it go after you aim for this chance  
Will not be lost. Once lost it never bounces  
Back for it is not made of rubber like  
The ball. Like the chance it is, it goes  
Disappears into the sunset like the sun.

If you try mother earth will tell gravity  
To stop for it is the chance of the son  
Of love to defy the force it is and tell  
The world he missed being Michael Jordan  
Because he was born at midnight when God  
Was in a hurry and human flesh was no  
Longer wet enough to make anything other  
Than the midget that stands so far from  
The basket that the basket stands as tall  
Higher than the gum trees of Tamarind.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Standing In A Valley Of A Thousand Poems

This valley known to history speaks,  
shakes like the seismic saga and sinks  
knowing Noone will believe me when I say  
I stand in the valley of a thousand poems.

One ant heap here reads the termites that  
dance in my head and says it wants to be  
a mountain. This also you will not believe.

This one here rises like the moon, a woman  
trying to carry a load on her haed. Tough  
luck, her bundle says. No biceps no do.

This one hoots like the owl. Someone is in danger of going where all owls go.  
This place where bats also make sure they do not go to alone.

This dance in this valley gets warmer when  
the chimneys caught fire. Knowing they do so noiseless means cancer finds us in  
a dead sleep.

The poets blow the trumps and all these poems stand and sing the click song.  
Dreds  
that are locked up kick doors and state  
What kind each poem is.

I answer for you blank verse, and all the  
clapping happens. The valley says it fears the species for to eat poetry would be  
to eat their own kind. Every animal does not eat it's droppings.

So clean is the valley because of this truth. We sit together in agreement for  
we are chewing the cud together hoping  
no flood will come into the valley, for  
climate change is real.

having borrowed

Sarah Mkhonza

# Standing In Our Truths Hands Of Ours

Just thinking about the past and its deeds,  
I find myself standing right there in it,  
Anytime I am standing in it, it speaks  
out with a soft voice calling me back to it,  
Come it says, come and just stand in me,  
Then we will be two twins in our time,  
My time, your time in the day time,  
When our past is just being in the two of us.

Speak right there the message I have from you,  
Right there where you open your hand,  
Rubbing my palm with ticklish touching,  
As the blood rushes back,  
Taking back the truth to revealing endings.  
Like the lines under my eyes which smile back,  
With lines around my mouth agreeing with a shiver,  
For I see in your eyes the quiet looking out of them,  
Looking on and telling the truth of our wonderings  
Saying search deep in me and go beyond the lines.  
They have been seeping into them the sun,  
Making my look as real as the sculpture,  
Out near the road to the big forever ahead,  
Which gapes at our looking with its openness,  
For so real and so deep are our truths, hands of ours.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Standing In The Grotto And Confessing

Now I know a lie has a long lifespan  
Words that came out years ago  
Haunt me here in the grotto.  
They sit with stares so hollowed by time  
These candles look dim  
As they melt and burn my hands  
When I pick them up to look  
How pure my soul will become  
When next I come to confession.

When I heard the lie repeated  
A decade later on new doorsteps  
the lie had traveled far in time  
To cement itself in the mind, the anger  
My mother fuming at the heavenlies  
For not bringing down fire on her  
The one I had lied about.

My skin is hidden in shivers  
Etched in the caverns of my mind  
Is the big story I told  
That lies between the three of us  
Untouched and half know by some.

It way my mind which fabricates truths  
The way I want them twisted to blame  
I stand in this grotto in a girlish fight  
Of silky petticoats torn in jagged tears  
That I hid at the bottom of the box  
And a huge scar on my face.

I argued with the truth then  
I cannot argue with the lies now  
For I used to survive questioning  
Not knowing the coming grotto  
Which will deal with twisted stories  
And dish out words like art  
Painting episodes to be told  
About the grace I have now

To stop me crashing into the fire  
As my ashes get swallowed by cries  
Of a penitence too late  
So here and now I say it,  
It was not her, it was not her.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Standing In The Plains Into Which I Was Born

Am I what the world was waiting for,  
looking at my trail right now.

It zig-zags and disappears behind me leaving me to go on for I am looking for  
the zenith of my life.

If I lived a life of gear,  
the results are written on  
the faces that received it.

If I was filled with hope, it  
equally shook the earth.

The wind swept above my head,  
my hair told the story of woe.

Out in this valley of windy storms  
There is one national anthem.

Prepare for the next storm it runs,  
Before you are caught wit your pants down.

The altos rings the melody swaying trees,  
blowing tree tops to one side.

Puddles form and water as runoff escapes  
into holes. The ground teaches it the  
game called sip away.

The drought comes and we ask where it's  
cousins arid and candid are.

The answer we are told, lies in the  
coming winter that will come drier than  
ever.

If I was born of wetness, I must answer  
why the sun burns this hat less valley.

I was told the answer is known only to  
bald men, for they constantly  
ask why the sun burns their hairless spot.

In this valley into which I was born,  
stands no princess with no pot of water,  
on the head. The storm blew the pots into  
a pile of debris.

When it is over, what remains is work and nothing but work. Let us work on.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Standing On Shark Island

I stand here ready to go down in shreds  
and leave the land of my birth to the reich.  
He has chosen me today. I will go for going  
is like coming. Now that you see me, all  
of me, sinew by sinew. I am ready to go  
where the sharks will put my skull on the  
shrine of remembrance, where only those  
who know how to fight go.

Once a man went inside a whale, they say,  
and then he came our unharmed.  
I will be no more when I go, only if you  
forget to go and call my name on Shark Island.  
Swakopmund is not far, when you mean  
to go there for me. I mean something to  
someone. Walk for me on Shark Island.  
Call me by any Griqua name. Call my Nama  
name. I will answer in the waves. They  
tasted my blood.

One day someone will care, that I suffered  
like the many, who were swallowed by  
the sharks. When others say go and die,  
they say so with bloody hands that have  
power. We leave our land to you. You will  
hear of us from our children. You will see  
them with hidden tears in their eyes.  
They will not forget those who left  
to go and be eaten alive.

We built this land of ours, that today  
we must leave to these who kill,  
and get forgiven because nobody  
asks questions on our behalf.

We have no shoah. When you see  
others in the cities, know that the  
death was the same. We were made  
to throw ourselves one after another

at the sound of the whip.

Is it because we have no images  
of how we looked inside the mouth  
of a shark, that the world forgets  
us and live us a story of life taken  
and forgotten?

These people whose lives only matter  
when they have killed others and then  
bury their heads in the sand have to  
answer like they do for all these deeds.  
The law which choses is not a law  
for all.

Where is the law that remembers us?  
Is it in the mouth of other sharks?  
These that equally say jump in and be eaten.  
For it is nice to watch history in the  
making, when some are green and yellow.

I have seen the Hage. I have stood there  
listening to judgements of some while  
I wait in these shadows of Shark Island  
for a lawyer that is brave. It does not  
take a crowd, but just one who can speak  
the truth that people have put a silence on  
that is like a rock. They rock it this  
way and that. They want it to stay put  
on this truth that I speak so freely.

It is nice to be free, they say.  
They come out with hands  
clean, when they buried us in the stomachs  
of sharks. Go your way and jump.  
We cannot eat your truth. Eat yours.  
We did not eat, but were eaten.  
When you eat your dinners  
today, remember you made us the dinner of sharks.  
Your silence claps for those who were behind us.  
Together with a world that is silent you say  
Jump in and be eaten. Silence is good

because it speaks louder than words.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Standing On The Wincrowing Floor

I stand on the wincrowing flow with  
A bowl of grain held high for I know  
Which way the wind is blowing at this  
grain will fall right here  
And some will stray, but I will find  
It if it falls under the husks.

To wincrow these words into poetry is  
To find the few that can make a meal  
We can eat and not fall sick. The rest is good for the wevels for I  
Will throw all in the compost heap  
And come rain it will rot and go back  
Home for they say we all came from  
The ground where as husks unwanted  
We will return.

Dream your dreams for the wincrowing  
Fork is coming. It is ready to do  
Its work that you do know  
As well as I. I wish I were not like  
You but like one of its prongs for  
I could have the power to point you out and have you dangling on the fork  
And look at you and say it's a pity  
You ended the way of a husk. Unfortunately I stand on this wincrowing  
floor as vulnerable and as ignorant is  
Things that await me and you. Therefore I wish to beg my lot to join  
Me and watch the direction of the  
Wind for that is all we can do.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Standing With The Dart In Your Hand

If this throw you want to make  
Is final it must hit the bull's  
Eye for you do not have another  
Chance for with a real bull  
Two horns you aim your hands on  
As two eyes you see. In this game  
Called life you aim once. You  
Miss the mark then you have to  
Await the next turn in the next  
Life and who said King Life  
Rewards those who throw their  
Chances away?

Throw the dart and wink an eye for  
This is the magic that does it.  
Don't ask me what to do when  
You have no eye to wink for  
Everybody knows the answer to  
That question. Make one then  
You will ask me how and as I have  
Said before ask the rag doll. If  
It can dance with no feet why  
Can't you aim with no eye. Your  
Questions redundant are a sure  
Sign of never trying for when  
The script runs out we all know  
That padding works. In this land  
Of reality we apply the rules  
Of the wedding at Cana and change  
Water into wine for the game is  
For the movie to run till the  
Credits roll on the screen and  
You see the name you love most  
Crawling upwards and you wish  
It would not disappear for it  
Assures you that you aimed and  
Let the dart go and made the  
Bull's eye son and daughter of  
An elder.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Star With The Brightest Gleam

Star with the brightest gleam I see you,  
Brightening even the darkest nights,  
Brighter than moons and half moons,  
You who beat the sun to the race,  
And won a place for yourself alone,  
Where you shine and make them wonder,  
Where it is you got your stary mane,  
Which glows and growls truths feared,  
And teeth that glow like jewels.

Shine on in the yonder where you are,  
Star with the brightest gleam,  
Glowworm who excels at everything,  
Touch souls of beast and pebbles  
Yes even pigs and piglets,  
Clean them up and let them dance,  
Clean them as they grunt and wiggle,  
For their tails are too short to swat,  
That even a fly can sit on their back,  
And not fear even one touch.

Shine on and peel off the log,  
For their eyes are blinded,  
They see, but what is theirs,  
And rub it on to others.  
Shine star with the brightest gleam,  
Gleam on and dash across the sky,  
The night is short, the day comes  
soon, to fade the gleam in you.

Suns from other lands will come,  
To take over the space where you frolic,  
The wide sky where you sparkle,  
And go on into ends unknown,  
Your light will be dim then,  
As pigs go to the butcher,  
To grunt no more, but bacon be,  
And babble and sizzle in flames,

When set on the tables of the rich,  
Being eaten, never to dance again,  
In the mud where they swam and slept,  
While the glow worm did its best.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Stay Alive The Water Lily

So flat yet floating to oblivion,  
No worries for you are fed by the sky,  
So beautiful you bloom for everyone,  
So solid, so there no one can wade in,  
And touch who you are without knowing you,  
From getting the shock that lights up,  
For only you knows how to live,  
The way of stars without paying,  
Even a dime for the air you breathe.

This bird sits on your leaves,  
Drinks from the pond looking around,  
Sticks its beak and strikes at this,  
This fish that it swallows,  
Its beak going up then down,  
In steps of the gobbling you watch,  
As it swallows on and on.  
You looking at this life,  
And blooming white like the clouds,  
That cast a shadow as they float  
Up above as if searching for a way,  
To help you on your journey,  
Of waiting for the pollen to be taken,  
To grow another one like you.

Life is not easy water lily,  
For your leaves know this for sure,  
Yesterday stood a bird of prey,  
That prayed for a fish to eat,  
Then tore the leaf as it fought,  
To get its dinner for the day,  
And fly away leaving behind,  
Its droppings for it to carry,  
Till the rain comes and washes away,  
These so rare that need to sink,  
To the bottom to make you feed.

When will your new leaves come up?  
When will your new flowers show life,

Alive you are the water lily,  
That everyone waits for day by day,  
For it is rare this you know,  
For you bloom for just a few,  
So rare a find, so beautiful,  
Stay alive new water lily,  
When you die no one will see,  
That in this pond there lived one like you.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Step Out And Feel The Breeze

Slowly reach for the next bar,  
One arm first then another,  
Heave yourself up with oomph,  
Kick the chair under you and

Voila you are seeing new heights.

Who said you were not made for greatness, daughter of wonder?

Sarah Mkhonza

## Still A Blessed Untouchable

This problem that bothers many,  
This poverty and hunger others  
live with daily, renders me to  
proclaim that I am a blessed  
untouchable.

I could grope around in the darn,  
without as much as a candle to  
light up where to lay my head.  
The faggots from yesterday are  
in my hand for a light. I let  
go of them. I confess having been  
there, I am a blessed untouchable.

I saw one little piece of soap,  
Shared for months by more than five.  
Till it thinned and disappeared in  
one bath. This does render me to  
proclaim this life of the blessed  
untouchable.

Those who touched me touched my  
poverty, which evaporated, a  
vapor pulverized. It left inside  
me, this blessed untouchable.

Having seen and heard poverty,  
churning inside some stomach of  
a kid, I sit here on the stool  
of my memory. I cry for many the  
tears that are the waterfall nobody  
hears.

If we could put them together on a  
slope, we would hear the sound of  
the falling water on the cheeks  
turned rocks by hunger. We see  
the cheeks of ours in the mirror.  
We know we have seen the blessed

untouchables.

Give a Mother Theresa wet wipe.  
I could not wipe the cheeks dry.  
I have joined the lament of many.  
Can poverty stand inside many and  
speak inside many and ask what we  
blessed untouchables remember.

We sit on seat of our memory.  
This throne thrown at us by  
time with her luck bearing left  
hand that reached me and you,  
calls us to act. We know the rule.  
Share and share like the ants do.

Seen the colony of ants sharing?  
They get into your kitchen. They  
create the load and launch in on  
their backs. No pulling and hiding  
stuff from others. We all labor  
night and day. We share the load  
we are going to hide from the house  
owner.

He does not like ants anyone. Who  
liked the untouchables of India like  
me and you. Who knew us when we were  
poor and had tears like a waterfall  
when put together. We call it hard  
work, and say it got us here. We  
turn heads at the group like us when  
we were untouchable. Yet now we laugh  
when someone declares us the blessed  
untouchables.

I have loved the touch of others. It  
is warm and so are the smiles. I join  
the world in its desire to help and  
stop the waterfall of tears and the  
din of noise put together when hunger  
causes the stomach to sing the song,

whose tune says, I will be hungry and  
hungry everyday till the drought ceases.

They have talked of climate change.  
Me and you, we listened and hoped.  
They have stolen clean air even.  
The poor who gave us the second rung,  
on which we stand feel it. The land in  
the Pacific Islands has disappeared.  
We live still on the second step,  
me and you, these blessed untouchables.

Seems like we are next, for we being  
on the second rung on this shaky  
ladder of ours, will soon fall with  
the water rising and threatening to  
swallow the poor, hungry and lost.  
Pray we make it to another step.  
I hear they are raising the bar,  
in a place called Silicon Valley.  
Shall we remain the blessed, lovely  
untouchables that society made happen.

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Sarah Mkhonza

# Stop Knocking On People's Doors

Like a blind guide you go to places  
You knock so hard that the people  
Think you are deaf. For so loud  
is your voice you leave them worried  
If a want wit has come to this place.

I said you know three times as so said  
A song of old and then go in for they  
Know me and you are now two people  
On a mission. I said I told them  
You are to be let in even when you  
Have not knocked. No more this  
Calling attention upon yourself  
For it makes me mad when everyone  
Talks about you disturbing our  
house. Next time you come knock  
Just once and I will be at the door.  
That means do not come when I am  
Not there. That means call me and  
Alert me that you are coming.  
When the doors are ours you can  
Overstep boundaries and jump  
Over fences and even come in  
Through windows. I am not bullying  
You but I am only trying to be  
A law abiding citizen. As long  
As I live in this house, I have  
To speak the truth about the rules  
Of love or it ceases to be what it  
Is for rules of love begin and stop  
When you stop knocking on open doors  
And try hard to be a stranger that  
Was brought up with knowledge in  
A home everybody wonders about.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Stories From The Windscreen Of My Car

The world comes to me at the speed  
I go into it. It brings buildings  
And trees of Palo Alto with shining  
Leaves into my view at the speed of  
My car. I ask my car to slow down  
With my foot which I take off the  
Pedal and the speedometer tells me  
The story of things inanimate that  
I can have the controls, but I do  
Not push the pistons of life up and  
Down. That is still the work of  
The engine.

I listen thinking I am wise for  
I alone can see the world for the  
Windscreen is the one that brings  
The stories on the road to me.  
This cyclist that wears a T-shirt  
That has spiders on it looks at  
Me daggers as I pass near him  
Almost bumping him for this is  
The problem of being small and  
Riding around people who look  
At the world through the windscreen  
Of their car. The world comes to them  
Smaller than that of a cyclist  
Whose head is cast on the ground  
In front of him as he works his  
Way up the climb.

I pass stories of joggers in twos  
And one in particular who jogs on  
Both streets by looping his way  
From one street to the other for  
I know as I catch up with him on  
the other side that my car has  
Come to be as slow as a jogger  
Who loops his way through streets.  
This life of driving on and on

At speeds of humans has long  
Been telling me to get a new  
One, but I am so in love with  
The stories I have come to see  
Through the windscreen of my car  
That I do not want another for  
The tint I will get will not be  
The same. They say people do not  
Like change, but I do not like  
Windscreens to be taken for granted  
For they shape the world in  
Front of us like the brain they  
Force to focus on the narrow in  
Front of them. My world is small  
But as long as it is as small  
As the windscreen of the world  
I will still stay myself for  
I will have seen only what  
Providence allowed through  
The windscreen of my brain,  
Should I decide to get rid  
Of my heap of scrap with whom  
We have become second cousins.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Street Wise House Foolish Worldy Wise Cyber Foolish

Where do we go when all the  
Word we tread on is taken?  
I knew how to scrub floors  
And could polish them shiny  
Till I went out and saw the  
Pavements dirty and broom  
In hand a person sweeping  
Them then I knew how street  
Foolish I was for I thought  
They swept themselves.

I learned some wisdom as I  
Stood and noticed a man with  
A sharp object piercing litter  
And there I saw an invention  
On the street which told me  
Plainly that I was not just  
House foolish I could not  
Make it even in the streets  
Unless I learn to be streetwise  
And invent an object that can  
Help me to sweep dirt and wash  
Dishes standing for when I do  
It any other way I am using  
Somebody's energy and stealing  
Ideas when even a street sweeper  
Called it plagiarism.

Unless I use this tool and tell  
It is the idea of another say  
Steve Jobs or Bill Gates  
Or some other person out there  
Who donated MSDOS to the world,  
I cannot even claim I am wiser  
For I borrow every idea I use  
From gurus of wisdom like these.

If I can walk in cyberspace  
And not pick up the litter

That is all over this world  
Of the internet with a sharp  
Object but stand here a victim  
Of hackers and all I am indeed  
not only street foolish but  
Also cyberfoolish. A time will  
Come when my invention in hand  
I will stand at corners and like  
A Pharisee tell you all that I  
Am not like the tax collector  
That cheats uncle Sam like you  
For see a woman with her own tricks  
That render the whole world not  
Only Cyberfoolish, but worldfoolish,  
For someone out there is worldly  
Wise like these computer people  
Who have left us tied to their ideas  
Like coins on the loins of an old  
Woman whose money need not be stolen  
By naughty township boys for they  
Would have to kill her before they  
Get into her undergarments for this  
is not the place where streetwise  
Tsotsis look.

This day is coming for I am each  
Day taking a leaf off the wisdom  
Tree for I want to win the battle.  
They say there is no revenge that is  
Better than success for every loser  
Knows that. Call me a loser now, but  
Talk to me when all the leaves of the  
Said tree have been swallowed by me,  
For voila! Streetwise I will never  
To be caught unprepared by time.  
For at the moment the riches are  
Passing over my head at the speed  
Of light and soon my spell is about  
To be cast on them for the leaf  
I am taking in my food daily does  
Not joke when it wrenches things  
from afar and puts them in front

Of me.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Stripping Down The Lamp You Are

The lamp shade goes first.  
Is it made of the finest silk?

Then comes the base. Is it made  
of the hottest brass?

And now the light bulb. Does it  
bring out the warmth that makes  
one to wonder where they make such.

The whole thing bunfled up, is it thrift store trash that has to go back where it  
came from or land  
in the dump?

There's no room for despair when what  
we want is the tatoo. It is either there  
or not. If not, it is not a collectable.  
You wasted your time and money in this  
purchase. Someone has the original, in some collection close by. Fix the fixable.  
A lamp is still a auction of the  
century is coming into town. Don't sell.

boots

denims change color with each droplet..

Sarah Mkhonza

# Swimming In Our Own Divided Pool Up To Our Necks

With bare hearts openly divided,  
we walk in our own divided mud.  
This mud in our pool calls you  
red and me blue. We walk in our  
own fences blinded by words that  
make us know ideas are stronger  
than shackles.

This redness is in a Red Sea blue,  
has the aftertaste of water from  
the Dead Sea. What do the dead say  
when we somersault in division. Our  
tongues cover the walls of the world  
wallpaper of division.

When the division was knee dip,  
we saw where we were going. The  
mud has got murine and the rest has got hidden in the dumpsters where we threw  
the truth away  
N

in the

wallpaper

Sarah Mkhonza

# Swinging Poe Fireballs

I saw a man playing with fire,  
Dancing around like like to tires,  
Spinning he moves and keeps going,  
Swinging his hands turning strings,  
With fire dancing at the end,  
To a sound that went on and on,  
Only to stop when the flame is gone,

This poe fireball, lights like fire,  
Dances like fire but not on its feet,  
Dances on arms but not its own  
Like flying on wings not our own,  
Just the man turning once again,  
To give a world warmth it had never seen,  
Even in the dreams of little stars,  
That danced brightly in the sky.

Would I fear to try a poe fireball lit,  
Tied to my feet like a toe,  
And dance around fire in hand,  
Waving a wand that has magic,  
I throw in the air to cast spells,  
On everyone to make them happy,  
The way the poe fire man does?

Would there was a fairy,  
To throw fire and burn my heart,  
And make me swing round and round,  
Me turning, with arms swinging,  
My own poe fireball in the hand lighting,  
The very one deep in me,  
To keep it dancing with joy like him,  
This poe fireball man who dances always,  
To the sound of fire in hand.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Tail Or No Tail Means Wings Or No Wings

The the horse swats a fly off  
Her back with the most beautiful of  
Tails and the pig shakes its coiled joke  
of a tail and the flies laugh until their  
Stomachs are painful for they have never  
Seen the likes of a pig's tail get at them.

The cow shows off its beautiful tail that  
Is the numerous colors of a beautiful dawn.  
I the pig swears that this joke has to come  
To an end and climbs on the cow and tells  
The flies to dare come up for it will  
Show them what it is made of. It somersaults  
On the back of the cow and takes its tail  
Swats the flies off so hard they buzz off  
Never to take the pig for granted for  
They have learned that pigs can do it  
In borrowed robes tail or no tail even  
If they boast of wings pigs can do it  
without those too. For the tale has  
to end with a pig victorious.

For one day it will also give the flies all they  
Need if it is about milk humans can drink,  
For this is about knowing how to get  
What you want.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Take Back Your Laughter

No matter how dark and sad,  
Remember the sound of your laughter,  
It's ring calls you to the future  
With the sound of yesterday,  
When you shrieked and rolled on the ground,  
Writhing and squirming,  
For your stomach was sore,  
You swore you had never laughed like this,  
Now know that was not true,  
For you had and will laugh again.

Playing dumb to the now,  
Is playing numb to the feeling,  
That takes away possibilities,  
You can create tomorrow,  
For you were born to do,  
That which no one can do.  
See yourself with tomorrow's eyes,  
And borrow tomorrow's truth,  
Hear it ringing in your laughter,  
For you were born to laugh again,  
Yes you were born to love again,  
For love repeats itself,  
Just as your laugh repeats it's ting.

What if you let your laughter go

And someone kidnapped it for aransom,  
A gold digger making you pay huge sums  
For what you had and did not use,  
Would you feel the loss for this  
Treasure that sits in your hove  
Unused for you refuse to be love,  
Of the you who will laugh again  
For they did day you would love again

Sarah Mkhonza

# Take Me On Your Search For The Fountain Of Youth

We swam, bathed and then emerged  
From the pool our feet standing  
Back there wishing we would not  
Leave and always live walking  
Backwards with mirrors agreeing  
That we have to do all we can to  
Claim our heritage for we came  
From the fountain of youth.

Mirrors do not lie for they  
Remind us of faces as smooth  
As the face of a porcelain jar  
And cheeks round and rosy with  
The touch of love. Our hand  
Once folded small fists learned  
To clap loud and slap each other  
To laughter for they did not  
Have the mark on their ring  
Finger that speaks of failed  
Marriages.

We looked at each day as a  
Wedding day in the making  
And heard the air we breathe  
Saying marry me so we can go  
On this walk sworn never to  
Let go of each other for I  
Will never let you down. I  
Blow in all directions  
So we will never lose our  
Bearings and get lost in this forest Called life. I have the power  
To cause the waves to rise  
Into a storm and bury alive  
Any enemy we encounter. If someone tries to get between us I have  
The power to capsize their boat  
So you can I can journey back to  
The fountain of youth at the  
Center of the earth for it is  
From there that we came and seek to return.

Ask the mirror if I have ever had  
As much as a wrinkle then you will  
Know I have the directions and can  
Take us on the calmest surf to the  
Shores of the fountain of youth  
From whence you came for I was born  
The Son of King Wisdom.

Take me for together we hold the  
Ace against humanity for you have  
Heard that everything that lives  
Is on a wild goose chase and is  
Forever chasing the wind. So marry  
Me marry me and be the envy of the  
World for humans will not believe  
Good things happen to the likes  
Of me and you for these truths I  
Speak are ones you left at the  
Fountain of her we will  
Go facing east on our daily walk  
To the place where youthfulness never  
Ends, where spines never bend and  
The clays of the pools glimmer with  
The glint of the magic we seek.  
Be

Sarah Mkhonza

# Talk To The Girl You Are

Nobody knows the inside of you,  
Nobody speaks to the girl you are,  
You are the person given the task,  
For you best know the girl you are.

Speak to yourself the truths you need,  
Ask yourself the questions you have,  
For it is you who walks up and down,  
Knowing, touching and feeling all around you.  
For you are the one top of this thing.

If you silence yourself with fear,  
You will die to yourself unsure,  
What you would have said to all,  
Who wanted to hear the words you have,  
For they were given only to you.

The land you live and walk on,  
Knows your strides as you walk daily,  
It gives to you all the power,  
That lifts your torso into the air,  
Propelling you to futures afar.  
On roads of dirt and tar.

Talk to me and also to you,  
For we want to hear your life,  
Speaking in a dance, this laughter in you,  
This song in your voice that is horse,  
For it will never break like that of a boy,  
To blast harder on the earth if you let it,  
For it was made for such words as you have,  
To release into the world right now,  
For we cannot be sure when silence comes,  
To turn off the walkie talkie that you are.

On this last jog that we are on,  
I hope to hear you as I stride on,  
Looking into the future with you,  
Telling me in laughter song and dance,

For they are the LSD of life,  
As I heard it said so long ago.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Talking To The Lilly That Grows Outside My Window

Hey beautiful lilly that  
Grows outside my window.  
Let us talk so I may tell  
You how far I went to get  
You. I know you do not know  
How far I went to get you.

I travelled far out north  
To get you. Wondering if  
The sapling you came from  
Would grow I planted it  
Outside my window where  
I would not forget to water  
It.

As my bad memory would serve  
Me as usual the sapling went  
Out of my mind. Then one day  
Vouila! Like the love of God  
There you were looking at me  
All the bell shape of you  
Hanging down a three foot plant  
Like the bells of Saint Petersburg.

That you did not ring like the  
Bells did not matter to me. I looked At you and remembered bending  
Down in a forest not sure you would  
Grow into the beautiful lily you are.

You looked all pink and shaded  
And I knew that you would live for  
Love had come to my window  
And would never leave. I watered  
You and ate of your beauty with  
My eyes that would not get enough.  
You remain in my memory the only  
Thing that reminds me of that  
Trip to the north.



# Tell Me Ananse Why Royals Demand Front Seats

Now that I am queen of the climb  
For my thumb peels off dollars from  
A pile I should answer these questions  
But sheer modestly says it is better  
To ask a question than to answer it  
In the conversations of the world.

Why do royals demand front seats?  
I asked my mother for she was a  
Princess of Magedu, a small village  
Not known and she said never to answer  
A question when you sit on a queenly  
Stool. So advised I ask why it is  
That royals demand front seats.

Is it because it is easier to get to the  
Front than it is to get to the back because  
The steps are many on the upward climb  
And fewer as you go down?

Is it because when the wedding  
Cake is cut they must get the first  
Piece because they are closer to it  
And leave the last pieces for us for  
That is what we deserve?

Is it because when the pianist plays  
They will hear the distinct note yet us  
At the back we hear the rhythm and start  
To dance for what else can we do for  
We also need to be seen and known for  
What we can do best?

Is it because their necks are so  
Labored with power that they are  
Too heavy to stretch at the back  
Lest they twist them and lose all  
The power they carry?

Is it because we do not want to  
To see their foreheads but just  
The bald spots that are seen in  
Half from the back for they shine  
Like the money trays they eat out  
Of?

Is it because power corrupts and  
Puts others in front and others  
At the back where come push or shove  
There is nothing they can do?

Is it because we want to hide at  
The back lest they see we are just  
A bunch of birdies flying in the  
Dark like bats and still wet behind  
The ears?

Is it because life is unfair and gets  
Us out of any womb at anytime throwing  
Us onto any lap that rocks us into  
Our invisible thrones where  
We are kings in the making in our  
Own way?

Is it because they hope to live lives  
Like us and face the danger that presidents  
Face when the altercations of life fire  
At us all and block them from us all  
For they always do so from the front?

Tell me Ananse for you are the knower  
And chose to sit at the front of every  
Issue on my mind like a real queen of  
The climb

Sarah Mkhonza

# Tell Your Story Lowveld Girl

I heard sounds in the valley,  
Sounds of whips cracking on beasts,  
The pushing and plowing nearby,  
Living lines of dirt turned up,  
And seeds looking at the sun and rain.

The farmer, that worked hardest,  
Ripped what he sowed I saw,  
And thought like me when I plow,  
I would reap as much as he.

Then I went to the place of work,  
Worked harder than the hardest I saw,  
Cracking whips on my back endlessly,  
Telling me to work harder than ever.

This I did thinking I had to please,  
In order to get a ticket of peace,  
That would lay food on the table like them,  
Only to find the bread was smaller on mine,  
Than the half a loaf I had bought at the store.

I asked the seller why my bread was small,  
He looked at me as if I was crazy,  
He put my bread on the same scale,  
When it tipped he said to me,  
Your breast and torso make it tip against,  
Everything you put on it.

This I thought was the lowveld in me,  
Telling me the girl of the city got better,  
I walked to town so sure I was it,  
The thing to get the corner office there,  
Only to find a desk at the entrance,  
For all I was, the receptionist also was.

Then I climbed the ladders of learning,  
I chose a gum tree for it is tallest,  
Green and smelly eucalyptus oil and all,

Only to be told I was not of the myrtle family.

Then I went back to the lowveld whence I came,  
Ready to rub sand into my hair like all,  
The girls I saw who had sand in their hair,  
And shake it off to leave some small shiny curls.

This was what I needed to do with me,  
For I had never learned the ways of the wise,  
That a widow shared with me in all black,  
That it is life to be a woman after the life,  
That a girl has lived walking this earth.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Tempt Me Not On Tree Tops

Tempt me not on tree tops  
For I will break my legs  
When the branches gives up.  
For branch and bramble  
Break the legs of a want  
Wit and climber to destinations  
Of love unheard of.

Tempt me not at the bottom  
Of the lake either for I  
Here they drown those who  
Cannot swimming like frogs.

But tempt me on the banks  
Of a river for I will look  
At your shadow in the water  
And change into a pebble  
And you pick me up and throw  
Me on the other side where  
I can watch your strong arms  
Fight the downstream current  
And get you where I stand.  
This victory so fiercly fought  
For tells the two of us we are  
Two fighters who won against  
All oddd. For it is the how and where  
And notThe why That speaks wisdom  
Btween me and you from now on.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Tepid News Of Independence

So young and hollow,  
Like someone had sapped,  
All sense out of us,  
Wanting nothing to do with rules,  
For freedom had just knocked  
On the door of our hearts,  
To be let in by us on our terms,  
Not those of the old daredevils,  
For we owed them nothing which we,  
Could not give back to history,  
On our backs come push or shove.

We, the progenies of the age,  
Had seen man land on the moon,  
And been there when the moonbeams,  
Bowed to the rays called sunbeams.

We had seen life at its take off,  
And watched it blow up in the sky,  
As bandits looted the pieces that fell off,  
To show off at the  
next exhibition of the richest,  
ones from the poorest country,  
We were sick of it.

These indiscretions of youth,  
Have followed us like the moon  
All the way to our north pole,  
Where white lights and their glare,  
Keep nagging telling us to remember,  
The little wicked creatures we were.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Birth In The Bus

The birth in the bus  
was a birth in no manger.  
Just with this cloth on her back  
and the baby that threatens  
to tap its little feet on the floor  
of life like any other baby.

The women come to her.  
They surround her as if to hide her  
from a public that fears to see  
the birth of a young one just there.

The bus is full of us onlookers,  
our eyes widen with the angst,  
that fills the bus with bursts  
of talk about what to do.

Put a stone on her back,  
and then we can get to  
the hospital. Why this burden  
on a hidden burden I ask. Pigg's peak  
is surely not about pigs,  
nor is it about this one birth,  
or what now could be a death.

All fear to see a life come or go,  
with them all in one space and helpless,  
for this time men will surely know the  
urgency that makes women ask for  
something, and want it right then.  
Get this kitchen painted, honey, please  
and it takes years and years and years.

This birth is not begging to come in.  
It is on the birth canal and majestically there  
as if it is the only person in the bus,  
who should be talked about with wide  
eyes, that look on with expectation,  
for something surely must happen.

She is giving birth now let us be ready,  
A life is raining from the sky of our talk.  
I am anxious, but also curious,  
surely baby once zygote should you,  
get us all mixed up instead of saying to you,  
with have been there before,  
and then go on with our business as usual.

Who has not been there in the birth canal,  
with mother, father, nurse or doctor?  
Only you stranger that makes us these,  
expectant passengers for surely we will  
tell all people we saw a birth in a bus.

There's a birth in this bus you guys,  
Even in the future we will point them back,  
to a time of surprise and wanting to see,  
and yet hoping not to see this birth  
for the bus could do us one favor  
And arrive at the hospital in town

Time stands still when there's an emergency,  
as if it wants to wipe the plate clean like you  
when you eat a meal where you have been invited,  
to go yet you did not really want to,  
like this baby that is being expelled,  
out of the warmth of the mother's body.

Maybe it felt the warmth was woolen warm,  
now we want the cold to get into its nostrils.  
So unsure this human to be. Always turning  
and rolling in the belly. Why pain your mother  
all the time you little one, by deciding on a time  
alone?

Surely the woman got in here,  
sure she would reach the place,  
where birthing people is normal,  
and getting a hold of them for the  
first time is the norm.

She has got to the bus stop!  
Everyone is so relieved to see,  
that this baby is the most obedient  
citizen we have and will ever have,  
for without a fuss she lay there,  
when the whole world was in shock,  
for right there was about to happen,  
a deed that happened to us all,  
in a privacy we carry in our little bodies,  
and want to give to each other.

This battle was won by time,  
or should we say time was defeated,  
for it stood still and let happen,  
what man wanted most.

Time is never defeated when we win,  
for it is a servant of the moment,  
where we stand with fingers crossed,  
and say surely he will come not,  
in the rush of this bus ride  
for that would have been hard.

Swazi men never witness a birth,  
they are exempt from seeing,  
what they did to their women  
who have to go to the birth place  
and do the work of taking out babies alone.

Thy would surely have been sad,  
sorry for the child and the mother,  
sorry about the inconvenience of the hour,  
where they worried about both,  
knowing they rest and wait to see,  
the little bundle in swathed blankets.  
Now they have it all for she has left,  
this place once tortured by the moment,  
nobody wanted to be the way it threatened  
to be, of making land a human on this runway,  
which is mobile and endless, for such was  
my journey, in sunny and dry walks of life,  
I see passing in my mind even now.

Suppose the baby had been born,  
could we have named it Busride Dlamini or  
Landings. I surely do not know  
but Swaziland surprises are many,  
for they land on your lap like all surprises,  
and this was one of them.

to

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Brexit Ended The Tango

When the two took the floor,  
They flowed into the platform,  
An elegance unknown in their step,  
To the admiration of many,  
Who knew there would be winners,  
If this couple held out to the end,  
While some couple wished they would win,  
And leave the winning to their perfection,  
They were not thinking of the impossible,  
For nobody plans to lose,  
Except those who walk away.

The dance continued into the night,  
Cheerers rising and sitting anxiously,  
Clapping of hands, the applause went on,  
The judges rising in their seats,  
Wondering if the German dancer, French dancer  
Belgian Dancer or Greek dancer tangos  
To the music of the sixties or the eighties,  
Or just lost in a national roundabout  
Where the milkman dances alone under a cow,  
And the windmill turns round and round,  
In circles night and day in the wind  
In a Holland all its own.

Then there was an invasion of the floor,  
By strangers dressed in tattered clothes,  
Ones from the street, the poor striding in,  
Their shoes upturned and coats floating,  
With shoulder pads flying whose lining floated,  
Flailing and falling into the eyes,  
Of these two lovers of the tango from everywhere,  
This cantata so beautiful this song,  
Has been taken over by the wind,  
That howls and shews everybody away,  
For the floor no longer smells the same,  
Having been perfumed by all the perfume,  
That cannot be outsmelt by all of the Paris,  
perfumes that a la mode.

The judges allowed all the dancers,  
And argued all flowers smell good,  
When crushed into perfume from Arabia,  
Where the knights of England once lived,  
For they were sons of heroes who had lived,  
On all the corners of the world,  
And therefore gathered the roses,  
From the rose shows of distant lands,  
And should love the perfume from there,  
For they had sold it for years and years,  
For now the sham of reviling smells,  
Was so false the upturned nose,  
That smelt the truth like it was not,  
Was not going to ruin the dance half way,  
Into such a well planned nocturnal event,  
That was a red carpet of Arabia event for sure.

More poor came in from the streets,  
Spitting into the judges tables,  
Trampling the score sheets to bits,  
The papers flying in the wind,  
Like a new snow storm on the internet,  
That invades and takes over the brain.  
The judges flew out through the door,  
They called security guards in black  
Helmets, batons and guns and flowers,  
A mingled mess masseuse of masses on the floor,  
Thrown on the back of every judges table,  
the feet stomping on the front row,  
Where the upturned tables lay broken,  
For the files are empty as is the score sheet,  
The invasion of a Europe's got talen show,  
Cannot be stopped by breaking down,  
And crying foul when all goes out,  
Into the open for everybody to see.

Brexit may be an exit,  
For some it is a running,  
For others a ruining,  
To end all is to sing God save the Queen,

From the north pole and south pole,  
Of far away shoes when standing,  
Hands on the chest and forever,  
Looking on the problems of a continent,  
That was learning to tango,  
At a pace faster than the two,  
Who started the tango on the floor,  
Him pushing, her pulling,  
For the world cared that much,  
And looked at it for what it was.

Who will live to tell of the dreams,  
Once flaunted in the hope of doing,  
As the dancers began the dance,  
And hit the floor with solid steps,  
Assured with the rhythm of the Beatles song?  
For it was the taking of a stage once empty,  
And turning heads towards the dancers,  
And showing the world how it is done,  
To come together even after wars,  
That tore and fried a continent in fire,  
Seven times two decades having gone,  
No leaders to write and show the way,  
For Churchill went the way of all,  
For those were people who saw it all  
While others saw what it was,  
That tomorrow would be written about.

Would the habib on a queen's head,  
Have taught the few who rename the truth,  
That the world is sizzling again,  
In a fire that is smouldering,  
Where arms are flying to places,  
And people suffer like Omram,  
Who wipes the dust of the rubble,  
That he was removed from dusty as dirt,  
Looking for a mother he cannot find,  
With the familiarity of reaching for the breast,  
That he knew when his years taught him,  
That we live to reach out and hold,  
The familiar and put it in our mouths,  
Even when Brexit has come and gone,

To live these flying about in a nearby,  
That could have been stronger and able,  
To put the child to sleep just one day,  
Than go begging a refugee,  
That will drown on a boat far away,  
And never know what home was like,  
For we all refused to let this tango,  
Go on into the finish.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Chase Of The Gazelle From Tamarind

Have you seen a gazelle grazing on  
The plains her head sniffing the air  
She is making sure no beast will prey  
On her. Then all of a sudden she  
Takes a leap and starts off in a  
Gallop and speeds off.

This Gazelle from Tamarind hears  
Dogs barking and sees a poacher  
With his pack of dogs coming after  
Her. She runs in the direction of  
Other gazelles from Tamarind and  
Only feels safe when she is with  
Her own. She joins the others and  
They run off now a crowd the safety  
Of which is the crowd.

They come to a river and throw themselves in and the hunters  
Let the dogs do the chase while  
They find a shallow place to  
Cross and on goes the chase.

Forever she runs looking this  
Way and that and finally they  
Disappear into a rocky alley  
And the dogs give up the chase.

The Gazelle looks back and  
Utters a sigh of relief that  
Says that was close. Next time  
They will get me and I will be  
Dead meat. Let me celebrate by  
Eating while I can for grass is Sweeter after a close call.

She eats grass with a ravenous zeal  
Reminiscing with the others as  
Their mother repeats the rules  
Of survival and tells them to  
Always stay close to each other

For today we almost lost the  
Fairest daughter of Tamarind.  
Look we would have lost two  
For right there the gazelle g  
Goes into labour and a new born  
Joins the pack. Those dogs almo  
Had a royal feast of  
And we almost lost a future king  
For look he has the kingly birhmark  
Behind the ears that only comes three  
Times in hundred years.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Crockpot Without A Lid

this here crokpot has no lid.  
it does not cook but soaks  
the stew till dawn. what shall  
we do to stop it from spilling  
uncooked bits into the twitter  
bird? we could cut the mouth  
of the twitter bird while we look  
for the lid, and then sit on top and  
secure the top with a pillow and  
sit still and make sure the beak  
of the bird never opens till the  
stew is ready and the crestfallen  
bird is ready to twit no more. just  
make sure your bottom does not  
get cooked into a wasted stew for  
that would be really funny for bird  
plus bottom would mean we are equal  
at the bottom of the hill.

Sarah Mkhonza

## The Future Calls Answer It Not The Past,

The past calls and weighs you down,  
It hangs around your neck,  
This past of voyages in the dark,  
For you did not fail, you dreamt,  
Dreams that were trodden down in places,  
Where people called you names,  
Where insults came one after another,  
Now the words from there call you,  
Haunting you in the darkness of loneliness,  
Just look forward and not back there,  
For it calls you to an end,  
That does not have a trail,  
That leads to any future.

You walked it like a tightrope,  
Your sweated and wiggled your waist,  
Undoing the tangles that tied you to it,  
Now you have left it do not look back,  
For it is in your mind to do so,  
For it is all you know,  
Seek the future even in the dark,  
Create a life like no other,  
One with dreams as high as the mountains,  
And walk into it with the boldness of a kudu,  
That jumps with each leap and keeps on,  
Jumping into the next,  
Oblivious of the snares of poachers.  
For they long to stall the jumps,  
That you make so boldly.

You alone can know it the way it came to you,  
You alone can do it right,  
Share it and not hide it,  
And work to the finish,  
For it is there that rest will come,  
And greet you with the courage,  
Of a final act of victory.

The past is yelling all the time,  
Telling you of cliffs and dongas,  
Creating darkness all around you,  
Making you see woe and not will,  
Yet they bang against each other all the time,  
One a winner, the other a loser.  
For it attacks with ideas of itself,  
And makes you think it is when it is not.  
When the past calls you, do not listen.  
Shut your ears and go to the future.  
For there is only tomorrow,  
To plan for and the past to regret,  
For it is the time we spent blankly,  
Looking in front of us and not doing.

Keep on jumping into the air,  
When the past holds you at the waist,  
Kick it for it will kick back,  
And find yours a stronger kick,  
One to reckon with always,  
For you were born to win,  
The battles of the future,  
Not those of the past,  
That yells and always says no.

==

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Future Of Gambits Is More Gambits

This talk of being outmanoeuvred,  
Of the preempted outcomes these that  
Speak to doings that help support  
Future talk will leave us in need  
Of ways of creating side doors  
In case there is an earthquake.

This talk of rigging that has  
Happened before we see the bull  
And take it by its horns will  
Leave us in the arena when the  
Bullfight is already in progress.

This bullfight is rigged by the  
Bull itself. It goes bellowing  
All over, when it knows the truth.  
That is how you lose a bet at the  
Races ask the bull. It has done this  
In all the betting houses of the world

Can we trust our hands when our bull  
Has them tied and is dancing around  
With the rope as if to ask us why  
We let it go? Can we trust our truths  
When they are bellowed in any way  
When the constitution has become a  
Book that is banned in the world of  
Those in power?

This world is reeling on the edge  
Of the next dive and we are not even  
Wearing our scuba diving suits.  
I fear the silk that is blown in  
The wind will tear down there and  
The fish will wonder how flimsy  
Our minds have become now that the  
Bodies we seek to hide lie vulnerable  
To every shark. We've been had.



# The Hide And Seek Game I Play With The Scale

Clever as I may be and garrulous  
One object has me running as if  
I am being chased by the wind.  
The only thing is I run and  
Never touch ground. I shy away  
From this numbered judge  
With eyes invisible and limbs hidden  
Inside the bathroom they call a  
Scale. It takes my breath away  
Each time I am called by the morning  
To get on it. I stand and think  
Twice after saying two Hail Marys  
And then get on and them zip  
My mouth for the sigh of relief  
On what I see says I must not  
Talk for people will hear how  
Things sugary have gone to the  
Heavens with my dear soul calling  
Me to sing songs religious  
Each time a plate of food  
Lands outside the door on  
My landing.

This game of hide and seek  
That I play with my scale  
Has had us call each other  
Me the cat and the scale  
The dog for we have this love  
Hate thing going that forces  
us to get together and what  
I hate is always the scale is  
The plaintiff and I am the  
Defendant. Why should this  
Piece of invention invade  
My life when it cannot move.  
Next time you will hear there  
was an arrest for throwing  
Things at the wall. Know it  
Will be this accuser who never

Seizes to have statistics to  
Back up the arguments that always  
Have me go away the loser.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Horn Tooted By Tutu

The horn tooted by Tutu  
Is not a broken horn as some do say,  
For they refuse to even listen,  
When a country goes to doom.

Listen to the man Tutu,  
For he is not tooting his horn,  
But telling our story,  
When he says, 'I am warning you, '  
People of the south.

Who are no more sure,  
Facing trials everywhere,  
Let the Tutu Bishop toot the horn,  
For it is not his but ours,  
Listen as never before,  
To the wisdom of an elder.

He speaks the truth without fear,  
Foretelling what is to come as always,  
Dragging us into the future,  
With bullhorns of an elder,  
Hoping we will not go,  
Into the gutter of history,  
A people who lost their pride,  
Not knowing when we once stood,  
A nations of haters,  
Spewing garbage at each other,  
With words of selfishness always,

Have we returned to where we once were,  
Have we sunk deep into the dirt,  
From where we came,  
Truth telling and unashamed,  
Only to be warned,  
That one day,  
We will regret what we are doing,  
For we are lazy to use the vote,  
To create a future where the man,

Tutu will not toot his horn endlessly,  
But give us a real walking up call.  
And tell us we are getting lost,  
If we will not mend our ways.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Judge And His Wig

I am going into that god damned  
Court without this piece of hair  
For these are the things that show  
The law is weak even with props  
That hide bold heads that carry  
Our people to the deep where  
The old crocs swim in shallow  
Water. It begins with this said  
The judge as he tossed his wig  
Into the air.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Lament Of A Pin Cushion

Ouch! I say when the first pin goes in  
Oh! I repeat and add an expletive and  
Then I seize to say anything for I see  
These pins are like acacia thorns which  
Got into the bottom of my feet when I  
Still had no shoes.

Someone should have told me that these  
Things that hurt were going to make  
A pin cushion out of my little heart.  
I would have learned to harden and  
Be more like a watermelon for the shape  
And the pulp would do the crying. Clever  
Fruit that you are for you knew the shape  
And the color and the stripes that go with  
Life not pushing sharp objects small and  
Piercing, but forced everyone to use a blade  
Or just dig in with their hungry mouths.

I see the love that goes into you watermelon  
When they drool for your sap and wish I was  
Also just made of substance rather than this  
Cloth that anyone can poke into and not even  
Care to wash or dust for all I am is a mere  
Pin cushion, red all round and green at the top.

Even invisible stingers like death do me down  
When you just disappear and nobody sees how  
You die, for who cares about the process when  
All they know is a deed done in the darkness  
Called the soul.

I have never heard of a blight attacking  
But in this mere tomato world we live in  
The tomato chose to be cloth thinking there  
Would be no blight but dust discovered a  
Way to do it to us even in this lifeless  
So called existence where the sewing  
Machine neighbors keep going on and on,

While we wait for an end at the factory  
Of love and the woebegone pushing of the  
Pins like syringes into a bum that is  
Forever diseased.

If I was as big as a sofa cushion  
I would get a chance to sting a few  
When they lay their bottoms on me.  
As small as I am nobody can mistake  
Me for anything, but a thing to push  
Around, into, and pull pins out of, for  
With no feet, I cannot even walk away

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Last Time I Saw Her

She was all spirit, walking wobbly,  
Getting into bed was a journey,  
That took minutes which were days,  
For she had lost all the history,  
With which she had walked me into this earth.

She was ailing, yet still calling,  
To those gone and to us remaining,  
In the whispers from her soul,  
Telling us to keep the truths laid down,  
When she sang, and danced like a clown,  
In this thing that life gave us to do.

The last time I looked she was walking away,  
Her body limp and leaning on doors,  
Then I called out her name like always,  
Only to find she was no longer here,  
Only the shell lay in this that I saw.

I waved to her and knew the time has come,  
For the call was waving her away,  
With the hand she had used to say,  
I want you to come here to me.

The songs she sang came back to mind,  
Long prayers of dreams she wished for me,  
With many names of God I did not know,  
Counting one by one as she went,  
All the way into the daybreak light,  
To be disturbed by roosters crowing,  
Telling us it was yet another day.

She remains a person who called to mind,  
Things I know and have kept hidden,  
Under my armpits where they tickle me,  
And cause me to laugh for she forgot our names,  
And called us all when she meant just me.

With itchy ears I hear her voice,  
Surprised by us and our naughtiness,  
Which she said confused even the devil,  
For she could not count even like himself,  
And then laughed and sang like a dove,  
Cooing away in a village with thorn bush,  
That covered our fields with hope,  
Sprouting yellow flowers, these balls of pollen,  
Whose powdery tops were picked by me and my own,  
And stuck in our hair for this was love.

She lies alone at the end of life,  
With me wearing her thoughts on me,  
Going to the future where they unfold,  
And get shared just as now we look,  
For this is life to you and me,  
For it calls us to do just like her.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Missing Chapter

after telling you about  
the day and reading the  
obituary you wrote about  
me, I see that there is  
more to the story of our  
lives and governments. the  
chapter tells us to check  
the box marked miscellaneous  
when the time for who you  
are to the giant walking puppets  
want to cut the pound of flesh.  
Do not do what I did and classify  
yourself. the holocoast can repeat  
itself. do not enter into a door  
opened by another

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Numbers Of Us Lament /World Population Who Wonders

The numbers of us grow  
The wail of a newborn  
Fills the air right now  
Yet still we wonder why  
Some of the people hungry  
Some of the people exiled  
Some of the many rejected  
In this world we call our own.

You see the moon and ask  
How many moons have I seen?  
You are on a flimsy boat  
Mediterranean waters licking it  
It tilts dangerously and you ask  
Is this the time when I will perish  
Life is counted in the fingers of the hand.

The waves rise and kiss the side  
They climb in and splash you once  
You know the next one will do it  
You count them as they get closer  
This is not like the thunder of the bomb  
You survived that and now this  
This turning, splashing and being thrown.

When the boat tilts all are thrown asunder  
The baby is lost first just as the one year old  
The man stays afloat for some time.  
The woman wails, 'my baby' and disappears  
Only her scarf can be seen  
Her flailing limbs will not carry her far  
Everything disappears and then the stillness  
The ocean has eaten them all.

The bombs were thrown at others  
Some were worn on bodies with anger

They blasted airports and dance halls  
In big towns and small.  
Was this to prove we can be destructive?  
Was it to echo back life at itself?

Our numbers mill around the world scarred  
By the news of the limbs that flew away  
Never to be recovered for they were pulp.  
The news is chewing us inside  
We are looking to the one love  
The word that stands alone and quiet  
Asking where it was when it all started.

We will heal our world of wars  
The very world we love and live in  
What are we when our rulers are gone?  
Ask people who land in exiled lands  
There is a voting day next door.  
Why are you here when we have no jobs?  
Ask residents of countries afar  
They give you a look that is a story  
You wonder how far back we can go  
If we can claim the earth for ourselves  
And move around with no borders as it was  
Before people knew to box themselves up  
And not give a hand to a stranger  
Without thinking they will take all.

We have grown in numbers  
We have taken over the wind  
Polluted it and sniffed it out.  
We have changed the waters in the oceans  
By crossing them and dumping in them  
We live a people with a trail  
We have to survive on this planet  
There is a new baby in your tummy  
Welcome to our world little one  
One more baby lands in you world of ours.  
The numbers never stop growing  
Welcome World Population Day



# The Place Of The Umbilical Truth

When you are born you come out  
the umbilical cord coiled  
Then it dries up and falls  
and then it is taken  
to the place of truth.

They bury it in the source,  
Where the clan is from.  
Where is the one that fell off  
When you were born?

You have to ask the bearer  
of good news where yours is.  
I am not going to tell you  
because I do not know.

Questions are not about the money,  
That cannot buy the truth  
When it can pay for the lie  
That keeps stretching out its hand  
And asks you to pay it  
For things it did not do.

When money sees beggars stretch their hands  
It makes the loud noise of coins  
Or rustles in your purse all the time.  
For the time to give has come  
To separate beggars from thieves  
By asking the question, what for?

This questions is yours,  
You answer it when you walk about.  
You answer it when you sleep,  
And even when you share with thieves  
And beggars in disguise  
Who come to your door hands outstretched  
For it is a question of life  
In this Swaziland that I know.



# The Rebel Returns Home Finally

I hear words from my past spoken,  
And see them forming in mouths,  
Sometimes frothing and foaming  
At the sides with fingers wagging,  
Thrown at me from everywhere,  
Speakers serious with backs tired,  
Hurling them at me these objects,  
Me a rock looking on,  
Where did all the words go?  
I ask a question here right now,  
Where the search for the real me,  
I set out to find has ended in truth,  
That can only be unspoken right here,  
Where I stand with open hands,  
Wishing for a pair to receive me,  
Who never begged as I walked on,  
To this surprise called my life.

I search around me as I look,  
My grandmother pouring words,  
Ringing praises into the air,  
Saying the future is brighter.

The priest sweating hands up,  
His coat on his back dancing,  
This way and that the madman,  
Telling me life is not a joke.

My mother speaking stomping, yes  
Up and down the kitchen floor,  
Breaking one high heel in her anger,  
And falling on the floral sofa in her rage,  
Banging the door shut this I do,  
Throwing myself into the wind  
That receives me with a howl.

Now as mother I look once more,  
I retrieve the slate of old so black,  
No white words for it was erased,

This tape recorder in my head,  
Seems to have heard only one word,  
No!

Yet I lived and blocked it out,  
And walked into the torrents outside,  
My coat ready to get wet like my throat,  
Which was drenched in liquids hot and cold,  
For to live was all I wanted,  
Living one word only I knew,  
Yes!

Now I stand on this pavement unsure,  
My sneakers wrongly laced up like my years,  
One hole missing where they were ten,  
Not knowing how all this happened,  
This tangling that made me fall,  
For they smell like the garbage can,  
I refused to take and empty at my home,  
How will I enter where I left its smells,  
Floundering in the air like me?  
This world that I tossed into my mother's lap,  
With the pride of the knower I was,  
Only to find the door locked and the key,  
Not under the mat like yesterday.

Like the wounds that scar the hound,  
That barks for the whole neighborhood to hear  
I stand voiceless with a hoarse voice,  
As the puppy I once owned,  
That walked away and thought it knew,  
Every stranger that it saw,  
And barked loud wagging its tail,  
Only to return with scars all over.  
Its head bowed in obedient quiet.

I walk home for home is home,  
Never to leave in like manner,  
As I did when the pellets were there,  
Waiting for me to take them in,  
And gain strength when they are thrown,  
At me one by one like the words,

I flung back at my mom in rudeness,  
Thinking I was and always would be.  
As if scratched each time she spoke,  
I stand here leaking them away,  
Unsure when they will heal,  
If I go back to the house,  
Built for me outside her heart,  
For I will knock and scratch the door softly,  
And return home new smells and all.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Sepulcher Speaks

now that you have my heart  
leave my hands to tell the  
story with no end. it starts  
with the princes of the dream.  
they were able to dream and do.  
they have now gathered on the  
hill and they are going to  
deliver to us the people whose  
dream did not happen.

I am not sure how the selective  
mind allows some people to show  
up at the right time and gather  
after the cockroaches have done  
their night work. when the leese  
in the pot is down there and  
doing the work of the remaining  
essence that the ants have not  
devoured and carried away into  
the hole the white cloth  
remains in the sepulcher saying  
here lay a prince whose dream  
happened all over the world, listen  
to him.

he is also one who can make it  
happen for you, just wait and  
see for this health bill that  
is going to be shredded is not  
doing it for you. you need to  
follow the ants and go and share  
what is yours for we are aware  
you are a suffering twenty two  
million.

when we are done recreating the  
dream, you will buy real stuff  
and go down in history as the  
dream that made it happen only

for those who now seat on the  
summit of the hill and dream  
more.

princes of the world, you have  
nothing to lose but your businesses,  
for I tell you a one better than  
karl marx is on the way to  
deliver a bill that will cure all  
the sickness in our land.

live and let live and then allow  
others to allow a bill to pass  
and then in this sepulcher the  
trusted ants will dig deep and  
break down the last of what will  
remain. next time you see them  
they will be carrying the falsified  
loot on their heads thinking it  
is a bill that will save them  
from all the misery of today.

I say this for I have seen the  
remains lying in here, come and  
disappear as each prince whose  
dream happened lays them down  
with the stroke of a pen.

first they tried to fill prisons  
then they saw the ants were not  
equipped with wrists that could  
be shackled for they had cut them  
on the lynching tree. now it is  
the hour to share the loot on  
the hill with bright lights and  
the man who is called after his  
own house on the hill remains  
the one who will laugh loudest  
for he chose to laugh last.

that is why I am telling the  
story as it is so you are not

for it all ends here within  
these four halls. if you  
can listen to a tell it all  
this is one for I am a true  
witness.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Show That Had To Be

They say the month of May,  
is the month of the aloe,  
for aloes begin to flower,  
in the land of my birth.

Aloes all around I come,  
Fisted, in two these little  
hands of mine. The aloe  
is as silent, as soldiers  
in the night, ready to invade.

They don't even whisper  
that the show is going  
to be fisted, fostered  
and bitter, for I have come  
to the land where only  
the thorny can sap the  
water with succulent leaves  
where they claim for themselves  
bodies like camels and  
march in the dry sand  
where the drought roars,  
in sandy waves in the ocean,  
these shark soldiers in the deep  
sandy sea.

Here I stand on the deep end  
yet the aloe stands with heads  
of leaves, looking at the sky,  
Crazy hair, like the dreads  
of the Black Madonna, in the  
night they stand.

To this day I shiver when the  
name death is mentioned,  
and they just prick the air  
with thorns. Stubborn,  
worse in the darkness,  
Green in the daytime, these

flowers that grow on stems  
so long, they could swath  
a fly.

Am I defeated in this show  
that had to be? Ask the aloe,  
for it was there when I landed,  
to be there when I exit. Still  
standing on the hills of the  
land of my birth.

Did I prick the world with leaves  
green and prick it with leaves dry?  
Did I stand and do nothing but stand?  
Did I march on hilltops with the hair  
of the Black Madonna, laughing in  
the dry days when there was no rain?  
Ask the aloe, for the show still goes on  
Like it had to.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Squirrel Knows Better

The squirrel on the telephone pole saw me  
My wig blown away by the wind as the  
truck passed by me on its way far away  
We are connected on the survival line  
It laughed and stayed up where it was  
Never got down to walk where I was  
For it knew what to do to be safe  
The other one carried the bread away  
It came back to my window to knock  
Mine was not the right one  
I never offer squirrels something.  
Because they know how not to die  
And cause a driver to go and hang.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Story Of Two Oars

These two oars, rowing this boat  
came from the same branch. Now they  
tell the story of the search for rhythm.  
In the hands of man, the search continues.  
Peace, peace they go.

The water  
line. In this game of winning, the oars  
learn they must be held by winners to  
make to the finish line.

This story of peace can be told in the  
rowing. Yesterday the tide came in. Peace,

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Time I Never Lived

It was raining blows.  
It was mincing words.  
It was bouncing on me.  
It was grinding me.  
It was bashing me.  
It was painting me.  
The whip of her words  
Turning me this way and that,  
Pushing me away always.

Now I am gone to the place.  
I squat there like a life.  
I speak in mumbles.  
The darkness answers me.  
Yes keep breathing  
You will be free,  
For you were born free  
To jump and laugh loud  
And tell the stories of people  
Whose minds were messed up  
Like yours, scrambled up  
And poured on the frying pan of time.

Tomorrow comes to kiss your forehead  
The sunlight comes to massage you  
With the hand of so smooth,  
So warm, so right handed  
Its handling is a holy caress,  
For the angels are listening,  
To every groan in your heart,  
Their messages to you are real.  
It will be better tomorrow.

You will not believe the healing.  
It is real like reels of cotton  
Inside a bobbin of a machine,  
That winds itself on as the wheel turns  
This pain that walks as tall  
As the spoken word of yore

That still hammers on your temples,  
And stop you from not forgiving,  
And tell you to stretch your hand,  
For giving is all you can do,  
To takers who always reach out,  
And swallow the air in gulps,  
Not knowing it never gets finished,  
It was there, to be there into forever,  
Until they go to the place of reckoning,  
Where they sleep soundly and noisily,  
Not knowing what they did with words  
Working for a mean master who hired them  
Never to pay them anything at all.

For the harshness of their hands  
That bewitched the world with hurt,  
The smacking and spanking resounds  
As they worked for hours in the field  
Where they planted the seed of hate  
Of the innocents who became abusers  
Unknowingly having seen only blows,  
Come down in torrents like fire,  
Pouring out of a volcano,  
To turn into a tar of psychosis,  
That envelopes the world,  
And brings sadness to everybody,  
Who happens to come across it,  
On this path, this adventure,  
Of eyes staring at another pair,  
Not blinking but yelling,  
The history of their seeing,  
In the bodies of the abused.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Tune Time Plays

Luck laughs at the sons and daughters  
Of time and tells the second was Created so that we can tap on the Floor of the  
earth and know what life is  
For we can hear it in the dulcet sounds made by the clock.

Hours luck says are like  
heavy boots on a child's  
Feet who knows there is a  
Race to win but only if the  
Boots were running shoes.

Luck says to get on the journey  
Boots or no boots and no those  
Who win do so even on bare feet  
For it is not the dance they'll  
Judge you for but haring the tunes  
Played by time..

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Unauthorized Biography Of Satan

I, born in the never never  
Of the skies an angel tossed  
Out for I am now the enticer  
Called by others a tempter  
For like bees they come buzzing  
Around the honeycomb I sit in  
And ask me to invade their  
Mind and make it home  
Even when they are poor, rich, or not so  
For my voice is so soft  
It is almost silent for I walk  
On invisible feet and cause even  
Kings to trip.

They say I am motherless  
For nobody wants to own up  
To giving birth to the most  
Hated of all beings even though an  
Angel invisible I am and powerful  
Too. For those in jail call  
My name while those in asylums  
Call on Jesus.

They take narcotics and invent  
A story that says I walked into a bag  
And took a powder and injected it  
Into a lame arm that wanted joy  
For I had taken it away. This  
Fiction that is told is indeed  
Strange for it does not hold  
Water, for sure, when everybody  
Knows that even vampires suck blood  
Of their own volition.

Who is my brother this Jesus  
The only son born of a virgin  
Who like me is fatherless  
Having left the father for  
He wanted to be king alone and left

Us demigods voiceless and invisible  
And only to him recognizable  
For he alone can say who will  
Follow me to be forever lost  
To the kingdom.

Let us look at you now  
Following me reluctantly  
Looking for me in gambling  
Houses, brothels and everything  
In this Las Vegas you call life  
Where you search for one like me  
On whom to lay the blame. For this  
Game goes on while I look at you  
Through the corner of my eye  
Without blinking knowing you may  
Turn back if you do not see my wink  
Which says it is alright to create  
A scapegoat out of motherless me  
For one day you will also be one.

Finally like Karl Marx I say reminding  
Unwilling you, 'Sinners of the world! Unite!  
You have nothing to lose but your ignorance  
For everybody loves vanity and knows it is  
bought at a lofty price when it is as cheap  
As air, polluted or not at the alter of  
Freedom where you kneel unwillingly.' See!  
Karl Marx could be your Jesus and save you  
On the day of trial when you stand  
Accounting for making me your tempter and  
More powerful than I really am. I'm only  
Saying this to be fair, for they say  
People get lost when the vision is blurred  
By invisible marijuana and pot. You are invited  
By me to sink or swim and just know you  
Do so at your own risk.

Sarah Mkhonza

# The Wind Does Not Know My Name

I sit in these windy verandas fail  
Watching the sky with questions,  
That are mind boggling and sad,  
I wanted to be famous when a girl,  
Now the wind was speaking one truth,  
It did not know my name.

I wonder what to do now that I know  
That it takes more than madness to be  
This piece of fame that graces the red carpets that carry one's name afar,  
For all the trying and acting in  
Dramas big and small, I remain,  
The mystery hidden inside my person,  
Unknown even to myself.

I do believe in the tabloids,  
For they tear to pieces a life,  
Shred it into strips and toss it out,  
For the wind to smell and broadcast,  
Its seed going into sods that turn  
Pages smelling like stolen fragrances  
That make readers sneeze into the air,  
Where the wind catches a name and run with it,  
With readers glad they had no fame for they wood be in tatters,  
Thankful that the wind does knot know their name.

Who wants to live a life of running from the wind I ask.  
Who wants to be known only for eating,  
Remembered only in receipts from the village mall?  
For it publishes the mundane record that says I was broke, to die broke and  
infamous.

The wind says I have to walk the tight rope with a walking stick,  
For nobody will forget that deed,  
Especially if I take my dog up there with me.  
For people always remember the bark of dogs.  
For they tell the story of man.  
For hearing their bark in the wind says 'we have arrived.  
This is the porch where our patents lived and loved.

Where kisses never stopped being released into the air, for we are proof that happened.

It needs no wind to assure us it did.

Sarah Mkhonza

# These Unique Chains That Bind Us

From today and yesterday  
Monday to Friday year in  
And year out there have  
Been these unique chains  
That bind us so close that  
We can hear the sound  
As our feet take steps  
To far away lands where  
Our thoughts lead as if  
We are on an invisible leash  
For they pull and push inside  
And finally let us wander  
On beaches white and sandy  
Not known to many but a few.

It is connections rare  
We find when we walk near  
Rivers and see grass grow  
On the edge and know that  
A picture of us is reflecting  
On the water saying there  
Is a person inside who cannot  
Talk but sees and knows that  
Life is more experienced than  
Seen, touched and felt like  
Icing on a knife when you spread  
It over a cake. You lick it  
Once and know who eats it will  
know the genius that made it and  
Be bound to love for such is life.

For to see oneself in another  
Shape and form on ripples in  
The water with curves formed  
By substances rare is to know  
That the self cannot be contained  
And talked about in two words  
We call a name and a surname  
For they are just what they

Are, words.

We feel a presence rare that  
Wants to climb on steps unseen  
And go up and down the wild  
Stair case the way we climbed  
Trees as children and talked  
To our friends through the  
Leaves. For life gives us  
A gift rare that allows us to  
Ask what we are when we are on  
The tree when we cannot fly  
Like a bird, for one slip  
And down we go and where we  
Fall broken bones may result.

This life which we carry in us  
This gift rare that binds us  
Like chains also frees us when  
We are doing things we love like  
Meeting others on shores rare  
Where no jelly fish stings as  
The one of the beaches of our  
lands.

We bathe together in waters warm  
And wonder about planes that  
disappear never to be heard from  
With passengers whose voices are muffled  
When we see one up in the sky as  
We float for we feel we are in  
An ocean which hides many truths  
In its vastness. This vastness that  
We wear like a vest on our bodies  
Wet and shielded in swim suits that  
Are clinging leaving the water to  
Draw on us and create out of us  
Pictures we cannot see for we leave  
Them behind when we go out and walk  
On the sand like the foot prints  
That tell everyone we have been there  
For they will always follow and not

Lead for they are just that, footprints.

This unique life of spirit that binds  
That the fish who swim will never know  
The way we know it even when two can  
Be broken and feed thousands. These  
Miraculous shapes that swim endlessly  
Without tiring they rush under the  
oceans the way we dwell in these lower  
Parts of the atmosphere. Till the devil  
Comes to these altitudes rare we are bound  
With these unique chains that have  
Us sing, laugh and dance in what we  
Call freedom for it is so freeing  
That chains that really binds us are  
Those we choose.

Sarah Mkhonza

# They Called Us Juveniles

When we were teenagers wild  
They called us juveniles  
For wild were our dreams and  
Crazy our actions. We did the  
Normal and ended up being  
Thought abnormal. Day in and  
Day out we wondered what the  
Adult world was like that saw in  
Us as small people from crazyland  
Who wore the high heels and  
Danced till dawn. My grandmother  
Liked to show us how naughtily  
We stood close to the boys  
In slow dances that said 'we  
Will meet in the evening' with  
Her walking stick tapping the  
Ground to knock on it wishing  
That the wisdom of the earth  
Could be tapped into our ears  
That listened to music loud  
And never heard a single piece  
Of advice.

I grew up and watched my daughter  
On her heels and knew I had to  
Speak nothing of the past for  
She would not believe I had gone  
On those on my first ride on  
The escalator of life and almost  
Fallen with my bags tumbling  
Down. Thanks God for the mercy  
Of the motion that is steady  
That keeps escalators rolling  
Without stopping and not running  
To match the anxiety of riders  
Whose balance hangs in the air  
Which high heels have them ride.  
Now my daughter does not see how  
We could wear bell bottoms wide

And platform heels high and not  
Cause a wonderful circus of oldies  
On the run to a land where only them  
Claim to have lived, 'those days mom.'

They called us juveniles when we  
Read James Hadley Chase and got  
Chased all around by ideas of one  
Man as we passed one book from  
Person to person in the light  
Of boarding school hostels where  
Books unbiblical were called  
Godforsaken for they changed the  
Mind and set it wondering to the  
Erotic world of stars in films  
We had not seen. We sang along  
With Elvis and when he sang  
'I just can't help believing'  
We would not believe for more  
Than just a day that there was  
A place called heaven besides the  
One in this song for his voice  
Touched a spot in the future we  
Were walking into juveniles or  
Not.

Sarah Mkhonza

# They Said Sherry Would Make Me Merry

I went with the girls to the party,  
Where we drank all kinds of drink,  
Anything liquid went down slowly,  
With an arrogance of youth,  
For they said sherry makes us merry.

I learned a thing or two in that flurry,  
Where drinks passed from hand to hand in a furry,  
And got gobbled down like the very berry,  
Out of which they were made.

I drank myself drunk with laughter,  
When even walking was very blurry,  
With girls' legs crisscrossing in a hurry,  
Flip flopping down the passage  
For we wanted to be the knowers.

The questions came back like a purr,  
Of a cat that lost its path,  
And came begging on all fours,  
For two legs could no longer do it.

I supported a friend or two,  
When we walked to the dorm,  
Unable to bring to mind,  
The happenings of the day.

We lay in our beds like cats,  
The snores coming out in purrs,  
The clothes lying all over,  
Exposing naked youth and lack of knowing,  
In youth who explore all things,  
By pouring them and sniffing them,  
Inserting them and gluing them,  
Only to lie abandoned alone,  
Outside the gates of heaven.

Our hair was speaking volumes,  
Our shoes making us taller than giraffes,

Our pants flying in bell bottoms,  
That rang very far from heaven,  
Telling angels to be careful,  
For the ones who were now knocking,  
Did not even know their very names.

We were the youth who lived and lov,  
And proved our youth was ours,  
Through the fashions of the times,  
And the dances of the current era.

They said sherry would make us merry,  
Yet it did make me worry,  
If we would survive till tomorrow,  
To tell my mother not to worry,  
For I was no longer sure,  
If I was still the me who left home,  
To return untouched by threats,  
That had been said to exist in life,  
When the yoke of youth lies heavy,  
On the back of my friends and me.

Who baked this cake with marijuana,  
And made it smell like vanilla,  
Which we ate and then threw up,  
Three times before morning came?  
Who made these rules that are like this,  
That leave us wanting if it was us,  
Who lay soaked and drunk like the sponges,  
That smell of beer not made of malt.

I swore on the bible I would never,  
Again go to a party with friends,  
And return wet as a river,  
That fish cannot swim in,  
For they know it is not safe,  
For even dogs know even better,  
For it drowns even the brain,  
Which is lowered into its bottom.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Thinking Of This Head Of The Hammerkop

He turns and looks at the ripples,  
where his long head seems longer.  
He thinks he has the antlers too.

He makes the biggest, ugliest nest  
in all of nestland. He works hardest  
carrying sticks in his nest. Only  
to find he is just the boss because  
of his size. Nobody will lie to please  
him. He is just plain dumb

Who could work so hard building the  
ugliest abode? Who could spend so much  
time turning this way and that in front  
of a mirror that is lying down. Only  
me and you, oh hammerkop.

Your tone does not come in all colors like  
a sparrows. No song sweet out of your voice. Even tweeter would not have you.  
For followers follow the tweet made now  
and followed by billions.

So why bother being near these beings  
blessed. Stay up in there and look down.  
Get the shock of being known by a few.  
For caring is the rare quality of a few.  
Of this me and you know we are the blessed  
few. By keeping at it we will cause a few  
to smile while laughing at our noble heads will nod in the ugliest but most  
sincere nod.

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# Thirsty Sounds For A Nation's Drought

When the news crawls down the  
Mountain on the stony village  
Staircase where news is rare  
Our grapevine comes to life.  
The village huts look skyward  
Letting out smoke at the top  
Like mushrooms with chimneys.

The news gets down the slope  
From the mountains and the people  
Crawl out of the huts like ants  
Coming out of grass topped  
Ant heaps.

The village runner has news  
We want to hear and that is  
There is a donation of food  
That has come from abroad in  
Some country over there where  
It never ceases to rain like  
Here where we never get snow  
Followed by another season  
Of rain.

The women go and get ways to  
Get the bits to be given out  
And talk about this the whole  
Week until the truck comes  
For we have indeed become a  
People in need.

Days were when women would  
Go out and get seed in bags  
From far away neighbors and  
Days where when the storage  
In the ground was full food  
Lay hidden so deep that in  
Times of war the enemy would  
Not know where the storage

Was and even if the enemy set  
Fire to the land, it would not  
Burn. People lived on and life  
Was not in the hands of fate.

Now the whistle is not blown  
To dance steps of maidens in  
The arena. It is blown to call  
The village to line up for the  
Ration from abroad has come and  
Food to last a few months must  
Be taken to huts where it will  
Disappear in a week or two.

This announcement rare gives  
Hope that never lasts and takes  
The same story back to the stomach  
Which will retort in grumbles  
Frequently heard and ignored.  
This starvation that hits the land  
With a drought leaves us with  
Mouths agape to ever be agape.

We seek a page to write a story  
That returns people to the days  
Of plenty in these days when the  
Heat seers every plant to shreds  
Leaving it shaking in the wind  
To die a fruitless death with  
No harvest to talk about. A solar  
Story to hit the solar plexus  
Of a nation and help people  
Regain their pride for deep  
Down water can gush out if  
We only but try.

Sarah Mkhonza

# This Boy Girl Thing Has Us Damned

This water cupped in my hand,  
As I lift it to my mouth,  
This fountain that lets it out,  
Knew it would end up here,  
Dripping through my fingers,  
Like the love we drink now,  
Me and you swallowing hard,  
As our taps let it in and out,  
As go the rules of this pouring,  
That allows rain to fill us up,  
Just as our mouths allow it to.

You lap my person with your thirst,  
You sap my strength and I swell up,  
Then I shrink into your curve,  
Go up and down as the hands that hold,  
Like a game, the skipping rope,  
That you throw up and jump up,  
Only to land like a rubber ball,  
For the tangling tells us to be,  
In like manner this life we live.

Love me you say you do now,  
Drink me, as you did then,  
Your fingers wet with touching,  
Me twitching with the joy of you I knew,  
As I scratched untouched parts of you.

Live me in that position I was,  
Sway me not to places that far away,  
For I know when love is given freely,  
And when it is taken ever so openly,  
And then swallowed very smoothly,  
By two people who are learning to be,  
For they have read about it in books,  
And seen it flashing on the screens,  
That scream and say it is how it looks.

We never knew how deep to go,  
Or how far the well we were jumping into,  
Which had frog tunes as loud as the promise,  
To sell frog legs to the buyer,  
Only to find only one bull frog,  
Made the loudest nose in the pond,  
Where only four legs could be sold  
In the pond that we had built,  
Outside this leaking house of ours.

Leave me not when the bus comes,  
Down the street full of girls,  
In school clothes just like me,  
Promising to open a world much bigger,  
Than what we have for me and you,  
Promised each other that this was to be,  
Our divine tango with the doves,  
That came to announce that we were a pair,  
And flew away and left us looking,  
At the flapping of wings such as we had,  
That taught us to say the one curse word,  
That we could utter under our breath,  
And say damn, if only we were there.

Sarah Mkhonza

# This Burnt Letterhead

At the very top of the letter,  
is the letterhead. It is burnt.  
Address and all clearer to the reader  
than the writer. You are fired! As if  
you were working at the gates of  
heaven and had just been told to  
go down with a number jump.

Fear-seized the ashes you are making  
with this letter are going to lay  
in your heart. Your life has come  
to naught.

You tap your foot as the flames  
help you read each word. This is  
your love letter from life asking  
you what next?

You swear with all the optimism  
in the center of your navel there's  
is no next. The numbers of the jobless  
turn inside the silo called your mind.

Who would want me when I have  
been retrenched. Which recycling  
center takes rejected  
answer is loud. 'All.'

You wonder as the hope rises  
where that all comes from. Then  
you apply a storm and declare a hurricane  
of letters to descend on every desk.

The storm ceases to make the wind  
howl when the gas tank is empty  
and there is red everywhere, as if  
the bank is also in collusion.

The letterhead reads itself back

relating those words you that say,  
you've been there before. Walked  
the streets and saw it all. It is  
summed in one in one word, 'regret.'

How can all these people know the  
same word as if they went to dumb  
school. Precious words exist out there  
that can heal a heart when  
the rejection letter is sincere.

Who can regret when they've never  
burnt such letters in the millions  
you have? Only the king of lies.  
Your mind pictures the writer as you  
burn the letterhead.

Some folk out there are reading  
the skies and writing more. They  
have numbed themselves to your  
letters with the burnt letterhead.

They went to the school of the  
numb one called dumb school, but  
they need one janitor. Take the  
job. At least you will lock them  
in on a stormy day and save them  
from writing the next letter with  
the burnt letterhead. Then life will  
go into recess.

,

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# This Craving To Disappear

Help me get rid of this craving to disappear  
For the feeling of joy eludes me  
When I look at the rainbow  
And envy it its beauty  
For my idea of the beautiful  
Is not sky high.

It still sits on its laurels  
And calls out to make up to  
Cover my weak points  
So the man who lusts for me  
Can drool in the mouth

My idea of beauty renders me  
Loved the way I want for I still  
Believe lovers walk on the sand  
And make angels with wings lying down.

This facing the world with false  
Love leaves me wanting to touch  
The rainbow and ask it how it did it  
To hang up in the sky with a beauty  
That leaves men drooling while  
I look up with my mouth agape  
With neither youth no long legs and  
A hair style that can get these god  
Forsaken beings to look my way.

They say beauty is the eye of the beholder.  
Where is this beholder who keeps all the beauty in his eyes?  
For I am beholden only to such a one  
And seek him in every internet bar  
Where the socialites of the world  
Have as a follower only meaningful

As a number to brag about. Hence this craving to disappear  
For I am already invisible.



# This Hobby Of Bird Watching

This hobby of bird watching  
Is like bed hopping in heaven  
For you want to feel the velvet  
Feathers of every bird the way  
You want to feel the velvet softness  
Of every bed before God says 'next.'

Your eyes look at the beauty as it  
Hops here and there and you wonder  
How these privileged so and sos can  
Sing songs in the air that land into  
Your ear when they see you wishing  
You could use God's bounty and float  
The way they do from vitrine to vitrine  
As if you belonged inside the eye of  
The one who is looking into your soul.

So rare, so fluffy these miniature yous  
Yet so smart and so loving, they remember  
Your bird bath and come to make you laugh  
Making the parrot in you sing the same song  
As you make the same wish knowing you along  
Can bring it into being. So trapped are we  
In this loving of the birds that it has become  
A real mockery to be so close to seeing one in  
The other, yet still we cannot fly and leave  
Our troubles behind, the way they do.

Sarah Mkhonza

# This Is Your Work

Strong, powerful and celestial  
Like you it lays on your lap like  
Someone dropped it there  
Celebrate what you see before  
You for it is a theme of life.  
You did it just by trying and trusting  
Doing for it gives birth to itself  
In the shaping you give it for you  
Believed in trying.

Sarah Mkhonza

# This Last Kick Of Hope Must Not Miss You

This kick of hope that is going round  
Has been announced by the wind with a  
Loud howl and I swear it said only a  
Fool refuses to get the kick when hope  
Knocks at the door of their house for  
The keys cannot be lost at such a moment  
For hope knocks only once at Christmas  
Time.

When hope knocks on your cellar where  
All the words are hidden open the door  
And go on a visit with the words for they  
Are sauntering on plains you have never seen

The knock of hope is said to be loud enough  
Just for you to hear and only you can tell  
People how it was. Open the door and allow  
In this friend who never leaves unless you  
Do not say hello and stretch your hand in  
A greeting for she only loves those who  
Love her.

Never leave the door locked for you never  
Know where and when this visitor who  
Comes announced only by you will arrive  
And find you so empty that even the bowls  
To hold her will be on the counters upside  
Down.

Allow the visitor who is warm and whose  
Laughter never ends for it is with her  
That the two of you can embark on journeys  
That others have never been to.

This last kick of hope only comes and stays  
And never leaves if you allow it to keep  
Kicking you sideways on this endless walk  
Where your sneakers both will get worn out  
And leave the two of you walking even though

Bare footed on the snow.

Do not fall away like a leaf and leave the  
Bus ride before you get to the stop where  
Both of you planned you were going because  
Of people who tell you, you have reached the  
Destination when there are still miles to go.

Life is a mystery for it never tells us one  
Person invisible is in us and waiting all the  
Time to take us to the next level, but now that  
You have heard it is the last kick do  
Not miss this one in case it never  
Happens again. No regrets will get us to  
The place they tell us of called heaven.

Though colorless odorless and shapeless  
She stands the most important ingredient  
In this mix for I have heard those who  
Will miss her last kick will only have  
Themselves to blame says the queen of life  
Called fate.

I do not care if this kick is so hard it  
Leaves me maimed as long as it leaves me  
Talking to others that it has happened and the  
Evidence is one sunken dimple on my chick  
And not a cavity in my tooth that pains me  
For I will have an argument to keep me going  
with all those who ask what happened to me.

Sarah Mkhonza

# This Molehill Has A Mouth

This molehill has eyes,  
ears and a mouth. It talks  
back, with the growl of a lion.

This molehill towers over trees,  
for it claims to have grown under  
the roots of trees.

This molehill towers over you.  
This molehill has speakers so loud,  
  
your bed shakes from its vibrations.

having borrowed

Sarah Mkhonza

# This Skirt Has A Grace About It

So you say they will not accept me as leader,  
They will not listen when I give out the orders,  
Tell them they have another thought coming,  
For this skirt has the grace of queens.

I wear this joy in my heart not on my clothes,  
I rule with power not with one shot here and one there,  
My guns are not fired from under a bed, but on it.  
For I fear no wizard and wait for no witch,

My incantations are as old as mercy itself,  
I say them over and over like a broken record,  
Turning to the tune of the first gramophone,  
Invented at a time when music was born.

Tell the team I put the record in there,  
And everybody dances for the tune is wild,  
I rule with the shoulders of a swimmer,  
That has done the backstroke on her shoulders,  
To the amazement of the world.

For this reason I will see the work through,  
And land on the other side a winner,  
Of all the hearts that have doubt,  
For they have never known this truth,  
this skirt has a grace about it,  
That defeats all doubt and creates the joy,  
Of a team tied to its hem by fate.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Thistles In My Feet In This Walk

In my walk in life  
Thistles pierce my feet.  
As I walk deeper and deeper  
They go. I walk on my toes  
Limping like a deer  
With a broken leg  
And wonder if I will  
Make it home before  
Dark for these keep  
Me from keeping apace  
With life.

This journey began thistle  
Free. Smiles and hugs this  
Fox trot was lovely.  
I jumped and leaped in the  
Air and somersaulted too.  
To walk was a thing of love  
All feet on the ground.  
It was heady to join the  
Walk with my head in the  
Clouds. Only to awaken  
When my heels were  
Hurting real bad with  
These niddles from the  
Wild that had nestled  
Deeper than my hand could  
Reach. So small yet so  
Painful these dark spots  
Down there sting like pins  
Were stuck in me by a wicked  
Witch.

I wish I could hang my  
Feet up and not walk on  
Them now that I must  
Crawl on all fours like  
A beast. Biblical  
Nebuchardnezzar I have

Become, only of my own  
Making.

When I should have bought  
Strength, I sold it for  
Favours. Gave out money  
Like water gushing out of  
A newly dug well in a desert.

Now the briers have me bend  
So poverty can climb on my back.  
What an easy ride! On a downhill drive in a car that is in neutral  
Gear.

It hits a road sign and turns  
Before going into the ditch  
It stops. Hands on my chest  
I get out and limp on for I am  
Now on the doorstep, yes I got  
Home with my hurting feet. Now  
I must work them out one thistle  
At a time on this path called  
Recovery where neither the time  
Or the loss of dignity is recoverable

Sarah Mkhonza

# Those Days With Nimbilasha

We read poems and she wrote  
I miss you touching me.  
For through her words  
The search for what was lost  
Was bold in her writing.

We read lines from Nimbilasha  
I miss you kissing me  
For such was the emptiness  
That poured out of lines.

We listened as she went on  
I miss you touching me  
She said looking at her poem  
When I read mine which I called  
The Longest Poem in South Bend.

For it was here where we were  
Women together loving our words.  
We explored our past and continued  
To feel in the space around us  
Looking for where we had been

People read and searched for we  
Just as we were had a past  
One we wanted to wrap in words  
And carry in print to others  
Who would know we were a people  
Whose destiny was written  
Even before we were born  
And left for us to find.

Nobody sent us to wander in  
The world and search with words  
What had been, but it was in  
Doing that we found we were  
Women and could tell stories  
New and rare and sip the juices  
Of the world that made us be

On our pieces of paper.

It was a world past where tears  
And laughter had mingled on faces  
And fallen down in drops from  
Men and women who had gone on to  
Be grey and not care for such was  
Life. Discovering their freedom  
Left us free to dream on for here  
In our hands we had a book to prove  
That we read poems with Nimbilasha.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Those Who Did Not Elect God

Those who did not nominate God  
Did not elect him  
They did not vote for him  
Now they have to live with him  
So sky high is he  
And so lofty are the elections of heaven  
That they threaten the very  
Law that brought them I to being  
For the maket of things has to run  
The world as always  
No messing about here  
Years or no tears  
For the bell has rung  
And the work must begin.

When the problems knock  
On the door they will  
Not knock on doors of  
Those who elected God  
They will knock on each  
And everydoor that has  
An opening.  
We better make sure we have  
The one and only key  
But not this endless bickering.  
Pain or no pain life goes on.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Through Reflections In A Puddle Of Water

I walk minding my own business on  
This pavement, looking at lavender  
Flowers swaying in the wind. My walk  
Is interrupted by this puddle on  
The cement pavement that forces  
Me to look at it, so flat, so shiny,  
So beautiful and so creative  
That I start to wonder what the  
World looks like when seen from  
Down here where my feet could  
Jump and take me further on my  
Walk or stop me on my tracks to let me  
Enjoy the adventure of a world  
Not seen by many.

I am told by this waters mystery  
To look at the world through its  
Eyes and know life is as good as  
You make it for flat chested or  
Not, you sleep as long a sleep  
As the sun allows.

I am told in subtle ways wise  
To admire the world through  
The eyes of this puddle of water  
For wisdom lays just where you  
Walk. I look around and wonder  
Who is telling my silence to  
Listen to the beauty that hangs  
in the air above this mirror.

The wisdom that has come to me  
Warns me to wait for the marvel  
Unfolding in a pool of water  
And listen to the untold truth  
It tells my heart in silent  
Tunes. It shapes the world above  
It into its own boat-shaped world  
That it paints as it brings

The sky above it to me, a painting  
From an artist unknown.

It sleeps in the middle of a  
Cement pavement looking at the  
Sky and the trees above it look  
Down and cast themselves on the  
Surface of a mirror that casts  
Them back telling me that this  
Is my beautiful gift for the day  
For I have waited long not sure  
What form it would take this  
Day in the month of November.

Twigs thin and unsteady have  
Fallen into it as if they want  
To enjoy the last swim in this  
Shot lived watery patch that  
Is forever threatened  
To disappear for the sun  
Has to win for that is the  
Fate of the puddles of the  
World after the rain.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Throwing Away Good Chunks Of Life

If life was meat,  
Would we throw it away  
In large huge chunks,  
For anyone to catch,  
The way we throw the minutes  
And hours away?

If it was left over meat,  
Would we stretch our hands,  
And grab at the chunks,  
We kept in the freezer,  
To consume on a rainy day,  
In the dead of night

The dogs would scramble,  
At the chunks and run,  
With us following, shouting,  
Their names and cursing,  
For they have stung us a part,  
Of last nights dinner,  
With its delicious juicy parts.

Would we let the seconds,  
Fly away like maggots,  
Going out of the window,  
When you spray your house,  
Never to be seen again?

For without these,  
There would be no day,  
Without a second,  
Its grain of sand feeling,  
Into the hourglass of life,  
Where no week would be,  
No day to slice away,  
And peel off this roast,  
That we bake in this oven.

I heard it said,  
That time was money,  
I went to the back,  
And stood in line,  
For one second more,  
For they had plenty of it,  
In their vaults,  
Yet could not pay a dime,  
To the poor beggar,  
Who came with hope,  
Not even one second,  
I thought as I left,  
This place where they say,  
They keep the likes of time.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Time To Add A Twist To Our Tango

We have had our funny ways of doing  
Where you pull and I pull and now  
We have to add a twist to our tango  
For I may just as well call it quits  
For I got in thinking we would make  
The swell steps and my dress would fly  
Away from my thighs and everybody would  
Say wow!

Now I see this was just us on a stage  
With no audience yet daily I waited for  
An applause that would not come. First  
Your mother who did not think I was much  
To write home about and said it outright.

Then your sister who wanted a nurse to  
Marry your doctor's certificate for you  
Two would work in the same practice  
Built by her for the couple in her mind.

Now the kids came along and we danced  
A tango of four, for they had learned  
From us a step or two and felt like  
This was how it is done. This talking  
Things loud and doing them half way  
So that the house looks like we are on  
The move daily.

The tango took a faster step and the  
Bank accounts got depleted for college  
Fees also called on our wisdom of  
Planning the future of our offspring  
Who had hoped theirs was a life planned  
In heaven for such was our tango.

Now I twist your arm and you twist mine  
And people see love in the air when yours  
Is a hard pinch on my arm reminding me  
I am still being watched especially when

Your mother comes to visit us.

The children love you and I, pinch or no  
Pinch for they never were loud these pinches  
Of ours for they were meant to remind me  
That it is time to take a fast turn around  
And wow the audience unknown to our weak  
Points. Now that the results are being  
Announced I want out for I cannot dance  
With the same loser in this competition  
That is always won by Russians far away  
And not me and you.

You ask me what we will tell our children?  
Why not tell them to start their own  
Dance for our is over and the stage is  
Open to the next couple from the next  
Generation of millennials like them for  
They read and learn everything on social  
Media where they would get an audience  
Endless in this day where we wash all  
Dirty Linen in public like I am doing  
Now.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Time To Sing And Dance Chan Chan

It is time to silence the fan  
And go out and get a real tan  
Where they make them better  
For it is here that we go  
Chan Chan to the sound of noisy cars.  
Someone has to teach us how  
You mourn a hero that others  
Find not so great for they  
See in him a taker not a giver.  
Could the world join in one  
Song when the tunes are as  
Different as they are in  
This cacophony of noises  
That have taken over an  
Island in tears?

It is truth that I hear voices  
Sad and voices noisy for  
I decided to join neither  
For it is time to sing and  
Invite the world to join  
In this lament that causes  
Others to dance in the streets  
Of Miami. They say those who  
Are razor sharp and controversial  
Remain the same in the minds  
Of societies like them for  
What they touch they leave  
In there a hole so deep it calls  
You from afar. Wherever you  
Are join in as the story  
Which has no end begins.

Let us go down the streets  
Of Havana wiping tears off  
The faces of those who mourn  
For the death of a leader  
Is never an easy thing to  
Bear. But cry forever we must

Not for we will lose the time  
When we have to dance to  
Chan Chan the way penguins  
Lost their ability to fly.  
For even to lay a mere egg  
They have to face the deadly  
Cold and go on a march to the  
Ends of the earth. Not to  
Dance right now is to go into  
A cold that will never go away  
For you will have failed to be  
A connoisseur and succumbed  
To the level of the mediocre.

If you do not smoke and never  
Have, you surely did inhale  
If you did put the joint in your  
Mouth in the dictionary of fools  
It is smoking and that is  
A crime you have to pay for  
By dancing Chan Chan for if  
You do not how will you tell  
Segundo you did not inhale  
When he sees the joint in  
Your mouth. Better say you  
inhaled but did not swallow.  
As for you who look and  
Smell like a shebeen you need  
Not make angels out of yourselves  
For everyone knows you to be  
More drunk than the composer  
Of Chan Chan for you will not  
Need to take a breathalyzer  
Test for the world to know you  
Were at a party tonight sinner  
That you are. Someone has to get  
Us all together for we have to  
Pay our dues for not to do so  
Is to fail to give Fidel what is  
Fidel's and Caesar what is Caesars.

Who said that Afro Cuban sounds

Were for those who stay on an  
Island blockaded in the slate  
Of time to suffer and dance  
To these sounds all alone?  
Let us get drunk with joy and  
Celebrate blockade or no blockade  
For if we laugh, sing and dance  
They will know we have taken  
The LSD of life. Fidel is gone  
For to some he gave and to some  
He took. It is time to Chan Chan  
And take a piece of the island and  
Hide it in your heart. Life is known  
To stretch its hand out once. You  
Miss it, and there goes the blessing  
For they say when the priest  
Says now take, eat and drink  
For this is my baptism of you in a  
History not mine but yours. If you  
Fail to dance to the tune tell the  
Stars that you know it is time to  
Bow to time and honor it for even  
For you the day of reckoning cometh  
Like a wagon of old whose hinges are  
Making their sounds as of comes down  
The road that leads up to the house  
At the bottom of the valley of life.

Lay Fidel not in a hole for he insisted  
His ashes should be carried in an urn  
And spread over the blue waters of  
His beloved Cuba. While they float  
There let us honor history for  
Here was a man who did something  
I need to tell you in a whisper.  
I went to my country in the south  
Of Africa and found doctors young  
And they had come from nowhere  
But the country of Fidel. Tell  
Me not to sing and dance to  
Chan Chan and I will tell the  
Gods you are jealous of this bond

That he had with Africa. The AFro  
Cuban sounds will swear as they  
Blast in the hot air of an island  
That you surely are.

\* Chan Chan is a song by Compay Segundo  
Of Cuba.

Sarah Mkhonza

# To Borrow The Wisdom Of The Praying Mantis

I speak and wish standing on two  
Legs with no wings. My message  
Moves from person to person  
Slower than gossip. I spice  
My stories with juicy bits  
From queens of the courts  
But still lack the wisdom  
To make my self seen and  
Heard for people would  
Long have heard of me  
And called me the praying poet.

What did the mantis do to get  
The verb I so desire to precede  
The likes of me? For if people  
Knew I was a praying poet they  
Would read my words and live  
Even before I tell them to  
Read my lips.

Imagine a world where I would  
Have the power of the rabbi  
And have everybody confessing  
Their sins into the air in which  
I would fly on the wings of the  
Praying mantis. It is not envy  
To desire the slim torso with  
The hour glass of a figure that  
Never changes. Imagine me with  
Hands in prayer kneeling at the  
Alter of time with no obituary  
To write but the honor to be  
Called a praying poet when I  
Am just wearing an honorary  
Title that hangs loose around  
My name for I have never prayed  
For nobody, but just uttered  
A few expletives that tell

Everybody I am a praying poet.

How can the world honor mediocre  
Actions when here are ones that  
Are so clean and sincere they  
Can only be described in superlatives?

I am still waiting at the shrine  
Of the Black Madonna pressing  
My hair and hoping this tittle  
Will come with the ease with which  
I run the comb through my hair  
And acquire the wisdom of the  
Praying mantis. What can a  
Poet do to be known around  
The world as the woman of  
Prayer when the likes of  
Insects green and brown  
Have taken the only word  
I crave and claimed it  
When they have never done  
Even as much as utter one word?

Next time you see the insect  
With the credentials I crave tell it  
It would do better with  
Just one visit to the confession  
Window for that would mean  
It has the humility to seek  
Penance for dressing itself  
In borrowed robes for if I  
See it first I will invite it  
To a duel and fight tooth and  
Nail with my bladed pen for it  
Is the sword I am sharpening  
For this encounter that will  
Come in the foreseeable future  
For I am keeping my fingers crossed.

Sarah Mkhonza

# To Love Like A Pro

When I love again  
I will do so like a pro  
I will do it with skill  
I will breathe into it  
Fall into it and sniff into it  
For the chance comes once.

Once the challenge came  
I feared even to move  
I was trying to be proper  
I was outside myself  
I missed out on it  
While trying to act it.

I dare not regret  
Put pick the air in my hand  
Tell it this truth  
It dare not escape  
For I will grab it  
I will talk to it  
I will make it special  
Now that I know  
It walks away and never comes back.

Missed opportunities are not lost  
They have gone to a place  
Where the eyes cannot see  
For they were always blind  
And knew how to fake  
This thing called seeing love.

When I plan to love  
I write the steps  
I order them one after another  
For this recipe changes  
With the fickleness  
That surrounds us all  
As we lose the only opportunity  
To put who we are into practice

And keep grabbing the air  
Trying to find tomorrow  
Not knowing it pushes us away  
And says, " you should have loved  
For yesterday was all you lived in  
Tomorrow laughs at you  
Because it knows your ignorance  
It lives and walks away with i.

Only if you fight back  
Only if you see the thing called time  
Floating in front of you  
Like chimes in the air  
Waving hello and good bye  
For that is just what it is.

Catch your chimes in one hand  
Let them go in another  
If you cannot chop them off  
And let them fall on the floor  
So that they will never leave you  
And go where you will never go.  
Unless if you decide to fight back  
When love was walking near you.

Sarah Mkhonza

# To Sing Along With The World

I cannot jingle bells,  
But I can jingle words

I cannot be an angel  
But I can be a shovel  
And carry words all over  
The world.

I cannot be a tree  
All green and shiny  
With decorations gleaming  
But I can call you  
To come shine on our side  
For it has always been dark  
While on yours it is light.

I cannot be the electric lights  
That caress a tree and light it  
Up with hugs, but I can hug you  
And say Merry, warm, hugs with  
Both of my arms which lay heavy  
With wanting to just shake and  
Do nothing but hug the whole world  
With the light in them. Merry Xmas  
Folks! The world is still turning  
With us suspended in it by  
Our stories of this holiday that  
Comes in less than ten days  
Before the New Year.

Sing along with the world,  
Buy a little not too much  
For the song is not about  
Spending but rather about  
Visiting the world not  
Thought about where stories  
Tell us a young year and  
Supple is about to be born  
In this story turned the

Story of money gleaming  
And jingling in your pockets  
Wanting to come out and  
Throw itself in the counters  
Of the world where the  
Tellers are waiting for  
You to say Merry Xmas  
And Happy new year with  
A handshake that powders  
The counters with gold,  
Leaving you poorer in  
The New Year.

Sarah Mkhonza

# To The Skewer In The Fire

On you are bits that  
Are to go into the  
Fire outside. Peppers  
Green, yellow, red and  
All colors interspersed  
With bits galore, all juicy  
With the marinade of the  
Season, all from the world's  
Best chef you have become  
Here where life gave you  
A chance to display your best.  
Will you serve the best bits  
With this shish kabob or will  
You have burnt every one of your  
Savory pieces unrecognizable?

Sarah Mkhonza

# To Update You On My Life

To update you on my life,  
While sitting here on this bench,  
Where you left me in the past,  
And would not want to hear from me.  
I am now a living free soul of the world,  
I have grown to be the tall gum tree,  
With the crown I saw through the window,  
That beckoned me on to a future of hope.

My leaves are green and shiny in the rain,  
As they did when you saw me years ago,  
When you asked me to join you in a dance,  
When the car hooted to our rhythms  
For your knees had touched the stirring wheel  
Making us laugh the laughter of lovers,  
Who make out in cars not theirs,  
In times that let their voices  
Ring out into the sky above,  
Making us know we were none,  
Of the nuns and priests we saw,  
And learned from at our school.

I look back and see you young,  
Eager to love and follow me everywhere,  
For it was young love, so pure,  
So ready to fulfill itself,  
That it fell full flat on the ground,  
Never to be picked up even by the birds.  
That would fly and put it on the trees,  
For the world to look at and nod,  
That it has happened even to us.

To update you on my life,  
I have become a lover of life itself,  
Not of humans as such for that is real,  
The feeling has dried and truths have come,  
To look at me in the eye,  
And say now the time has come,  
To go down the winding road to the trees,

For this is where it all started,  
Your fumbling with zippers that was endless,  
Letting me wish you were wiser,  
And knew what to do at the right time.

Where I stood I now walk on proudly,  
Talking to the world with a louder voice,  
More like yours when it broke,  
For your baritone was my pride,  
For I longed to hear it always.

I have grown to know this about life,  
That it is not how it sounds or looks,  
Not how it feels and smells,  
But how it goes into truth,  
Even with the blindest eye,  
Of those who carry it in their hearts.

To update you on my today,  
I go back to our past long ago,  
And search for your words of truth,  
And find them intact not loose.  
For that would break my heart.  
To know you were not really there with me.  
For mine is a continuing dream,  
That heals me with its truth.

Sarah Mkhonza

# To Whom A Lot Was Given

I walk down the street and there lies a watch,  
I pick up this Louis Vitton strap on which it hangs,  
Clear from its band, brown and lettered,  
It is one of those the rich really own,  
Now it is mine to take and keep.

I walk to the place where I shop,  
This black bag is now lying there,  
Now who left such a treasure as this?  
I think the fool did not even know,  
The price of life when he loses a jewel,  
For me to find and take home once again.

When all these finds are counted by me,  
I see a coat with fur hanging there,  
Left in the street for me to pick,  
Then I know I must give back,  
For a lot was given to me who takes,  
Just like a lot will be required one day.

Next time you see me the beggar,  
Remember I gave even with the hand I took,  
For us to take, is also to give,  
For who would be blessed if they only took,  
When there are no beggars in the street?

Don't shy away from giving alms,  
To those whose hands are forever stretched,  
For they do have the power to do so,  
Which one day will be gone forever,  
Just like it will to you and me.  
This thing called life that walks away,  
And leaves us looking in the distance,  
Where it disappears never to return.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Tombstones Are Greedy

I didn't know that  
tombstones are greedy.  
I came to talk to you  
and they all looked at me  
and waved unseen hands  
of named ones in the air  
that said, this one too.

I thought they fought with ants  
over their contents the bodies  
of souls mingled with dirt  
but found they fight for me  
to look at them and wonder  
who lay in there so silent.

I thought I was alone  
and yet there was a contest  
fighting for my gaze  
to turn in the direction  
to which my eyes wander  
thinking of the loved one  
whose message is so clear.

Who lies in here was beautiful.  
who lies in here was never sick.  
Who lies in here was strong,  
princess of lonely spaces she  
If you do not say 'hallo.'  
you will miss a message  
from beyond the now.

I said a loud 'Hallo! '  
It echoed in the loneliness  
arrested my own thinking  
and walked all the way home with me  
for someone told me  
they died unfulfilled.



# Tortifrogs

Two races mixed and produced one tribe.  
They called themselves tortifrogs, for  
They resembled mother frog and father tortoise.  
The frog could sing loud, the tortoise could not.  
The babies started the song.  
The frogs told them they were too young to sing a  
funeral croaked and croaked,  
jumping up and down and nobody liked their tune.  
They invaded every pond and could  
deafen heaven with their noise. Nobody could dance  
for their song was strange. Then they sang even louder,  
till all people went mad. The big shut up came  
from the soldiers. So sick was the nation of them.

So the battle went on, tortoises even  
borrowing guitars from the village boys,  
only to find the frogs louder in their usual.  
Asking the tortifrogs to sing loud, the  
tortoises loaned them the guitars. The  
village boys watched in amusement.  
They were looking for a winner.

Sing tortifrogs sing. It is your world, too,  
the elders said. 'We are trying and cannot  
be louder, for the throats we have were  
transformed by the new genes.  
We have learned the tune but the older generation  
cannot be silenced. They call it culture  
this singing of tunes that make the hair  
stand on edge. The voices loud even make their  
throats hoarse. When they say we must join,  
we squeak and the ducks laugh.  
They tell us we could be better off quacking.  
Now the song has gone into a low key that no one can sing.  
That is what we get for following a conductor who cannot sing.  
He quacks and tells us he has come to  
make the best of a bad situation, and will make the marshes great again.  
Yes tortoise still has his head right inside his shell.  
He says he is waiting for the next vote, so

he can play the trumpet in the band and bring  
a lot of rain to these marshes inhabit. God  
help us and put a stopper in our ears for  
when he sings every note turns into a strange  
tune never heard, and also a string of profanities'.

People will still rather live among the ducks  
and watch the battle in the land of the tortifrogs,  
where mouths open and nothing  
comes out, for the frog turned tortoise  
says sound or no sound let us blame it on  
nature.

The frogs go on shamelessly arguing. They  
say inside their white frothy house, a sound,  
is a sound. We all have to listen, to what they sing  
for that is called politics. They say we are all immigrants  
so we are at their mercy for they created the tune.  
If we want to sing, we must return to the land of our birth.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Trails Of Native Lands That We Walked On

Tell me of the Indian trail  
And I will show you a Khoisan trail  
For nomads walk on the sand bare footed  
And the Chicana row the boats on lakes  
Bigger than the Okavango where water lilies  
Sing in the night and hide the snouts of  
Creeping crocodiles bigger than a whale.

For I left a land supreme with rules  
Of life intact that molded in me a person  
Not perfect but almost for I was to seek  
A new home where I had to learn to eat  
And cook without putting any food on  
The flames that glow above the coals.

They say it is adventure when you jump  
From tree to tree like Tarzan wearing  
A loin skin as Black and as invisible as  
The one I have on even though I do not  
Know how to swing on twines and land  
On the opposite side of the river.

I have listened to sounds animals make aired  
Out of multiple channels some insolent some  
Holy for I am listening on a borrowed pair  
Of ears my pair having stoppers from afar  
That still ring of music from the sounds  
Of the clicks of the Khoisan.

They say our people know how to place  
A leaf and get water from the due that  
The night has left and dig so deep that  
Water giving roots come out and quench  
The thirst of a whole people.

And here where the land now bleeds  
The native people look on and cry  
For they see that the life we live  
Has come to take and not leave any

Trace that there was once a life of  
Giving and sharing what the land gave.  
The land itself cries for it has given  
Until it can give no more for the way  
It has been treated has been so rough  
That only death emanates from the ground  
Once kind.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Treasure Box In The Ceiling Come Down

They said there is a treasure box  
In the ceiling. All they told me  
To do was to look up and my mind  
Would show me what it was that was  
Hidden in the box.

I looked up and my mind told me to  
Pen down ideas as they came and ask  
What it is I want to see. I saw good  
Luck walking towards the east on the  
Back of a camel. I also saw cousins  
Singing and dancing on their knees.  
I asked them why this unusual dance.  
They told me to get to know the truth  
About things you have to go through  
Suffering so that the giver who has  
It seed that you want badly and do  
The hardest things.

They said they would not give up the  
Prayer until they had been given what  
They wanted. When asked what it was  
They said they wanted to become the  
Rulers of their countries for they  
Had suffered enough and did not want  
Their children to suffer like them.

I told them they were daughters of  
Dust and therefore would not get  
Their request for only those born  
In the month of May when the aloe  
Is in bloom can ask and get things  
From the giver. For those are the  
People who know where the treasure  
Box that sits in the ceiling of the  
World is and only them have seen  
Its contents.

I was told to go away for I was

Causing them to have no hope. They  
Told me they would get down the  
Box in the ceiling with their  
Belief for they had seen the box  
Starting to turn up there and hope  
Was all they needed. They could  
Hear presents making noise in the  
Box. Presence of mind was all that  
Would have them bring down the box.

I walked away for I was not one to  
Wait for things so lofty. I had no  
Patience nor did I have the company  
That could help me sustain so noble  
A cause. Tired I was and hunger had  
Scooped out my eyes. Box or no box  
With no eyes but holes in in my face  
I could not bring the box in the ceiling  
I decided to bring it down in words  
And here it is. Now I can only dare  
To tell the box to come down with  
The best voice I have.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Tried At The Court Of Injustice

Resolving matters with clansmen  
And clanswomen without head gear  
Tells a story of imposters who  
Give out rulings that are from  
Over eager minds that do not  
Read the books of the law  
Written in their minds.

These jurors wear wigs like  
The fungus on rotten food.  
Mice squeak into their ears as they give  
Them the judgments they read out.

We reopen the case and get a repeat  
For who wants to fight a rotten legal  
System where ignorance flies on the  
Wings of gulls that utter a defiant cry.

We have been brought to this court  
Of injustice for our case was thrown out  
Because of false witnesses who argued  
That nasty women wanted to sit in  
The oval office and rule the earth.  
Speaking of rotten systems.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Turning Over A New Leaf Was Never Easy

The page turns then you realize  
it long turned.

It is made from the old papyrus.  
It is heavier carried in your minf.

It is like opening a door made of lead.  
or rolling the rock off the door of a tomb.

You have heard the previous page read  
and spelled out.

You could not be reading ahead, the  
words tell you so.

Futures are yesterday's reborn. Read  
today they ask you one question.

Why are you still standing here. Were  
you not called forth.

Where is forth for I still here the same.  
To turn a new leaf ask yesterday.

It will tell you that you stand in it,  
with it, and for it.

Please turn the page. The reading goes on.  
We hope you will still go on.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Two Days To Christmas Day

I battled crowds everywhere  
Laboring through heat so high  
Each step punctuated by pain  
On my virgin groin which was  
In intermittent bites of pinches  
That told the story of old that  
To me would soon be born a son

No manger in the town of Manzini  
But taxis going up and down. No  
Dubais too in the day, bu buses  
With Albion engines that sounded  
Their baritones loud.

Amidst this hustle and bustle I  
Walked tunnel visioned by the moves  
Of a new life ready to be born for  
It was as if it knew the story of  
One birn in Bethlehem and wanted to  
Race into the world and say I got  
In before he landed in the manger  
Where he lay. Christ forgive me for  
Beating you to the race and bouncing  
Into the world on a census year in Bethlehem. Let me be counted among  
Those who answered the call and  
Celebrate with you the greatness you  
Brought the world.

In a ward he cane like a bomb exploded  
Into the world all his own to grow  
Up and bless us. The joy we feel saysc

In a ward far away  
I

Sarah Mkhonza

## Two Women On The Dromedaris

They sailed on blue seas to lands far away.  
They saw it all, this landing that shook the  
ship and had it wrecked on a strange land.  
Two women on the Dromedaris, where  
fourteen men went on a spicy search.

This Van Riebeeck ship landed on shores  
blue, called the Cape of Good hope,  
also the Cape of Storms soon to  
become the cape of misery.

This cape was no cape, this new name  
was heard also by the two women. One  
was a priest's wife. One was the gardener's  
wife. They would meet and stay where too  
currents meet. Sister Benguela and sister Agulhas  
for people think about gardeners and priests  
on journeys where life could take a new turn,  
as it did here.

That day they prayed, and also ate,  
for the two people and their wives,  
had made the Dromedaris home.  
A home now wrecked on the shores  
of the land called the cape.

We do not know their names, for they  
were not the captain. The people around  
having never seen a big ship wreck like this,  
Surely knew their souls had also been wrecked.

Women on the ship tell us, what sounds you  
heard that day. Were they like silence, or like  
whips cracking on the backs of people, like  
waves shattering themselves on the rocks?  
All we know about Boers, is that days of  
whips cracking on backs of people and slaves  
pouring in had begun. So had wars over  
cattle. Did you see it all?

I ask for the retelling leaves you out.  
Nobody except the books of the  
latter saints tell of you. I ask for a  
society that speaks the words of people  
like you, for you can also attest to what  
happened when the Dromedaris landed.

It became news with consequence,  
this fit of the landing of a Dutch ship.  
Nobody wanted the spices anymore.  
Nobody could progress anymore for  
the trip to Indonesia was now ended  
on a new Dutch East India Company morning.

Years of history tell us you two,  
could not sustain a population of  
these fourteen men. Who were the  
new brides? Was it Sarah Baartman,  
or some Sarah Baartmans whose names  
are lost in history like yours?

I ask and tell for in questions are answers,  
and in telling words, for people need them,  
Even if to create a false history that says  
history began the day Van Riebeeck landed..  
Someone out there is asking the same  
questions as these. For these are the days  
of knowing, where a mouse cannot squeak  
and not rock a house and bring it to its feet.

Here lies the Dromedaris, in these pages of history,  
with Jan Van Fiebeeck bigger than all the people  
once on the ship, the day it landed. His name can  
blow the wind, that covers the names whose souls  
wrote with footprints in the sand, for only the sand  
could tell us, who stepped out of the ship and walked  
on it that day.

People of this world, I have read and will tell, that  
there were two women in that ship; one priest's wife,  
the other the gardener's wife. If women's names would

be recorded, like the names of men, we would know their names.

Life captains, the way the sea likes them,  
history likes men, the way it loves Van Riebeeck.  
I chose to ask that we find out more, now that the  
cat is out of the bag, it cannot come back into  
the bag empty handed.

When we read next about Van Riebeeck, let us not  
forget, he was not with men alone. He was with two  
women, this I proclaim. They already belonged to  
someone. Yes, Van Riebeeck is not said to have had  
a wife. He had sailed year in and out on the high seas,  
where a woman to a captain would have been a distraction.

Captains too sleep on pillows softer than a woman's, I declare.  
I have seen life to question it with the micro phone in my eye  
and my brain. When you ask questions loud, you get answers  
loud. For they say it is culture. For now we learn of how it was  
for lives lived daily, on the Dromedaris. Don't ask me, ask history.

We said one day, we will rewrite the story of this ship,  
and not say the history of the people of the land,  
begins with Jan Van Riebeeck. When we do so, let us also  
rewrite the missing chapter, that tells of women on this ship.

It may not rewrite it and give the honor due to Sarah Baartman,  
for Saratjie, who lived to see lands far away, this freak of the world,  
whose genitals were on icons, whose behind was the spectacle,  
that mine and yours refuses to be is now dead. She who wore no corset,  
when those around her of her shape did, is dead. She rests now in our  
bosom, for our soil has taken her from France to its bosom, where she belongs.

This story of women and the Cape, rings hollow to me,  
when it is told from the chapters in the books of male professors,  
who glean the archives and eat and forget that food can only  
be present if a woman who gives birth is present. Her story is  
the story of the land. Let us tell it.

We may not know where they died, but surely they arrived.  
We may not know who they gave birth to, if surely they did.

One thing we know about women, they are our mothers,  
No matter what shape, colorant height they come in.  
They they mother us, and so they should be given a voice.  
Even if the voice is distorted like mine. Hear me out,  
there were two women on the Dromedaris.  
That is my sermon for today. Say Amen!  
Then read this new chapter of the bible at home, with your  
finger on the name of the first woman called Eve. Make  
this bookmark, on behalf of the two, for names are important,  
for they give us a way, to know things and name them, for that  
is what knowing is, in this land of we, we men.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Undeniable Wizard Tricks Of Others

Betrayal of insults that make you shrink,  
Coming from cowards you knew yesterday,  
Trap you on the road to new islands,  
Where the water is blue all the time,  
Why did you shake hands with devils,  
And wave to cruelty that sang your name,

Kick this habit of listening to topics,  
Whose themes are laid on the rungs of a ladder,  
That goes nowhere but under,  
You are sinking in the muddy springs,  
Of yesterday's storm with its grassy  
meanderings that take you nowhere,  
Just wizard tricks of failures,  
These moorings that keep you down.

You could turn into a wizard yourself,  
Drink a concoction you mixed alone,  
That cures the insides of your internals,  
And renders you bristling new with nettles,  
That pierce a witch and kill a wizard.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Unique Perennials Of Love

These new perennials sweet scented  
Have come from our honorary gods  
To flatter us with a love never seen

The love flip flops all over us wives  
We join in the dance for we know the guarded gates that lead to the roots  
Of all this fast moving sweepings of  
A love that we know will disappear.

When the gods say while the hay still shines  
Listen for they know the human heart that changes  
As many times as you hear the tick-tock of a clock  
Make haste for they will say they told you so.

These fast growing perennials of love are fuelled  
Not by feelings that rest deep down but by yearning  
For what is new and the mystery that follows it.

For mystery loves stories new and untold like you're  
For they tickle the world in their ordinariness  
For they make humanity cleverer when everybody asks  
What was she thinking? She should have known the curse  
Lurks on the walls of the house of the vampires  
For their polished handsomeness keeps every girl guessing.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Unlocking The Place Of My Darkness

There is this place where love eludes me,  
Where my faith faults itself into nothing,  
And my hope jumps into a lake of darkness,  
While calling me to retrieve it with one click.

I utter a Xhosa click and yell an English verb,  
And find myself deeper in the crisis of words,  
That return me to the dream I shelved years ago,  
That says my life will swing in the outswing,  
My brother pushing me into the sky of a tire,  
That is chained with my bottom and hands holding,  
As I am thrown into the air and landing in the light,  
Laughing yet scared as hell as he continues to throw me,  
This demigod who hands my life in the air right now.

How will I survive this daily throwing of time,  
That teaches me to have faith in those controls,  
Which I hold with my little hands that pick,  
My yelling and fold it into one happening,  
That unlocks the place of my darkness.

If I had loved with the faith that put me,  
On the see-saw where I trusted my brother,  
To swing up and let me go down one minute,  
And then swing down and allow me to go on,  
With one swing and another a faith that laughs,  
Saying if we keep this tango we will go on,  
for life is as much a gamble as this,  
As long as we stay and play house after this,  
With the awareness that minutes pass as we do,  
This worldly play called going into oblivion,  
With those who love you pushing you into the air.  
Where the fear is nothing for truth is assured,  
And it is the only thing that will unlock,  
This darkness and the hurts that will bruise,  
Us on this long path called life.  
So swing on birds the darkness will go as will  
The light of our daily living.  
Remember to get on the swing and see-saw for,

This never ends.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Vanishing Traces Of Gold

My heart is losing its gold linings  
And starting to worship at this tower  
That sometimes vanishes into the night  
Then I feel my knees shaking in the cold  
For the juices that kept me supple  
Are starting to harden for here at the  
Alter of time there is nothing I can  
Change, but just bow down for it is  
Easier to give way than to plaster walls  
When the mud is falling gradually.

I had knees of gold that knelt  
On mats of gold when confessing  
That the day was hard and bones  
That stood and let me bow before  
I tell the angels to convey my  
Message to the day and tell it  
It was beautiful.

Life gets harder as the coast  
Gets nearer. The wind sails blow  
Softly and at half mast for the  
Shipmate is losing the grip on  
The oars so the rowing team gets  
Weaker for the hands on the oars  
Are fewer and the boat loses the  
Position hoped for, and nobody gets  
To the end a winner, but an also ran.

These vanishing traces of gold  
That lined every strata of rock  
Are now way down in the depths  
Where they have sunk forcing  
The miners to go down never to  
Be retrieved in the amounts that  
Were hoped for.

To get up from here where I kneel  
And recover a few traces of gold

I need to dig deeper into the pool  
Where the water has gathered as it  
Fell from the sweat in my forehead.  
For my lamp is also adding to the  
Heat for in this mine it is very  
Hot. The work we do in the pits  
Of the earth earns us just a penny  
When you sell your labor and dig  
Never to pocket the bars of gold  
That go into the vault in London  
In the names of the big guns whose  
Names appear in the skyline of the  
Towers that grace our world with  
Shiny windows and walls that have  
Taken most of the gold we worked  
For to build.

We cannot take back what we gave  
For a few pennies, but we can keep  
Our words for they will be money one  
Day when the big guns start to read  
What a sacrifice we made at temperatures  
So hot while they fanned themselves  
With peering through windows lining the walls  
When trying to shield ourselves from  
The rain when the wind forces us to  
After it has violently broken our  
Umbrellas.

Dripping wet we stand and watch the  
Smoothest cars gleaming with fancy  
Tires going into parking spaces deep  
In the earth where only a few go for  
Their spaces are marked with the word  
Reserved for they came with them from  
The previous world and will go with them  
To the next where me and you will shed  
Our sinewy arms and wear ones of light  
And once again show some of our traces  
Of gold. Theirs will be gold rotting in  
The vaults of this world and who really  
Will have the last laugh. I am not so sure

So said a miner's child hungry in the streets  
Of Johannesburg South Africa.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Vanity Never Said Take Off Your Clothes

In the hot sun when bathing in the best swimsuit,  
vanity did say, show it to all around and swing  
a little so all can look at you. Lover of life on  
a sunny day at the beach. Vanity should have spoken  
to the quiet in you and told you to wear the sun tanner  
at a high level of the rays that would later land you  
in hospital with melanoma, for it loves those who roast  
themselves bare.

Vanity said look for the show and find it and then told  
melanoma the same, but in a whisper so that you would not  
hear. Next time you go into the sun, know how you will shield  
yourself from bites that are invisible and taste as nice as  
sunbathing, for a beast lurks under the rays that tickle your  
skin the way your lover does and if you can cover up, if not  
with just the oils from the torrid places. There are no 'if onlys'  
in the land of melanoma. Melanin queens only survive.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Verily Verily I Swear Unto You

My children and children of my ex-husband,  
Verily, verily, I swear unto you,  
Like your father said before we split,  
We will be bound by a bond that was made in heaven.

Verily, verily he swore unto me,  
We were not made for each other,  
For it had become clear that his inheritance,  
Was for all of us when he passes.

This expression I will swear when the will is read,  
For I am pouring out my heart to you now,  
Knowing you may choose not to believe me,  
For the truth I tell you now,  
Was churned out by cherubs,  
That brought us together,  
The day I met him near our church.

We sat with our legs held out,  
Our hands hidden and drew the will,  
For which we now fight,  
For it was a piece of paper,  
That would foretell what is to come,  
When he no longer breathes and sings,  
This last aria, written in his blood.

Verily, verily, I swear unto you,  
I have not altered a word,  
For my hands were always tied,  
Behind my back,  
When it comes to such matters,  
For money was not my best friend,  
Only your father had sworn on a bible,  
That he would remain the real and only one.

Now that you know that this was not to be,  
For he left with another younger and richer,  
He never needed the wealth we amassed,  
For all the money owned by his goddess,

Was his to launch himself into mars with.

This accident that makes us stand here,  
Was looked at from afar by the cherubs,  
Who saw us write our will and sign our names,  
In our blood that said we will die one ball,  
Knitted together like as it rolls away,  
From some widows thighs whose knitting allows,  
It to roll our this will.

So bear with me as I tell you this truth,  
Verily, verily, he swore unto me,  
That he trusted me to call you all,  
And read these squiggles he made alone,  
When he was changing the words in the darkness,  
Making another to replace with lies, ,  
The one we wrote, for the DNA test,  
Can prove it was indeed, the blood of us two,  
That wrote the only original that exists.

I want to go to a future with the speaker,  
Of the words I distort for they are truth,  
Just like what I say even to you now,  
Who may hate to see my face,  
Since the money that stands between us,  
Separates us like the cut of the knife,  
That his lover slew him with,  
For she did not have time to spend with the likes,  
That tell lies like him. Get it from me.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Very Shallow This Deep End

Your last swim does break your neck,  
This shallow end of deceit so new,  
It shines bottoms that look far,  
Because of the moonlight you jump in,  
Now you sit with a broken neck,  
Very shallow this deep end.

Glistening afar this mirage,  
Takes your pencils on a page,  
Whose leaves glisten in the dark,  
Helping you chart with dots and commas,  
Till the story is now gone  
To the end of the book,  
Turning over no more space,  
Very shallow this deep end.

Live this breath with its mysteries,  
Breathing deeper and going deeper,  
Till your head hits the bottom,  
And your eyes open and look,  
At the rough surface below,  
Very shallow this deep end.

Don't say you were blind folded by time,  
For time sang no song like the O'Jays,  
And pulled you under, touching you under,  
Moving you closer into the curve,  
Of the one whose arm you held so tenderly,  
To the music at the disco,  
Very shallow this deep end.

Who said they would woo you in the woods,  
Call your name in the dark of night,  
Whispering words that make you cry,  
For they were sweeter than the nectar,  
In the flower to the flying bee,  
Only to land there with the beetle,  
That takes the pollen even further,  
Very shallow this deep end.

So cry sweet tears on soft cheeks,  
And wipe them with the back of hands with rings,  
That were worn till they lost their shine,  
For this is life girlfriend you know,  
That we hoped, sang and danced to dreams,  
With songs we leaned in customs old,  
Only to land with a broken horn,  
Like the cow that tore the rope,  
And ran away from the bullfight,  
Claiming it was no to be dance around,  
In a ring like a Spanish bull,  
But just a beast of burden like others,  
Very shallow this deep end.

They argued the tits were full,  
And ready for milking under the moonshine,  
Feeding foals that it did not know,  
For the bull had also lain here,  
Near this cow before the big fight,  
That ends in a dance of a crazy two,  
Who disown even their own,  
Leaving the crowds disappointed,  
Very shallow this deep end.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Voom Goes The Zoom

Smile life says to me,  
And I let my lips go,  
Only to see an image strange,  
So old and sad looking at me.  
The shutter clicks and the ducklings go  
Their line forming the letter v,  
As they swim off with a quack  
With borrowed beaks still pink in color  
I feel left out of the first take,  
The recluse that did not see,  
When zoom go with a voom  
As life went to the next planet.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Waiting On The Winning Line

They told me history repeats itself  
And I bought a lottery  
Ticket so sure that this  
History which always repeats  
Itself would prove itself  
To me. I waited in prayer for  
They argued as long as I did  
Not love money this was a sure  
Case. Then I met an elder from  
Our village and she asked me if  
I was sane. When had I seen the  
Sun rise twice from the sane east  
On the same day?

I looked at her and she walked on  
And shouted back that  
For me to win that money  
I have to journey to the  
End of the world twice to  
Learn that words are cleverer  
Than people. People speak words  
Do. And luck is a word that  
Does not glow in the darkest  
Of forests.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Walking In My Own Kalahari

Words small, big rough, round,  
I am the desert spreading far.  
Today started when I saw the light  
It will end as I lay in the dark,  
With stars looking at me  
And sand dunes like sheets hugging me.

Feet kicking the air in from of me  
Missing it, yet riding on in plods  
As if angry inside my tired shoes  
With grits of sand inside my socks,  
As I trudge in this Kalahari.  
Of sand dunes sky high  
Like those of the Namib yonder.

My little toe is shy  
It suffers hiding at the side  
Like the days I would not read  
When the teacher pointed at me.

My boldness is new  
Like the big toe it sticks out  
And stands out there unafraid  
Who is this so loud with a pen?  
When yesterday I was silent.

Once I was like my middle toes  
With no song but a mime  
Doing everything I was told  
Just around the age of one  
Now everybody knows I can walk  
Talk too, ladies of the Sahara

Sands and dunes have heard me  
As they piled in waves silently  
Filling a dry imaginary trough  
As I walk in this my Kalahari  
My feet sinking and not kicking  
Because the drought has set in

To write my own Sahara  
Singing its song of excess heat.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Walking Into A Screen Of Raindrops

Making sure the dollar umbrella is open,  
I walk into the world protecting my  
head, ears and coiffure. The rest of me  
throws my body in denims blue, that  
change with each droplet.

Thoughts racing, I walk to my domicile.  
sure that life is a wet affair today.  
When the coffers were dry, I cried torrents, what will I cry in this  
wet affair, where my denim shoes are  
muddied up. Shut up and watch this in  
my bed, I whisper to my wet denim wra  
pped body. Next time, wear a raincoat and  
for life is a storm. Watch what remains after it is gone. Disgruntled twigs  
separated from their source, wishing they  
could have put up a better fight. Don't  
let it happen to you, this big rip you will get a shower you did not ask for.

To be showered walking on the road is not  
for the feeble hearted. They are schooled in being prepared,ask their heart. For  
me, I now hear raindrops from afar. I get under cover. I will not have a repeat.  
While the screen is blue, I will be prepared.

boots

denims change color with each droplet..

Sarah Mkhonza

# Walking On The Railway Tracks Of Life

We walk on the slippers one by one  
All on a way day by day for like  
Trains we run endlessly and only  
Rest when the darkness creeps in  
On this long journey that ends  
When the train reaches the edge of  
The water for the Pacific is far  
From the Atlantic just as the India  
Ocean is Far from the Atlantic  
Even though they touch and pour  
Water into and away from each  
Other.

Still the railway tracks call for  
You see one stanza marked by each  
Slipper that is laid and walk not  
Knowing what lies round the corner  
For you are heading onward on a train  
That never goes backwards the way it  
Came.

I have tried to live life walking  
backwards the way I felt when I first  
Rode in someones car and saw all  
Trees going backwards and thought  
I had a story to tell my friends  
Who just looked at naive me and wished  
I would take my countryside ignorance  
Away from their place. I walked  
Backwards and tripped on a small  
Clump of grass and felt lucky that  
These clumps though everywhere  
Only chose to make me fall where  
There was no stone. For this I  
Salute life for it chooses what to  
Feed me for if I was fed clods of dirt  
Everyone knows I would choke on  
This walk which I have taken with  
My eyes closed so I can see only

The lines on my hands for I have  
Chosen selective thinking for I  
Am afraid of the world and its  
Scandalous happenings.

The journey continues for I did  
Not choose when to start and cannot  
Choose when it ends so like a hoe  
Working on weeds in the hands of  
A hard worker this farmer who knows  
No time we plod along in the heat and  
Rain unstoppable energy pushing so  
I can keep at it whether I like it  
Or not like a poet pouring words on  
The ears of the deaf for she will stop  
The day you say enough is enough for  
We will hear no more for everything  
is alright every crease has been ironed  
On these rail tracks that go at gradients  
Known only to the maker of railways flat  
Even on hillsides dangerous. Plod along  
For all we must on this train till it  
Stops to get a refill on a stomach that  
Will take no more for it will have been  
Undone by time.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Walking This Royal Maze Begins Here

Quite a task this dismantling of fairgrounds,  
Hastily shifting from rotundas that chip away,  
Every summer comes with its own rain and bowing,  
For when you courtesy you are breaking the rule,  
For the courts once spoken of as loving have hardened  
Older moths that were reluctant have eaten all,  
That did not offer the royal touch that is soft.

Emperors have walked here have said it all,  
That love here is like the chattering you hear,  
Of subjects, about subjects and subjects about rulers,  
For it is true for you and them there is no rain,  
But frozen grounds that reek of frozen hate,  
Staled out by time in its rancidness.

When the show falls very silent in the fall,  
Of the veil that covered you the cathedral train,  
You remember the coming of summer you waited for,  
For your story roused jealousy even in the grounds,  
Where the animals with loveliest fur hide in wait.

Nearly twenty years you have been here,  
Has it been that long really, you ask,  
You ask for time seems to have stood still,  
Stone faced as the gates of this place do,  
That only say, 'as you should know,  
Only in death do you walk out of here, '  
For it is a jail you chose knowing,  
That the bang closes it once and for all.

Even if you spit giggling white love,  
Wrestling with time is a challenge like love,  
Step by step you go on charter after charter,  
That calls on you to put up a face,  
Who  
Of the delighted royal whose handshakes,  
Quench the thirst of souls built to dream,  
That one day they can also be near,  
Enough for you to to touch them personally.

Were it not for their mood forever singing,  
Even in standing looking for this being,  
This saint that comes out and reaches out to them,  
The subjects who returned from reading the headlines,  
About you and your problems like theirs,  
This faithfulness you have developed would shake,  
While kings sit and look at their thrones,  
Demanding that you go on and make no mistake,  
For kinging it is not like living it,  
Till death do us apart.

This contract is not written in stone,  
But in unsung songs that are still to come  
Where the commoner can only excell,  
In the things of the world you once knew,  
That were hidden to those who show off crown,  
And wager the biggest some at the betting house.  
For we live to eat together one day,  
When all this facade is no more.

Sarah Mkhonza

# War To Add To An O

When you need three letters  
to an 'o, ' do not think of gone,  
for everybody is here

Do not think of bone for is not  
time to debone a poem.  
Nor is it time to think  
of tone, for your voice  
needs no toning down.

Just think of zone for you  
are entering the love zone  
love for we do not need a rose  
to prop our words for we are in  
a love zone gone bony with our  
little love poem that will touch  
a new 'o'. Welcome to Joburg, where  
guys are called 'o.' Hey O? Don't  
ask the poem. Ask the pole for on it  
hangs the flag, the only semblance of truth.

Where you can now thint of

Sarah Mkhonza

# Watch The Lone Walker On The Lone Beach Walk.

Walking on this sand, kicking it, sinking  
my bare fit into each footwork of sand,  
my feet tire of this work.

In this walk on sand white and seawater  
blue, I hear of sharks and whales. I see  
my destination like I see this sea sand.

This walk started by a walkline new,  
Will end with a sin hot on the head.  
Gives solace to the lone walker alone.

The toes are blessed for they have siblings they take everywhere. Not this  
lone walker whose companions are seals.

Seals have noses unlike the walker's  
They lift them outside the surface at  
will. Not the walker whose nose is burried in the sand

For to wall on a see onr'destination  
far away brings hope as long as the  
rope of time we hang on.

Time is a lynch man. Don't say to the  
walker it is not. For time goes forward  
When it takes the walker to its bosom where  
two thin milk less beasts dangle and play a staccato long in a darkness long.

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# Watch This Laden Cloud

This misty cloud full of rain  
Cannot deliver it's point in pain  
Unless you watch it, for in it stirs  
a new born.

Nefarious clouds like sad news come suddenky. This laden cloud could bring  
some. Seen way up it gets near. Like  
a silence all its own it less droplets  
fall on your nose.

One drop, two drops and then the outpouring that mixes rain with  
salty tears. Today you are learning  
that freedom is about sweat and tears.

Yesterday in your bushes you fought  
your own guerilla war till sunset.  
You, bazooka in hand, you danced and  
fought for the future. Now you stand  
in the memory of past storms.

This cloud, This reminder carries a story  
of your wars, your muscle, your doing  
and undoing. In it you dance cross legged,  
the freest nightmare they still have to see. Watch it.

If the eye fails you, the heart will not.  
Hard as it is, it is leading you to the  
center. In this place lies the truth about  
shackled hands that need you to free them.  
Yours is a guerilla fight with no end.

Shackled hands cannot line up the soldier line. Shackled minds too. Workers are  
needed. Free the free and shackle the storm, for the free stand in their delusion.  
Take a stand. Watch this cloud.  
It is already sundown.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Watching The Aloes In The Light

We watched in the dark  
Where silently we stood  
Watching under dark skies  
A car in the distance  
Whose light kept coming  
Getting closer to where we were

It's light danced as it amazed  
It showed on the wall  
Making the aloes dance  
For they stood between us  
Watching us  
As if we were the ones in the space  
Making the light dance  
In the midnight sky.

We knew it was coming  
We could feel it in us  
The thing we did not know  
And walked into uncertain  
For courage is not seen  
But lived in the things we do  
That we do not call by that name  
For lack of understanding.

We see it better now  
Like the aloes we do  
Surrounded by grandchildren  
Who laugh and think life is real  
Who in their joy they see themselves  
And in it grow taller than trees  
As the future comes to them daily

Hold my hand we say  
Shake it harder and harder  
I may not see you again  
For the light gets closer  
Like the car in the distance  
That shines its light against the wall

Making the shadows of aloes real  
For they also stand erect  
When they stand on a mountain  
And make the lowveld real  
Like soldiers in hats  
Who march quietly and watch  
As the march continues in the light  
Where the stars cannot be brighter  
Having been defeated by the night.

The aloes remain standing  
They are stronger on their feet  
They wait for the seasons  
They shed their leaves in turn  
We are stronger for having stood  
Shedding no leaves but scales  
In a skin that is so brown  
For we have lived to tell the story  
That we stood near the aloes  
And marched to the tune of time.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Waves Of Rubble That Throw Things All Over.

I look through the hole in my eye,  
And see waves of anger rising high,  
They curve in and turn everything upside down,  
Leaving young and old strewn all over in a pile of rubble and glass,  
Dusty they rise and the wave comes back and knocks them down,  
It throws them into boats that throw them in deeper oceans,  
Where they become living proof that the hole in my eyes sees visions,  
That hush the world into a silence that is as violent as the silent waves,  
This irony of a violence that silences like the silence of poison.

What is this daily acceptance of a spinning world that will throw us off,  
the rails as we think with the wails of those whose lives are hidden in fumes that  
rise so high they darken our vision,  
And get us lost in thickets of smoke on this way to our uncertain future,  
Those who have met the death chamber are sleeping wondering  
why theirs is a history that was written in blood,  
Only to be read in blood again,  
For no one wanted to give them a passport to a better world,  
Where they would breathe the sigh of arriving,  
Even though they do not have the treasured feather in their heads?  
Joy is hidden somewhere in the future of the corner of my blind eye,  
It sneaks into conversations of refugees running in the narrowest paths,  
They speak laughter and anxiety to the friends on the path,  
For them reality is in the bundle of clothes they carry,  
For they are evidence they come from life,  
And have agreed to take the plunge into the night,  
Where every flashlight goes dim, when the hand stretches to it in a foreign  
country,  
They wish always to be mosquitoes for they know they have one freedom,  
To fly everywhere with no boundaries, even in the days of ZIKA.  
For their constitution came from a place where words have one meaning,  
Which they heard and keep repeating as they fly,  
Citizen of no nation.

to the future with our heads spinning,  
Only to be gillotined at the alter of the graveyard.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Waving Away Questions Full Of Good Byes

Have you ever lived in the shadow of a dream,  
And watched it float away from you,  
With the wave of the blessed right hand,  
That curses in the same manner it gives?

Have you ever seen a car drive away,  
Its rear end with lights all in place,  
Only to see it one roll of metal,  
All dismantled with loved one gone?

Have you ever wished you had been there,  
When it all happened for you would have done,  
One did that could stop the red light  
From turning green in order to save,  
The life of the loved one who filled your heart,  
With this story that lingers in you?

Have you ever stood among a crowd,  
And watched pall bearers at work,  
A flagged coffin carrying one,  
Whom you loved even to the end?

Have you ever wished for life to go on,  
Only to find that it had stopped,  
With the waving of a good bye,  
That was done in a park far away,  
When nobody knew the wave was the last,  
For this good bye remained unspoken?

Have you ever walked out of your house,  
Only to be told that she whose children you love,  
Has gone to the place where dreams go,  
Leaving those who remain still shaking,  
For it was not just yesterday you thought,  
As you watched the unfolding of this mystery?

Have you ever seen a loved one thin,  
So full of life and laughter yet falling,  
Saying I will not let this thing win,

For it is choking me once again,  
Before my children grow to be left,  
To rule the world all alone?

Have you ever heard a woman asking  
Saying let us sing together,  
For this song will lead me,  
Past this misery I see,  
For the end is near?

Sarah Mkhonza

# Welcome To The Club

You came to Palo Alto thinking  
It is the paradise of Silicon  
Valley and now you know how  
The rent stings and the money  
Goes, we all say welcome to the club.

You now have to sleep in the bus  
Like some of the people who sleep  
In their cars which they call  
Castles, we say welcome to mars.

You thought you would find  
Millionaires at every corner  
And rub shoulders with the rich?  
What a good joke for they stay  
In haciendas and walk out for a  
Speedy jog. Only the likes of  
Me see them for I hit the road  
Any hour.

Welcome to the club of the Valley  
Of Silicon where computer companies  
Grow like fruit on a fruit farm.  
Here we plant one company at noon  
And reap another before the harvest  
Of Uncle Sam's taxes scares it away.

You came to work as a writer here  
In Silicon Valley? I am not short  
Of words, but short of breath for  
Here we keep our breath in an  
In breath for the out breath  
Signals that it is time to  
Welcome all of you for now  
You are wiser. welcome to the  
Club which you joined not knowing  
That the Bay can be as cold  
And as turbulent when you  
Are not wearing a thermal

suit. These Palo Alto blues  
Are all we can welcome you  
With. Join in and chant with  
Us for we have become skilled  
At survival and so will you.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Welcome To The Round Beehive Hut Casino

If you thought there would be the roulette,  
or the slot machines, the gamble is over.

Here we toss numbers in the air and grab  
them as words. We win if we milk the air.

It pours out according to where the beast  
called the what-you-call stands facing.

The tiger in you has to wiggle its tail,  
look at other beasts in the face.

The jackpot is hidden under a grinding  
stone. Ask the maize farmer.

The wife who hurt her fingers while grinding talked with her knees and arms.

She said it is because of love of family  
that we try so hard.

The jackpot lies in the bee hive hut,  
simple tons of the world.

Why go to the palace of the Caesars  
when Caesar died because of a conspiracy.

Why provoke poverty when it lies down  
like a defeated bulldog.

You like to dress up and be led by neon  
lights. You then come back miserable.

The Good Lord said it a long time ago that  
Caesar had his head not yours on the coin.

In my gambling there is no bride price for we gamble with the naked truth.

You either have it or you don't for I cheat not. Empty handed you come and play.

The more truthful you, the more the tokens. Who said you cannot win.

Come into my casino and weigh your heart,  
Only the lightness of the light counts.

Go dear gambler and lose your last penny.  
Just make sure I told you this truth.

My impart at ions were yelled at me inside a hut where my grandmother told by  
truth.

Listening to this one will have you walking on the ridges at the top.

All will wonder why the coup on  
Caesar. The jackpot will not be shared.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Welcome To Widow's Paradise/Swaziland Widows

No longer missing the spouse,  
He has gone on ahead. Now you  
can join me and we sing the song  
that is sung in Widow's Paradise.

Loud we sing on, saying we have  
arrived at a cross roads of us  
women and not the men, for they  
get to be widowers, as if they were  
made to be that by us.

Inequality stands tall in words,  
hence this composition of the song,  
to be sung in widow's paradise,  
the world of cynics holy.

Luck does not do it, for we could  
have manufactured the next generation  
of widowers out of men. This corpse  
beat us to the race, and rushed itself  
down before we could.

Come with a candle and light up the path.  
We are going where they've gone. Greet  
John, I will, for he left a baby I did  
not know. Now I am to be a forgiver,  
for how can I begrudge a corpse.

The story unfolds like one of another,  
not one about the man you lived with.  
Debts tie you down like a real widow,  
who needs to come to widow's paradise.

We live on manna here, for the estate  
is still being wound up. It got tangled  
at every corner. It will get a couple  
of dollars in your hand. Stand here  
with me, and think of widow's paradise.

Laugh at the past, for you were colluding  
against yourself and your offspring,  
in getting pennies crawling out of the house,  
when the babies were in nappies.

Now that you sit in the back pew,  
wearing a black three piece with  
the skimpy thing on the back, and  
hear people in the front, and ask,  
what did put me here.

John did. Yes, you also did, for you  
walked back there and not up there.  
Protesting, like she does not know the  
rules. She cannot even wear that at work.

John did this to you. At work they treat  
you like you have leprosy. Claiming the legs  
of a widow are bad luck. Now you cover them  
with hose, for you believe the death of John  
made them unlucky.

Come to the dance of widows of Swaziland.  
Here in Widows' Paradise. We sing and  
dance and throw the black clothes away.  
One day they will come for them. They  
will buy you new ones. The maker of  
the invisible law. It makes you like  
a diseased person this law. Yet you  
comply for you must.

One honor remains. You get the best sit,  
when the coffin is lowered you put in the  
flowers first. Your black veil covers  
your face. Beautiful you on that day in  
black. End of business sister mine.

Now to the High Court you go, to claim  
the titbits before the family fights over  
them. Ride the bus you must. Stares, hard  
and quizzical. Now the drama begins.

Widows at the entrance. Lots of them come.  
Claiming John owned this and that. Only to  
find all the property gone. To whom, you ask?  
Family, they say. A but of dishonesty,  
that stings everybody. His sisters are also  
there. Their claim being that you were immoral,  
if they have not stolen and torn your what  
certifies you married him.

Let us dance in Widow's Paradise.  
Just once dance this last dance.  
It heals like a real drug, makes  
you high and gives you time, to go  
on with the tangled up mess  
you have entered in through those  
double doors of the court.

When we get to the end and see John,  
he will get to hear what happened from  
the mouth of the horse. It knows the way  
home as it goes into this court of  
the biggest injustice death committed,  
when it took John from us.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Welded Together By Untruths

Brought together by fate, these twuo,  
once a duo bundled they unravel  
as the glue thins. The world happens to  
them. They hide the truth of mishapen  
acts. Now that the fire from within gets  
hotter, we see how they put untruths in the fire and started to wax their story  
away.

The truth now burns low as the ashes pile.  
For theirs has become the story welded Together by hard untruths. Lessons are  
everywhere. All we do is throw away the ashes. The story bends with welding,  
but  
not the ashes.

Who loves a story of ashes, that is ashen white? Who knows the story where the  
amber glow and the flame lights up lovers eyes?  
Me and you.

Sarah Mkhonza

# What Are They Saying Upstairs

What are they saying about our costumes?  
Are they saying my halloween wig is gross?  
Are they saying I will scare the bogeyman,  
And have him come charging into their bedroom  
With us children cheering him with giggles?

Will they let us go tree atreeting outside  
And bring candy in bucketfuls to the house,  
And feed on it till the cat gets sick of it  
And go upstairs and vomit in their bed  
Leaving us so sick the doctor's bill,  
Shoots sky high making them scream louder  
Than the devil and his wife?

Ig this Halloween could bring us together,  
Then let it forvI am tired of ourvden  
So dull it needs the dance of ghosts  
To wake up these spiders with cobwebs  
That bring tarantulas to our door.

Will we go out and watch Moses ready  
To cross the Red Sea chariots and all  
While the Egyptian chariots break down  
In the biggest Halloween float ever?

Sarah Mkhonza

# What Happened To The World

This shrinking of the world  
That makes me touch the hearts  
I longed to bless and did not  
How to reach even when I asked  
Migratory birds to walk for me  
In the march of the penguins  
Has suddenly popped up on my  
Doorstep. I breathe and people  
Far away hear my helpless sighs.  
Thank God the bad ones are not  
On my doorstep to ask if I stole  
A boyfriend on cyberspace for that  
Would be pretty bad.

Stories go round of people unhappy  
But I am still in awe for I feel  
So close to those who come to see  
Me in the small window where we play  
Throw and catch in the space where  
Every word we write can speak volumes  
To those who listen. Our eyes are  
Glued to screens and together like  
Deer we graze and walk on the same  
Prairie lands.

What has brought you and me  
To look at each other eye ball  
To eye ball and not wink even  
Once? For now I know our destinies were  
Meant to collide and cause the earth  
To cry for our words know pain. How  
Lucky we are to be able to break it  
Before it breaks us up. For those  
Who are jealous do exist on these  
Prairie plains we have discovered

Let us graze and chew the cud  
Lying down in our kraal where  
The manure rich will bring out

Green and more for us to eat  
For this journey never ends  
In this cycle of grass we eat  
As we lie down with our horns  
In the air waiting to hear the  
Next news we can write about. For  
now we are the voice nerves of our  
World. Those with a falsetto must  
get into the chorus for my soprano  
Long lost the smoothness of a voice  
For when mine broke I developed  
A false one just far from the  
Baritone of Luciano Pavarotii

Sarah Mkhonza

# What Has Happened To The World

What happened to the world go  
this energy on the loose,  
running wild on its own,  
gives me nothing but awe for I see  
this shrinking of the lands  
that fit into a square bright  
that makes me touch the hearts  
I longed to bless and did not know  
how to reach even when I asked  
migratory birds to walk for me  
in the march of the penguins? Here  
they are for I can feel them for  
suddenly they have popped up on my  
doorstep. I breathe and people  
far away hear my helpless sighs.  
Thank God the bad ones are not  
on my doorstep to ask if I stole  
a boyfriend on cyberspace for that  
would be pretty bad.

Stories go round of people unhappy  
react to the screen and sweat in the  
palm of their hands which are clicking  
the keys that now walk the whole world  
as they tell all with no stopping.  
But I am still in awe for I feel  
so close to those who come to see  
me in the small window where we play  
throw and catch in the space where  
every word we write can speak volumes  
to those who listen. Our eyes are  
glued to screens and together like  
deer we graze and walk on the same  
prairie plains. What has brought you  
and I to look at each other eye ball  
to eye ball and not wink even once?  
For now I know our destinies were  
meant to collide and cause the earth  
to cry for our words know pain. How

lucky we are to be able to break i and  
speak before our world breaks us up. Let  
us brush up the teeth of the deer so that  
they can chew more and live more and lie  
in these pastures knowing it is not about  
words quiet hitting the keys, but sharing  
truths that can help us live.

Before it breaks us up  
For our relationship is enviable  
To the home wreckers that have  
Not what we have.

Sarah Mkhonza

# What Terry Said To Jerry

Terry, I didn't know you are this bad.  
Just yesterday you swore you would obey.

Jerry, you sound so biblical! It's as if  
you're a page I tore out of the Torah.

Gosh, where do they make them these days?  
These husbands that wear white shirts.

They are like you, you know. No creases  
on the shirt and trousers, but the heart!  
You can hide four concubines in it,  
for the fifth one would yell to the foolish  
maidens and say she does not want to go  
all the way. Yah, she'd tell them about other  
five.

Jerry said' 'I told you to count your words. See!

Sarah Mkhonza

# What To Add To An O

When you need to add three letters  
to an 'o, ' do not think of gone,  
for everybody is here

Do not think of bone for is not  
time to debone a poem.  
Nor is it time to think  
of tone, for your voice  
needs no toning down.

Just think of zone for you  
are entering the love zone  
love for we do not need a rose  
to prop our words for we are in  
a love zone gone bony with our  
little love poem that will touch  
a new 'o'. Welcome to Joburg, where  
guys are called 'o.' Hey O? Don't  
ask the poem. Ask the pole for on it  
hangs the flag, the only semblance of truth.

Where you can now thint of

Sarah Mkhonza

# What Was It Like In The Belly Of The Whale

Have you ever been sent to a destination  
And ended up in another and then had  
To face the only question; What was it  
Like in the belly of the whale?

No biblical story is as funny as landing  
Inside a big whale that has swallowed  
fish, frog and crab and minced them  
Into a stew and you inhaling the after  
Dinner smells inside the whale and asking  
How you landed there.

There is a good picture of the unforgettable  
That lands you there in your mind for all  
Things happen in stages. You walk the walk  
Of a lost prophet and end up with people  
Who cast lots and ask where you come from.

You stammer excuses that say it is not you  
But the wind that blew you in that direction  
And everybody can tell you are a fibber who  
Is skilled in the art of mendacity.

You sit among the group and look like a lost  
Soul for you do not fit in no matter what they  
Can give you to wear or eat for it turns in  
Your stomach and you burp and they ask,  
Hey guy, from whence did you come?

You finally beg to be let out into the  
Raging storms for you know the parachute  
Has not come and then get out there  
Hoping the sea will not do you in and  
Then the splash that can fill the lake  
Near your village! You get out and  
Right there is the sign. This direction  
It says and you go there and find the  
police car that has them catching you  
And shackling you for they ask you how

You ended up in Liechtenstein when you  
Had been sent to Africa.

You sit there and say let life take its  
Course for I can only answer one question  
Not many. What was it like in the belly  
Of the whale, they ask and you give them  
The only answer you know. Bad enough for  
Me to want out. They laugh for they have  
Seen the likes of you so sure of themselves  
When they begin something and so unsure when  
They end it. The only consolation is that  
The inside of a jail is far better than  
The inside of the belly of the whale for  
Prisoners welcome you with curiosity  
Wondering what crime you have committed  
And when you tell them that the only  
crime you committed was that you lost  
Your sense of direction, they give you  
A thumbs p and welcome you to the club.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When Candles Burn Upside Down

Candles churning out cheese like wax  
Filling candle holders upside down  
Making a mess no knife can scrape  
Yet the light at urn only filters  
Through. Don't ask me why this is  
For the answer lies in a phrase  
Coined long ago. Nothing is impossible  
Where possibility is the word for let  
It happen.

All colors of candles crying with wax  
Dripping while they are upside down.  
Then one emerges and rares its head  
Says enough is enough for change is  
The name of what we have to do for  
Nobody will do it for us.

Everybody looks at the reincarnation  
Of Imbecility trying to rise up on  
Stick legs and throwing a hearty laugh  
Into the air says friend we are made of  
Wax and follow the mold.

Frustration with the sons of Ignorance  
The god whose hand is wrapped around  
People's minds you continue to lie on  
One side and squirm into the vertical  
Position and when the wick looks out  
Into air the flame gets bigger while  
Your fellows stay with mouths gagged  
By wax that leaves them burnt out of  
Shape. You tell them to get out of this  
For being misshapen is not the destiny of  
A candle. It was born the destiny of wax.  
They look at you and wonder how you got  
To know this truth. You tell them that  
You had to feel what burning upside down  
Is before you could feel the compelling  
Need to try something new for it takes

Going into prison once to know that  
Things have to change. You watch the  
Eyes get bigger and you see that the  
Truth is finally sinking in and candles  
Burning bright begin to line the horizon  
With a beauty that surpasses the light  
Of dawn.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When I Am Tired Of Wishing

When I am tired of wishing,  
I will hold your picture,  
up in my mind.

I will remember when you were well,  
and you called to me from afar,  
And beckoned me to come to you.

I will wish you out of this bed,  
walking like before you fell sick.

I will go back to places where we walked,  
and remember you yelling on escalators  
.

I will tell the world you were for me,  
the person who could never die.

For your passing would leave me nowhere.  
I fear it now and know I am tired of wishing.

You do not move your limbs for me,  
yet you wink when I call you.

I know you hear me, now I say these words,  
for you to know I am not tired of wishing.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When Kind Guests Bring Trouble

When kind guests arrive and sit here,  
They bring smiles in inaudible quotations,  
And put them on your lap with heads bowed.  
Oh what a good day it is just real practice,  
Said over and over over the fence now its in,  
On your turf and you have to smile back,  
Good neighbor that you are to the end of time,  
With every sinew stretched in smiles,  
The wrinkles on your forehead frowning,  
You listen and bow your head to musings,  
That will one day ask you why you listened,  
And did not say out right then that it was not that,  
That you were about other things not this,  
Counting of days and filling the hours with talk,  
But going nowhere really with actions,  
For we belong to clubs and meet at houses,  
Host strangers in our heart of heart with talk,  
Then fail to know where exactly we are bound,  
In this superficial talk that we chew ourselves with,  
For guns are speaking the hate and depression of others,  
Who act on their misery by blasting into the future of others,  
Like spies who have been searching and wondering when and how,  
They would finally do the act of strangers,  
Who are received by you as kind guests.

What does it mean to love your neighbor,  
For you need to also love yourself and vow,  
That you are here to listen and do things,  
That change your three foot radius into you,  
Who is the core of this existence that cries out,  
Saying some of us have gone silent so you must speak,  
And end this carnage that blasts into horizons far,  
And send citizens of countries to ends not drawn,  
In the plans that are laid on this table in front of you'll  
Who simply seat and entertain neighbors like yesterday,  
When time asks you how you will serve the stranger,  
In this time where the next person may be a walking bomb,  
That can explode and stretch the radius to horizons,  
Where thoughts can never begin to touch the lines,

That mark with numbers you know these neutrinos,  
That have brought all of us to this place,  
Where we wonder and love and hate and cry aloud,  
Saying enough of this killing of us too,  
For we remain dead when one of us dies alone,  
Tying us with a burden of sadness that hangs us,  
On a noose that we did not put around our necks,  
This lynching of nations all in a noose that circles,  
The whole world under one tree in tangles,  
That cannot be unwound easily with numbers,  
For armies have stopped to be the tool,  
With which we can win a war of the mind,  
That thinks death must be the judge of me,  
Who chooses to enter into this endless battle,  
That started with strangers who came and smiled,  
And then shook hands with a bomb unseen,  
And hidden in the lines that are written,  
In the inside of the hands that stretched out,  
To receive unwritten truths that changed,  
To the tellers of stories that lay there,  
Coupled with the bodies that went down,  
These unsung heroes we loved that yell,  
Saying we should act and change the world,  
For they did not die in vain.

If me and you sit here burdened with tasks,  
Of spirits that haunt us and teach us to laugh,  
And walk into the future like yesterday not bothered,  
We have not done the duties of the busy bee,  
That flies from flower to flower in service,  
Feeding a queen bee that sits forever,  
These soldiers of an endless cause,  
That we were sent to work on endlessly,  
Saying in our buzz that as long as we live,  
Our wings will fly on the flowers and write,  
With new pollen the trail that leads to the new,  
Beehives where a new queen bee lays endlessly,  
A honey so new so ours so old and full of smells,  
One can say that we traveled far for it,  
For it has to be sought in the new holes,  
Where we will build new hives that are fatter,  
Juicier, and more well combed,

Than the ones that we created yesterday,  
When we ran our hands through uncombed hair,  
Receiving each other and not seeing,  
We are bees from different hives,  
That linger under the same skies where we get lynched,  
With this noose that we are removing from our necks,  
For we came from horizons further than this,  
With this answer that will prove,  
That bees are not cleverer than us.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When Lizo Said He Was Going Away

Each time Lizo said he was going away,  
I wondered how far he was really going,  
For I had not been even to the town nearest,  
Our village.

When Lizo said he was going away,  
He polished his shoes so shiny  
And tied his shoe laces so tight,  
that I wondered what happened in the big world,  
That made him want his shoes so secure.

When Lizo said he was now returning,  
He had a suitcase full of clothes,  
I only had a dress and a petticoat,  
That I wore to our Sunday service,  
And took off when we returned.  
What place was it where people wore,  
Clothes that filled a whole suitcase?

When I went away I got to know,  
The place far away from parents ours,  
Where the children wore designer clothes,  
Shoes with a brand names from far away,  
That I had to tell them my family was rich,  
Rather than say we were just orphans,  
Raised in the orphanage called the village.

I saw lights that shone above me,  
And saw girls who loved nail paint,  
For such I had never wished for once,  
For it was way above the life,  
That Lizo had said happened far away.

If I had known how boys behave,  
When their feet hit the city,  
I would have known I did not have,  
To polish my shoes and tie my laces,  
But just buy a pair that did need any of those.

When Lizo asked what I had done,  
When I took the first trip to the city,  
I told him I had seen children in shoes,  
That did not need these things we have,  
Pointing at the laces on our shoes.

When Lizo heard me speak disdain,  
Of the laced shoes that had been faithful,  
To our feet all these years,  
Causing us corns on little toes,  
That made people think we were rich,  
For our feet certainly looked,  
Better than the feet of the villagers,  
Who worked unshod and swept the yard,  
With deep cuts in their heels,  
You could secure a penny in,  
And steal it without anyone seeing,  
He walked away angrily.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When Love Sinks It Sinks Real Deep

When love sinks it sinks so deep  
This quick sand takes your down  
You end up battling for breath  
With just your neck above the ground.

When love rises it rises high  
You walk on airs and trees look  
For shorter than you and love itself  
For it is the power that envelopes  
Its prey and takes it where it wants.

Don't get stolen by love but steal  
Love and get it to do what you want.  
Remember that it is a powerful tool  
That has its own power gang that wears  
Red and white on Valentines Day.

For love to have its own day like you  
Have a birthday is a sure sign you  
Are dealing with one hell of a clever  
Mystery that is always waiting to be  
Solved by you and a few others. Stay  
Cool on this road to love for it has  
Many stops some of which have no signs.

Look outside yourself and stay inside  
As well for neither of the two sides  
Are to be neglected for the inside is  
The part you will open for the stranger  
At the next stop sign.

Remember to keep your head high  
For the neck starts to bend when  
It is overladen and the shoulders  
Begin to show when the sinking  
Begins. Remember love is a feeling  
Not a thing that can sit on the  
Shoulders like a parrot does on  
Your hand.

Remember it does have wings to fly  
And let lose the parrot for they say  
To hold on is not to love genuinely  
If I may speak for the experts.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When My Stilettos Wouldn't Do

I had prayed to rule the earth  
In my stilettos walking arm in  
Arm with the one I love  
Only to find it was sneakers  
That could get me there.

The voice of reason murmured that  
I should jump up and get on the pews  
And stride down and jump onto  
The alter and kneel on the priest's cassock.

The strides I took shook the foundation of the church

For I landed near the offering plate  
And scattered its contents as heaven  
Opened and granted me what I wanted  
most.

Why this feat you may ask?  
I had to defy the rules of  
Heaven and earth to get the  
Dollar bill with the one eye  
That was the only one out there  
Before the bride got to it and  
Used it to buy a ring of gold and  
Shout 'I do' with a hoarse voice  
Like that of one who was drinking  
In the early hours of the previous  
night.

Ask me if it was worth it,  
Look who wears the golden ring  
In this battle of words to the heart  
Now I do not dream of speaking  
From on top of the double decker bus  
When I wake up and see it turn the  
Corner without me.



# When Nobody Wants You To Stand

The eyes look at you as a piece of something,  
To be removed, stabbed and taken to nowhere,  
Yet you journey in the all that is for all,  
You step on everybody's earth and look at  
Everybody's blue sky and see all of you and  
Others breathing hot air before a storm,  
You know the cold air lingers out there,  
Looking, peeping, wanting to know when  
Its turn to blow into someone's eyes will come,  
It jets in a plane from afar and the eyes wonder,  
Will she survive this one which comes from the  
Leeward side of life where no winds blow,  
Or go to the windward side where all air sings,  
Where the grass sways and opens your eyes,  
To a future out there at the ends of the  
Tips of your outstretched fingers.  
Some know you will get there no matter what,  
For you came from where people did not want  
You to live the life you see in this air.

You were trained to make happen what does not  
Want to be and walk on this table on which you stand,  
For it has four corners that jab into your side,  
Making you utter words with feeling as you touch,  
The side which hurts now, knowing it will hurt,  
No more for pain is a part of the universe that,  
Imposes itself whenever and however to whomever,  
Even on those who do not want you to live here  
For they have failed to see themselves in you,  
Your pain being their pain as we share the sorrow,  
which is our sorrow, like that of the victims  
Of today's hunger and poverty which rocked the country,  
Killing hundreds who are being buried today,  
In a state funeral to be watched by all on this table,  
Where others do not want others to live,  
For they fear the success of those they oppose,  
Yet this life is never in opposition to itself,  
As we walk and talk and shake its hands daily,  
Looking into eyes sad and merry, red and blue,

Like varicose veins on the leg of one who,  
Stands forever working for all of us,  
Ready to burst and say no more standing, please.

You stand for it is in you to not move,  
To not shake when the earth quakes and faults,  
Living you sinking in a quicksand of hope  
That shines in horizons far away,  
Still saying you shall stand for standing,  
Is standing for all who do not have feet,  
That have five toes that balance a foot,  
With the bones broken, stepped on in this  
horse race where we yawn and watch looking  
To see which horse will win, so we can get  
The windfall that is promised when we cast  
the vote that they so desire and tell lies  
To get in the name of a better life for all,  
Minorities, refugees, immigrants whom nobody  
Loves when they take food from the table,  
Being better of as Lazarus who sits under  
The table and looked on at the smoke,  
And glared at the future that is long and  
Unchanging even after a vote of the many,  
Who declare life is for all who stand,  
On this table which shakes with the  
Stampede of the powerful who head for,  
The offices of power to say, we were there,  
In centuries making a history that did  
Not change any life but ours who got in.  
We stood even when nobody got anything,  
For that is what you were told,  
To stand when nobody wants you to stand  
For life is only for those who do.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When The Bet Is Placed By You

Can we win when the bet is placed  
By you with me just following behind?  
You said luck sat on a woman's palm  
And she licked her up just yesterday.

Now you won't let me place the bet so  
I tell you we will lose and you  
Stubborn once again will say one  
word, 'Well..'

You bought the winning ticket I hope  
I talk for to have a mouth is to be  
Burdened with the ability to say you  
Were there even when the actions show  
Yours was not the action that did things  
In this union of two.

I hold your hand each day so that I can  
Sturdy myself for the wind blows between  
Us asking one question how closely glued  
We are when one word can send you betting  
Without my input.

You walk near me and the world knows  
My bet is your bet but you never let  
The bet be my bet and then you follow  
As this happens with me.

Love the horses love the racing but  
Love me too just by letting me do  
It once and show what a winner we  
Are for the world does not know  
That I brought two souls to the world  
And once, only once we won the bet.

I know a thing a two like where the  
Dust is behind the bookshelf and you  
Just know when you bet on our behalf  
Even though the end is the same.

You will say I have a mouth for always  
All I do is talk talk when you never  
Let me bet, for that is what I want  
To do repetitively like you have and  
Make the talk, talk be a bet, bet.

Who misses out when luck came when I  
spat on my hand and rubbed in the thought  
That I itch to come home with the winnings  
Written on my face for our kids would see  
When I open the door it is a different  
Day for ours will have been the winning  
Family of four?

Sarah Mkhonza

# When The Gods Gaze Into Your Eyes

When one god gazes into your eyes  
Will she see something good or bad  
Will she see the nose you have never  
Seen and ask why you did not sneeze  
And have you answering you did only  
To be asked, but where is the evidence.

You will take out your handkerchief  
And spread it out and she will call  
Another god to help her see what is  
In front of her. Look he says he sneezed  
All the snuff of heaven that was in  
His head and this is what he has to  
Show for it.

Where are the golden nuggets that  
Were in your brain? We looked into  
Your eyes and they were as empty as  
A house after an eviction. What did  
You do with your master's gold.

I knew that you look for gold where  
You did not put it and like an ostrich  
I buried my head in the sand. Go look  
There for there is evidence in the sand.  
The particles in the sand will produce  
A dusty golden glow that will force you  
To pick them up and put them in the  
Hands of the gods.

The gods will holding you by the neck and  
Tell you that it would have been better  
To be a thief for you would have stem  
Away with something than to be one who  
Shirks his duties and messes with the  
Gold in their head.

Then you will walk away and go  
And worship them with doing as

You were told and when you sneeze  
The golden nuggets will pen a poem  
That will be read in the land of  
The gods for so good will it be  
That the world will know you as  
One hell of a poet for you write  
Them with a pen that has a golden  
Tip.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When The Golden Arrow Lands On My Forehead

I who lives in this rich valley of gold,  
Where you scoop out money with the hands,  
Watch the valley go to sleep daily,  
Hoping that the arrow out there,  
In the hands of the hunter whose bow,  
Is bend into two ready to shoot out,  
Would land on my forehead.

I wish my forehead was narrow,  
So the arrow would shake the head,  
And get stuck in there forever,  
For this would make me stand out,  
So that all the goodness of the bay,  
Would go into me like poison,  
And spread with the power of venom  
Giving me the power and drive,  
That makes me tremble with wealth  
Like those who flower this valley.

The likes of them live big,  
While the poor of them live small,  
Jogging on pathways where I do,  
Breathing this air we share,  
But none of their luck and genius,  
Rubbing into me like ointment,  
That can be smelt afar in my hair.

I wish the arrow of wealth,  
Unending like the jar of oil,  
Biblical incantation it is,  
That was poured on the feet,  
And wiped with hair like mine,  
Would linger in its actions,  
Foretelling a lasting blessing.

They say I am a dreamer,  
Daughter of the spirit gone,  
That came from the caves long ago,  
To keep looking at the earth,

With nothing in my hand,  
But praying for the cavernous deeds,  
That can change me into the princess,  
Not forgotten by the kings.

You will know when I step out,  
For I will have the mark of wonder,  
This bindi dot on my forehead,  
This Hindu attestation to greatness  
For I will have joined the ones,  
We call the noble of the earth,  
Never to back up and open the gates,  
For I will have become the gate keeper,  
A job I envied throughout life.

Why this violent act mysterious,  
You ask for you do not know,  
How filling wheel barrows of sand,  
Leaves the hands calloused and hard,  
With the owner unable to work,  
Or rub the two hands together,  
Without feeling hardness her heart.

If you thought I would open gates,  
You should have seen all politicians,  
Praying to be elected and going,  
Into the shiny offices and opening,  
The gates of hell that haunt us daily,  
With us wishing they would close the gates,  
If not hire us as gatekeepers,  
For we can keep misery off the face  
Of this earth that is in ever flowing tears,  
That can fill the Nile a thousand times.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When The Math Fails To Add Up Just Multiply

I tried to divide and the math did not work out,  
For they told me God said we must multiply.

And then do what, this tall order I asked.  
And fill the earth, they replied.

Still impossible to do it alone,  
For I need a plan to get me there.

Then I tried to subtract thinking I could, then they stopped me,  
God instructed us to add for subtracting takes away.

Then I decided to leave the math for I was no whizz kid,  
Just knew words for I was born and raised on them by mama.

Then the teacher said I was not clever if I could not count,  
Then I tried and found that I got one plus one made four.

Then they asked me how this could happen in the math world,  
I told them that I had never walked on that world.

All I had done was multiply and add and end up with four.  
For I loved a number that sits as if it is cross legged.

Like me when I am trying to be smart when I am with him,  
I mean this boy that is talking to me of love lately.

They do not know he is not very smart like me,  
But knows how to do the high, low and side jump.

He has been to the olympics of the math world,  
And failed to get even a medal for being last.

Yet in the world of sports he got four,  
For he can do the thing called athletics.

For he counts the holes on the jump pole backwards,  
And cheats counting four when it is two jumps.

His is not the athletics of the math world,  
where his pen and mine dry up with ink on the nib.

How then will I know I need a reverse mortgage,  
When the time comes to pay for the present one.

I cannot add or balance the check book that heaven gave me,  
With these words that drop pennies into my purse.

I decided to ask the boy for he jumps and counts backwards,  
Always reversing and surely ready for the reverse mortgage.

I think one thing I can ask of you reader,  
Let us hire my friend for you too if you cannot count.

For only with him counting our tuppence on earth,  
So we can laugh math, sing math all the way into the ark.

For Noah could only count up to the number two.  
That is why God told him to build the ark.

Me and you, we will survive in this world,  
While those who can count waste time spending timeless hours Counting beyond  
the number two, like this third line here.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When The Moon Looks Down On You

You must be visible from up there  
because you have a bank account  
down here. The moon only shines  
on those who have separated themselves  
from the coin jinglers. They that  
swear by their power to stay  
penny foolish are not admissible.

You may look like the fake next  
door, but just because they make  
a collection at the church does  
not mean you will be spared.

They say poverty's knuckles are  
worn out for knocking on people'  
doors. They are always open and  
the key dangles on the door. Big  
enough to be seen on the moon.

Yet they still walking to share a  
life with cousin church mouse even  
though he squeals louder than their  
empty stomachs. Lock the church and  
throw the key away. They run in threw  
the peep holes to their destiny. Their  
faces are not visible from the moon.

This clan shines from the moon with  
faces with a destiny. Their spatter  
is derived from the rivers up there.  
Riches is not the jingling of foolish  
angry coins, but the smooth stashing  
of soft, newly released notes, hot from  
the press.

Which clan do you choose? Wake up from this slumber and join your lot. Silent  
warmth of riches awaits your  
wisdom. There's a coin waiting for you  
to show up on the moon. You promised the

faceless coin.

Th

They

Sarah Mkhonza

# When The Route Goes Further Than The North Pole

What you have been chasing  
While precious is more dangerous  
Than the poisonous mushroom  
Outside. It is as soft and as  
Tasty for it is equally rare.

If it is the white lights that  
Lead you on, ask them how far  
You have to go for if it is further  
Than the north pole they have  
Been there.

They will tell you that to be  
Seduced by the sun is futile  
For it shines in all colors  
Gold and bronze and tells you  
Its soul and yours will be one  
All a hoax for chasing this love  
Is as good as chasing the white  
Lights that look at you as they  
Speak.

The victory you seek is hidden  
Beyond the poles for its fame  
Has made it so dear it lacks a  
Name. Love is a name we use for  
The force it is, is more precious  
Than gold. The danger lied in  
Being lured to the ends of the  
World where hunger and cold devour  
Their prey by preserving it in  
The icy cold forest and no directions  
Exist on where and how to guide one  
On the love sick path.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When The Royal House Sneezes

With a mom born a princess  
I always listen to a sneeze  
That wakes us up at seven  
My village says there goes.

She sneezes long and loud  
She has scooped the earth  
All night in the river with  
Her hands and there goes the  
Night of yesterday.

The village runner wakes me up.  
He says she has sneezed her last.  
I look at the door it is dawn  
Today no sneeze and never will  
Be one at seven for she is gone.

She who sneezes loud is gone  
Yet people still come to mourn  
For like the clock she woke them  
Up and they believed in life  
That when you sneeze, you are alive  
Like a person sneezing in the mortuary  
You are alive for one day you will  
Not sneeze anymore. Value the sneeze  
For it is a big uttering of what is you.  
It tells the world breath and  
Stuff is too much with you,  
It wants to get out and do  
With a pen or a kerchief  
This throwing and wiping  
We do with the poem.

This is my sneeze for I  
Learned from this woman  
To sneeze loud and wake  
The universe up to take  
Arms of the spirit and fight  
For the likes of rulers

Who tear us apart, who  
Say this that and the other  
When they are sneezing poison  
Into the air full of pollution  
That the dreamers who make money  
Have made out of this earth.

To sneeze or not to sneeze  
Has become the motto of life.  
For when you do you let out  
What should be out there  
And hope an idea will heal  
When it is spilled into the  
Air and tell others to watch  
Out for poison came out of  
The ones with no seven o'clock  
Wake up call, but lies and facts  
That are brewed in minutes and  
Sent out for everybody's mind  
To sleep some more.

Rise and sleep no more says the  
Woman whose sneezed loudest after  
Working in the rubble in Aleppo.  
People are dying rise and sleep  
No more for the princes royal  
Now lie in the rubble. How then  
Is the world going to rescue those  
Whose buildings pile on top of them  
When they leave on the Mayflower to  
Nowhere for the time says go away  
As does the rumbling earth around them.

There is nothing royal about death  
As there is nothing royal about life  
It is a use of words we sneeze when we  
Want to protect the wealth and give it  
To a few who are born with keys to the vaults  
Of gold hidden under the earth they  
Walk on. These sneezes cannot reach  
Them, but when a small sneeze is heard  
In Aleppo hope creeps into our arms

And we rescue an Omrum. Rise and sleep  
No more, says the sneeze not royal.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When The World Cries Foul

When the ants cry foul  
We will have blisters  
Large sores from the curse  
For they will be asking  
Telling us to stop at once  
For we've been stepping  
On them for too long.

When the rocks cry foul  
They will explode  
Into the air like bayonets  
Saying we've overheated earth  
And they cannot take it anymore.

When the air cries foul  
We will choke from smog  
And wear masks everywhere  
For it will be telling us  
We've been pouring dirt  
Into it for too long.

When the frogs cry foul  
They will utter the bull frog croak  
Asking how they will jump  
For we've been feasting  
On frog's legs on our buffets.

When the inner city cries foul  
There will be a burgeoning wave  
Of ignorance and poverty  
That asks how long this nightmare  
Called life can go on  
While the suburbs these inner chambers of kings and queens  
Romance the money on beds of gold.

When the youth cries foul  
They will be asking nations  
What they have done to leave  
The world a place where future cohorts  
Do not live and cry for jobs  
Looking at the sky till their  
Eyes go blind from hopelessness.

When Americans cry foul  
They will pour out into  
The streets asking how  
Gun totting cops and  
Insolent adults can wield  
The power of the gavel.

When the oceans cry foul  
They will be protesting  
The melting of glaciers  
That fill them up  
And drown the islands  
Leaving whole nations landless.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When Two Zippers Went Down

When two zippers went down,  
They did hope to go up,  
For who made the rules we follow,  
Of pulling things up to close,  
When we pulled them down to open them?  
Who said zippers should stay in place,  
Only the nuns at our school know,  
That we were meant to know the rules,  
And keep our insides shut in right there,  
Only to peep out in private places,  
Where only one stands alone,  
This secrecy that is heaven bound,  
I have not head written about in heaven,  
Where we all say we are going.

When two zippers are pulled down,  
Only new things happen to lovers,  
Who have been waiting for these moments,  
Not heeding the rules of nuns,  
For they know they wear no zippers,  
And so have none to pull down.

The zippers went with a sound,  
Like metals that ate into each other,  
The opening and closing that went on,  
Was like a grinding metal to metal,  
For you know a zipper when you see it,  
Pinching your hand for it is too close,  
Saying don't touch or you will be hurt,  
For a bite worse than a snake.

Then the devil walked in on them,  
Up they went the zippers that went down,  
Falling on the legs of pants pulled on,  
The two work up a frenzied zipping,  
Not concerned about the pinching,  
Of stealing moments that are gone,  
Only to be discovered in acts with rules,  
That were made long ago.

Rewrite the rules and make new zippers,  
That close sideways and backwards,  
For you will not follow a single rule,  
And learn to make everything new,  
Only don't burn if you do not know,  
The rules of the game that we play.

This game that is played only in two,  
Always ends only with one,  
Standing at cross roads wishing and wanting,  
Wishing the pulling and pushing that happens,  
Had not landed them in the knowing,  
That they hold against all people,  
Who said there was love in this pulling down,  
That had to be found in this known way.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When Will It Rain Poetry

I am waiting here looking at the sky  
It is raining cats and dogs. I  
Ask the sky when will it rain poetry  
For then love would pour out  
And wet the pavements and on every  
Segment of cement a poem would stand  
Up and tell the cats and dogs to stop  
Hating each other for it is a time to  
Love.

Imagine words falling from the sky and  
You picking them up and telling the world  
It is the season to smell citrus fresh.

No poem does that like one you write on a long  
Citrus peel that you cut into one long  
Spiral and then write the poem word by word  
Knowing even if there is no crown on your  
Head you have nailed the poetry slam for people  
Will not need their eyes to read the poem, but  
To read your lips. For your lips have been where  
The poem has been just as a knife has been on the  
Peel of a citrus fruit. Even if cats and dogs can  
Deny they rained from the sky for who knows what  
Happens in the world of felines but the poet that  
You are.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When Women Are Priests That Serve Mass

The ruling is out once again,  
No woman serving mass here,  
But heaven seems not to say,  
Only men serving mass here.  
Whose is the right to say,  
One gender is better than another,  
Can we sit and be served mass,  
In a world where men are man  
And women are we-men.

I like the seeing of this world,  
For anything different separates,  
And makes one thing to be called,  
By a name that is fitting,  
Only to be told it is not 'it'

These women who are not to serve,  
Are told to be served only,  
Who said being served and serving,  
Were two different things,  
For the server and the served.

The acts of giving out bread,  
And sharing the cup of wine,  
Are done in the biblical sense,  
And yes in an earthly sense,  
For in heaven they neither marry,  
For gender is a thing of this world.

When priest and popes pop into heaven,  
There will be a loud pop sound,  
Like that of pop corn burning,  
For they refused to serve the corn,  
To a whole tribe of people,  
When everyone knows that corn,  
Is of Mexican heritage.

How can women be denied a task,  
By the very corn they popped,

Into this world amidst tears,  
Of birthing, planting and weeding  
Then harvesting the last crop of the year  
After the longest of droughts,  
With dads sipping a beer at the bar.

These priestesses no princesses,  
Have borne a halo of grace yearly,  
Waiting their hands outstretched,  
For the serving gowns so male,  
They fail to go around their heaps.

Can the God of grace grin just once,  
For he has failed to grant the grace,  
Of his presence in the minds of man,  
In their meetings where nothing but truth,  
Ends up shoveled in spoonfuls,  
Into the stomachs of a few men,  
Who run the richest state in the world.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When You Have Forgotten Your Dancing Shoes

When you have forgotten your dancing shoes  
Just dance anyway for it is not the shoes  
But the body that needs to know the moves.  
It wants to learn to balance on one leg  
And swing the heap up and stretch the  
Other in the way of some ballerina for  
It once tap danced and the staccato  
It made annoyed everyone for they could  
Hear the beats on the floor and knew a  
Mediocre is a mediocre no matter how  
They fast they tap. Wear no shoes and  
Nobody hears Your moves but your muscles  
Swing and turn the same way yesterday's  
Class deemed you do. The dance teacher  
Will know from your weight if excuses of  
Dancing shoes are genuine for you will  
Be weighed on the scale and you will  
Not make the mark. They say they dance  
Better who dance always for the dance  
Moves get etched on their bodies  
You will learn that it is the number  
Of attempts that perfect the game  
And not the garb.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When You Put Heavy Weights On Your Arms

I have been asked to speak on a subject rare  
By the poem sitting inside you. It says you  
Stop it from coming out for you bar it in with  
Heavy weights on your arms that are tied on for  
The scale lied and said put on the irons invisible  
That tell you, you cannot write. The poem is angry  
For you stifle it with doubt from the weights that  
Stop you from picking up a weightless pen and scrawl  
It into life. It says the day you die it will be the  
Last day for it to hope you can free it. It will go  
Down in history having told you all it wanted was not  
For you to dance a weird dance but just to try for it  
Is there on the open page as clean as a baby's new tooth  
And as novel and exiting that you fall from the top of  
The ladder into the lowest rungs leaving a stanza at every  
Rung. No poet has not fallen at every rung and with wounded  
Ego risen and dusted off the hands and felt the bump on  
The head and said that's the way it goes at rung number one.  
Your poem seeks to be in the anthology of witness poetry  
For that is where it can tell the world the rare story of  
How the irons that weighed your arms down and lied that  
Poets are born were removed. The irons that weigh you down  
Get less heavy when you listen to their plea for they want  
To go back to the museum of the invisibility they came from  
Called the land of the null and void. They say in this land  
Is found a list of those who never tried for they hated to  
Learn from their errors and stood with an eraser rubbing out  
Of their mind every word that threatened to become a  
King of the land invited poets to submit a poem that praises  
Him for his bravery. When the poets thought of a line it would innediately show  
on the king's screen. He sat and watched one poem he liked panned down by a  
poet who had heavy irons on his arms and the biggest eraser. He wrotecgreat  
lines and erased them and annoyed the king hired a scribe to write every line  
this poet wrote. When the contest was over the poet submitted nothing for he  
had erased all his work. All poems were collected and none qualified but lines  
written by the scribe from a man who erased the best lines of the praise poem of  
the king. The poet was made the king's praise poet and told never to erase his  
words before they were seen by the king's scribe  
Poetry accused the man of murder for he had killed a lot of them and told him

never to stifle his thoughts for they  
Like medicine could heal a nation.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When You Said I Do

The tune I hear is loud as the fear,  
That sips through my bones in the rear,  
That yesterday was just a tear

When  
you said I do.

Sarah Mkhonza

# When You've Made The Mistake All Dread

When you have said 'oui' where  
'non, ' should have been the word,  
the bravery of apology is not  
suffering through, but in facing  
outcomes and taking the proceeds  
to the place where sits the judge  
of times, deal with you.

Next timers are full timers for  
their way points forward to the  
next deed. Yesterday cries the tears  
of its world. Grieve the grief of  
of the present and make it short.

Learn a lesson in a saying.  
They say life heals those who  
heal s fall  
on those who pout their lips.

in the

wallpaper

Sarah Mkhonza

# Where There's been A Fire

Coals once red and fiery, map  
the fire which burned like fireworks  
from a devilish land. They lie dead cold  
to fool you.

Don't put your foot in without shoes  
emboldened with a the mom eternal that  
can read a century of degrees.

Hot are the remains and bitter is  
their ash. Look back with a wink  
that says' I know how plastic burns  
when rolled into a cigar. It drips  
onto flesh. It sticks and wiping it  
off is a job even a fool would't take.

Don't remember the size of the flame  
and height of the pils of smoke.  
Walk away with eyes that can smolder  
a smile and burn your image in for  
you know what it's like to be so hot  
you could melt the inside of a freezer.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Where There's Been A Fire

Coals once red and fiery, map  
the fire which burned like fireworks  
from a devilish land. They lie dead cold  
to fool you.

Don't put your foot in without shoes  
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a smile and burn your image in for  
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you could melt the inside of a freezer.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Who Gets More Cards Than The Queen

I do want you to ask a question  
That is not to be asked by me and you.  
For we know the answer,  
To who gets more cards than the queen.

If it is not us, then who?  
The Pope or the King of Greece,  
I still wonder if there is one,  
For people are sold on power.

Guess what, this is no competition,  
But a puzzle that needs to be sold,  
Even though we will not get a penny,  
For this precious knowledge we will gather,  
For we being the blessed of the earth,  
Always wondering about royalty,  
When we should be royalty ourselves.

Our dreams have grown with the years,  
To the point where they reach the roofs,  
Of the very doors of palaces in our minds,  
For if I am not queen of my palace,  
What shall become of it?

Start sending cards to me,  
And fill my space with these pieces of paper,  
So I can be the answer to a question,  
You have been asking about me for years,  
For you fear asking it about you.

If you were king what would you get,  
Cards, gifts, chocolate or just plain nothing.  
Would you dye your hair, pierce your ears,  
Or ride horses without a saddle,  
Just to prove you are the one,  
Who gets more cards than the Queen?

I will ask questions to you for you are not,  
Doing the job of answering them even when I do

Force your brain to stop looking into the coffee cup,  
And go out there and answer questions in the air,  
For that is why it is blowing,  
So you can breathe it and enjoy it,  
As you ponder questions unanswerable.

The poor answered this question,  
For they got the left overs from there,  
Where people pour unwanted gifts,  
Me and you were sitting on a bench,  
Near the pavement of life,  
Sniffing the air with disdain,  
For we felt even less important,  
For we did not get one card.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Who Sits On The Mercy Seat Right Now

They said if you were condemned to Die, run to the mercy seat, yet now  
The seat is occupied by those  
Whose accusations are hunger and poverty. They were condemned by  
The state of affairs unbiblical to  
Burn at the furnace of powerlessness.  
I. have seen their all in trollies  
We use in the supermarkets far from  
Where we buy food and clothing.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Whose And Where Are They From

I should have asked you your name  
I should have talked to you of the past  
For then you were mean, now you are smiling  
Looking for food at the edge of my yard  
I should have known you would come  
For you knew not how to live  
For the insults said it all  
That in you was just a shell.

I should have known you would pack  
Your children and throw them on my door  
Leave them there for me to nurse  
When I do not know where you got them  
Or even with whom you nestled them.  
For your breasts still stood firm  
Like thorns of the acacia tree.

I should have known you would starve  
For you worked and never saved  
Spending all the time laughing  
Around the yard at your home  
As if to grow and be old there  
When you would shrivel to nothing  
And walk towards the sunset empty handed.

I should have known you would not love  
For hatred was always in your words  
What you wanted you insulted  
For you were jealous of all  
Who tried to do something with themselves.

I should have known you would call me a tourist  
When you have packed away my boxes  
And jumped up to a chair not yours  
Pretending to be me without wings  
For you flew everywhere like a bird  
On borrowed wings a wild sahara.

I should have known you would hunt

Anything with my name rename  
Create yourself as me in wings glued  
To your back like a false doll the cob  
Wearing arms as sticks that stick out  
The girl in you playing the game.

Now you wonder feisty as powerful  
Telling everyone you are a hard worker  
When your children lie untended  
In a veld with backs uncovered  
Your mother being gone for good  
You go there to get money  
As if from a bank teller  
When you ran away from spending  
Even a cent when they were young.

Your children need their father  
You shut them up like thugs  
When they ask a genuine question  
Whose and where are we from  
You look at the with fear  
Which you turn into fire  
To frighten them forever  
Yet their questions will remain  
Whose and where are they from.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Why I Was Never Brain Dead At That Hour

This I thought was a misdiagnosis  
I should be sharing a brain alive  
story. The world never spoke of one.  
Yet it singled out my brain.

Why not tell the story of  
exclusion that leaves out  
the state I'm in now so  
the world can know, I was  
once brain alive. Lest you  
forget, I was once brain alive  
and forge into the future of  
diagnoses. I, in my sound mind,

AWh

I choose to speak for all. To tell  
the

Why

Sarah Mkhonza

# Why Pain Never Sings The Aria

Pain never sings the aria  
Yet it goes up and down  
Voiceless as always in  
One silent drone yet still  
Doing its work in making  
Us feel and know we are  
The humans on whose necks  
It hangs like a noose for  
When it is tied and the  
Stool on which we stand is  
Pushed down we go never to return  
To feel once again this long wait  
On the guillotine that life becomes  
When this endless silence that  
Bites deep has come to stay in  
A house it never built.

For when in pain we wish  
Our dog could pain for us  
For it is wiser with handling  
A feeling. One whine and it  
Is back doing what we said  
Should not be done.

Not to say I can overburden  
A dog, but I see how it connects  
So easily when in pain for I  
Feel it too and then relent from  
What I am doing for I know it  
Too like pain does not sing the  
Aria but barks with the same  
Voice that only changes in a  
Growl and also in a whine.

If pain could sing an aria,  
I would tell it to go down  
When I want it out and tell  
It to go up and fly through

The window when it is on  
My tooth for my wisdom is  
Written on my wisdom tooth  
Which knows how to kill me  
When it feels like for someone  
Told it it is wiser. My dog  
is cleverer for it has never  
Suffered from tooth ache.  
It just knew to be laid down  
With the same set, hence I  
Have never heard of a canine  
Dentist for I would run for my  
Life if such a one existed for  
Fear of what might happen in  
Case he pulls my tooth.

Change into anything and I would  
Be the friend of man for I see a  
World where food is just bought  
From the store in packets and poured  
Out with water at the side. No stew  
But if this is what a feast for princes  
Is I will buy myself a chef like the  
One my dog has. For I saw a prince  
And princess and kids fed by a chef  
Similar in size and clothes like me.  
So too was he middle class just as  
is My dogs chef. So never ask the  
Questions for pain is cleverer than  
you for it never sings an aria,  
But just goes on and on, the same  
Stanza, same tone, same piano, same  
Everything till sleep decides me and  
My dog must rest for we are sick of  
Being sick.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Why Roosters Sing Hallelujahs

I turned on my side at an early hour,  
And found that my breath was sour,  
Wishing for the early morning meal,  
Feeling empty and worried sick,  
By this crowing of the rooster.

He had a tail that spread out  
Backwards in all morning colors.  
His cook-a-doodle-doo was loud,  
My listening to him brings back,  
The memories of early morning sounds,  
Made by my empty stomach.

This act of waking sleeping dudes up,  
Does not sit well in the 'veins of my blood, '  
And make me want to wake up from my sleep,  
But makes me think of things to do.  
Like the doo in cook-a-doodle-doo  
All because I have to work before I eat,  
And the rooster does not do that,  
He just walks around and shouts loud,  
Singing his hallelujahs into the air,  
Then pecks his beak on the ground,  
And gets full from that.

Next time you see a rooster up a tree,  
Know that it may seem easy to look up,  
And call him down with a loud vote,  
And then crash under the tree,  
For his crowing will ring the bell,  
And get you out the door, never to return.

Birds like him are too loud,  
When it is time to work,  
For they watch the clock,  
And call the shots,  
For me and you.

The gizzard of a rooster,

Tells the story best,  
For he eats and grinds,  
With little stones and sand,  
For they are always free,  
And waiting to be pecked on.

Roosters shout hallelujahs loud,  
Like preachers on a pulpit,  
Always seeing the heavens up there.  
While me and you walk on tip toe,  
And char our fingers and toes,  
Like the rest of the brood he leads,  
That scrape the earth for a living,  
Following him as he dances,  
Wanting another cuddle,  
For that is what hens are for.

Roosters won the battle far away,  
In the lofty heavens up there,  
For they were hired for a job,  
They did not apply for,  
But were found to know it best,  
Hence never fired, but by death,  
For it fires even kings.  
By rendering them silent forever.

Don't join the pity party,  
For you can be a rooster,  
It takes climbing a pole,  
And announcing hallelujahs,  
In the early morning hours,  
For you will do no dirty work,  
And never watch the washing,  
As it gets clean in the wash.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Why You Were Not Invited To The Last Supper

If you know the rules, you will  
not gatecrash the last supper.  
Sit knowing you were not one of  
the twelve. You did not have what  
it takes.

Simple. Go home and stop the lament.  
Last suppers are for a few. Their duty  
is to call the many. Crowning a king  
is done by the chosen. They sing  
a song you do not know. They lift a heavy  
crown to do so.

None of this is known to you. Losing traditions is not done by kingdoms. Yours  
was a name not mentioned, in the phrase, 'thy kingdom come.'

Your 'thy kingdom' suffered a coup when  
the crown fell and broke into the beats  
that use your skin as its envelope. You sent them to a palace with no address  
only  
known to you and me. Therefore, being your  
only subject, I salute you only when you get on the dias.

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# Will We Make It To The Bluest Skies?

When I open my eyes and there you are,  
I know we are together for it is  
Your body that I see right here,  
In the space in front of me,  
And wonder what it is all about,  
That we have done to two bodies,  
That do things silently,  
And move on silent as two stones,  
That can rub against each other,  
And leave no visible scars,  
But deep gashes in the soul.

I look back at our words,  
I see lines written in stone,  
For we did things that opened us to each other,  
Both of us lining up words one by one,  
As two people on a journey.  
Yet now I see this was no way,  
To any place that we can get to,  
For our words fly into the air,  
And disappear like bees,  
That searched for honey and found none,  
And then moved on to another hive.

I thought we talked just yesterday,  
Yet we struggle to put together,  
Those decisions we crafted,  
Rubbing against our stony selves,  
And thought we were reaching into a deep,  
Where we could build the truth and secure it,  
My mind opening and yours locking in,  
I open my eyes and there you are,  
The lock is open and the words are gone.  
The promises flew out of our vault,  
Where all was fully laid out and ready to happen.

You said things would change,  
You said I would no longer look into the distance,

Wondering if you would walk into my view,  
When it is time for us to be together,  
For you would be always nearby,  
Touching my person and locking in,  
To the life we have made for each other,  
While our hands were looking,  
And scratching each other lightly.

Was it just words we spouted,  
Or your somersault that kicked us  
Out of our handshake of yesterday  
From which you now jump up in protest?  
Were you walking in a false stride  
For now you will not allow,  
What we said would hold us,  
In our tomorrow world like gum,  
Sticking to a shoe and closing up,  
The holes that walking far has made?

For now I see and hear the truth,  
Of you going back to your antics,  
For I am tired of thinking,  
That we were made for each other  
Ribbed together with a knitting,  
For now I see the truth so clear,  
That the knitting has holes,  
For that womb that carried you,  
Surely did not carry me.

Your kicks in that place were not mine,  
For I hear the difference today,  
Yes I see it and touch it,  
Right here in your ever fickle self,  
That rejects to fulfill what we make,  
And tell each other is a friendship,  
Which as shipmates we can sail,  
With oars that move back and forth,  
And create the needed rhythm,  
That can get us to that side,  
Of the riverbed where we slept,  
And looked at each other like love birds,

That have a long way to fly on windy days,  
With the air pushing us further  
Into the furthest of bluest skies.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Will You Pass Your Own Pencil Test

They used to test for kinkiness,  
In the skin nines of days gone bye.  
Now you do your own pencil test,  
And get yourself in and out, in this  
Maze that has us hungover from the  
lifederal of the money seeking that  
Rubs it's behind against us like  
prostitutes with their sensuousness.

You touch a button to declare the  
kinkiness of your brain and the  
pencil fails to go through.  
It declares you are kinky, yes,  
more kinky than your hair.

By the wisdom standards of heaven,  
you are duped to forever sit on a  
slot machine hoping for a jackpot.  
Your brain is now frying in this.

You hear the sound of money,  
this flutter of angels wings.  
It says you are next and you  
dance in this casino of madness.

You have seen a tomorrow, which  
glimmers. This mirage, this thing  
knocks on your rib cage, seeking  
to open your heart, says  
go and take the test. Yours is a  
kinkiness that cannot be combed out.

having borrowed

Sarah Mkhonza

## With A New Maori Haka

You who know the haka,  
The game has ended.  
The team has not won.  
It was surprised by adversity  
Coming at it in a flush  
That blinded the eyes,  
Like never seen before.

The fans have gone home.  
Their hopes shattered,  
Their eyes blinking in the shame,  
For the trophy did not come home,  
Once again like before.

The team is unbridled,  
The players walk heads bowed,  
Still breathless but alive,  
Their fists clenched hard,  
Ready to punch the air.

No shouts and steps of mirth,  
No dancing with faces alive,  
Whose talk it loud and calling  
For their souls are drenched,  
For to win is all they live for,  
For every chance was a victory brought home,  
To bring joy even to mama smiles.

No sport has no falls,  
No game has no fails,  
No fame has no end,  
The wounds heal quickly  
The songs return,  
To be sung once again,  
With a new vigor and hope,  
For one day we stand to rise,  
And win like before.

The captain looks tired,

Yes speaks of a future,  
Carrying hope on his shoulders,  
For they are broad and alive,  
No matter what fate brings,  
To the future unbridled,  
Loosened to gallop,  
And win the race again,  
And make losing history,  
For they beat up defeat  
By defeating it at its game,  
With a new, New Zealand haka,  
For there never was seen a fury,  
As that a Maori warrior,  
Whose stance is in the haka.

Sarah Mkhonza

# With A Zero Balance In The Bank Of Life

I walked up and down looking for  
The bank of life where all the  
Rare species are found and people  
Showed me buildings with neon  
Lights. I told them not those  
For they house money that belongs  
To the rich and poor who run the  
Risk of having accounts that  
Read zero balance for life is  
A big game changer that makes  
The sleepless at night..

I went down the street and asked  
An old woman the question she said  
She can swear by the wrinkles on  
Her face that the millions lie  
Inside the big brain that is carried  
By my beautiful head. She asked me  
Why I had not asked my hair the Question for their numbers are  
Sure sign they are closest to this  
Wealth for it lied near my hair  
Roots.

I walked away richer in my mind  
And went to the bankers of worldly  
Money and told them I had come to  
Bank my brain. They asked how much  
For they could not put a price to  
So rare a commodity that it had no spare for only one exists in the world. I  
walked away convinced  
The old woman was right and I have  
Never had a zero balance again

For those who live on the brink  
Of bankruptcy know it is not about  
That bank account for that figure  
Changes. It is about invisible  
Unchanging truths that say you

Were born with I the wealth you  
Need in your hands. Shake b  
Hands with the spirit of Plentiousness and you will  
Feel the magic go up both arms.  
Spread the news for that alone  
Erases the zero balance.

Sarah Mkhonza

# With Angels Walking In The Spaces Between Us

I thought we were being made in a jail,  
When every day we went to school,  
For the rules were tough and loaded on us,  
Like going in to deep ourselves in poison,  
That would kill the teaks on our skin,  
We lingered as teachers sprayed our brains.

Now I see that we were chosen by one gambler,  
Who took the best bet of his life on us,  
For rebellion was cemented in us on the wall,  
Of the belly that carried us into the world.

We twitched and turned in chairs daily,  
Looking out through windows searching,  
For a future written on four walls,  
That would blossom in us in time.

Now we see the future and touch it,  
And feel we should have known it then,  
For it was surely wired in us daily,  
As angels walked in between the spaces,  
Of our daily walk punctuated with commas,  
Of the bells that rang hour after hour.

Some of them invisible as they were,  
Now sit in our memory saying, 'Yes, so and so.'  
That is not the road to the future,  
As they looked and listened to each and every one,  
Of the answers we gave daily as we were being made.

Now I hear the angels for they had patience,  
Repeated the same message the broken record,  
While we sat, laughed and whispered aloud,  
How funny they looked thinking we were made of gold.

Now that their work walks and serves the earth,  
We pray daily for the thing that kept us alive,  
When the message on virtues was the bore with lived on,

For it never changed but did rub some of its oil,  
Into us which is why I share this story.

For who heard the 'holy, holy holy,  
Sung by the likes of me in a dorm,  
My legs on the wall while I ask,  
Who was the shortest little man,  
Or the man who came to Jesus at night.

The answers which rang were uttered,  
Mischief ridden yes they were,  
For in my language there was no word,  
That spelt Nicodemus, but Logodima,  
and Zaccheus but Zakewu's, as one kid,  
Would answer as laughter rang into the air.

Who heard of a lesson on the plagues,  
That had us view a land full of more frogs,  
Than the ones on our roads in summer,  
That stink after a car has hit them,  
And give flies a feast of years,

Yet she did speak those truths old,  
About darkness you can feel,  
Not the one in our brains at that time,  
But a biblical darkness we had to see,  
As she searched spreading her hands everywhere.

You would think we would become found,  
And finished out in the lost widow's mite,  
As they showed us how it was brought gone,  
And how happy heaven us,  
For such was mission school,  
With its stories biblical,  
For now I see the penny shines a face,  
On this page with a laugh.

Sarah Mkhonza

# With Bits Of Grass In Their Beaks

I've very seen birds prepared,  
ready to build a future. UP  
in the air they rose, with  
grass in their beaks.

Weaver birds they were, working  
on the overhanging branch, with  
water reflecting the hut  
round enough to warm young  
ones with the smile of a touch  
that brings life home.

I've very seen life break out of  
an egg cracked with a beak that  
once carried a piece of grass.

The sound of cries for food poured  
out of mouths with yellow mascara.  
Each young one receiving a ration  
stuffed in by an elder.

No cravings for choice was a word  
foreign. When served receive for  
they honor hard labor.

The first flight, this first day  
in the school above comes for survival  
is a word not preached but practiced.  
Rules as rules require all to share.

Wisdom is not questioned for it is wise.  
Here in the land of overhangs it beats  
the snake at its own game.

Weight is not controlled for it resides  
with a control button that is inbuilt.  
It is manufactured in the darkness called  
life.

Grandmother's are taken care of by no  
doctors, for such is the land where  
age is a cherished novelty.

To borrow a broom is to shame the air.  
It is a self cleaning world for feathers  
sheared never haunt their master like  
employees when pay is low.

Now I see why the citizens of this land  
are the real immigrants, for they built  
a country with next to nothing, yet they  
have to run from the sling with a stone  
from the devine.

The

Sarah Mkhonza

# With Bougainvillea Clippings In My Hand

I walk with two clippings in my hand  
One of yellow another of red bougainvillea  
These tell me my world is in balance  
For the thin twigs with thorns on them  
Tell me the world makes you what you are  
Neither red nor yellow but ready for these  
Sharp thorns to prick your sides daily  
And then look at you with rosy eyes,  
Like the flowers on these clippings.

They lie here ready for the dump  
Where they will wither and not remember  
That I once held them dear just before  
One of the greatest storms in my life.  
Where thorns came with hail and sent me  
Reeling to the dump like these twigs.

They say gorillas would eat these raw,  
And swallow everything beauty or none  
And then forget they have eaten them too early  
Before the twigs became fully grown  
Hence my worry that I have trimmed too much  
And not left some for a rainy day.

The gardener in me does not know  
When to cut off trimmings on the bud  
For it is this that carries life on  
If one is to trust these clippings I hold  
To remake the dump into a fresh piece of ground.

Never trust yourself when doing such a task  
It is only the experts who know how to clip  
That should walk to the dumpster with wheel barrows  
Full of what is pruned with the shears of life.

The rest of us are just following along  
Doing tasks we saw done by our parents,  
With shears as big as the ones in there,  
Where my father hung them on the garage wall,

There they rest till today because of size,  
For they were always too heavy for me to use  
Thus I walk with only two clippings in my hand,  
Till the end of time.

They say bougainvillea never dies,  
It resuscitates even the older ones,  
And breathes life at the dump  
Waking dumpsters and telling them  
It is time to dance with roses  
And crown the earth with beauty  
For such is the task of these  
Who grow with thorns that prick us daily.

Sarah Mkhonza

# With Nigger Balls In Our Mouths

When the N-word came to me,  
I was so little that  
it's sounds did not sit  
badly in my mind.

This man's car fatherly  
black it was. As fatherly  
bold his head showed out  
through his lowered  
window.

Balls black, licorice sweet,  
black like hail dyed black  
in yonder skies fell all over  
the ground. Jar in hand he  
rained the black niggles balls.

Scattering all over, lowering,  
scampering, like real chickens  
of heaven, we ate the black sweets.

With no dime, no nickel either,  
we filled our mouths. Hands black,  
teeth black we smiled at each other.

When later I learned to be black was  
nigger, we laughed for friends white  
and black, had eaten these fruits of  
what made us children.

What are they called again Eloise?  
She is telling me when my pockets  
are as full as is my mind of their  
sweetness. We laugh at the world,  
lost in the sweetness of our stomachs,  
the way the mother laughs, for in this  
is hidden the sweetness of the origin  
of humanity.

With our nigger balls in our hands every  
day is sweet, for licorice never tasted  
this sweet. So come to my lovely, sweet  
nigger ball world. As for this, call it what you will, i live in my factory of joy.

For who knows this licorice sweet better  
than me when I speak with a mouth that is full of these so called nigger balls, for  
when the licorice goes, they whiten while my teeth change slowly, for I have just  
been to the world of the sweet boogy girl.

We fear liars in this world, where boogy girls play with and eat plenty of nigger  
balls. Where Eloise asks me if we will let out black wind after these, i say yah!  
Why not for it is our world, this nigger ball world.

Ask the world what sweetened us, nobody  
can tell you. I want to swear it was acts  
so kind they fell on us like this black sweet hail from heaven. Bless a soul when  
you're eating blackness from God for it is  
sweeter than that of the world.

having borrowed

Sarah Mkhonza

# With Pliers, Saw, Tongs And A Hammer

It's not like I am going to straighten  
A molten piece of metal like this bangle  
I wear on my arm. It is truth that I am  
Going to knock sense into this poem  
With pliers, saw, tongs and a hammer.

It has given me a headache that is known  
For it refused first to get thought up.  
I had to use the pliers to get in on the page  
For I had to break a fence and twist wire  
This way and that till I could reach it.

As for the saw, I used it to level the  
Tree trunk so that I could reach the leaves  
Of the poem and cut it to size with the  
Jagged edge of my saw whose teeth sank  
In and even broke in the process.

The tongs came handy when I had thrown  
It into the fire to mold the molten mess  
And shape it for it was so hot my bare  
Hands could not have done the job.

Now I have hammered it together and  
As you see it has come out in the shape  
Of my own piece of art that reveals the  
Innermost parts of my being and also  
The thoughts of the jeweler in me.

Next time you read a poem don't  
Even begin to think it was easy to get  
It on paper for the medium is deceiving.  
It takes pliers, and a hammer and all  
To get to produce a masterpiece.

For poetry is harder than a rock,  
Softer than metal in the mold  
Harder than the pith of a tree  
And as solid as the iron hoofs

Of a horse shoe.

Sarah Mkhonza

# With The Same Inner Control

She let her words out one after another,  
with the same inner control. She let her  
mouth spit out the truth as if it did not  
hurt. She was not leaving anything to the  
children for they had abandoned her when  
she was ill.

She reached for the crotchet dress and  
gave it to Cindi, my mother said the  
youngest of you should keep it. It is  
the only heirloom this family has. It  
has been in the family for a hundred  
years. Then she let her breath get out  
of her, with the same inner control.  
She shut her eyes for the last time.

Sarah Mkhonza

# With Theinvisible Helicopter Above My Head

Seemed as if I was dreaming.  
A helicopter over my head.  
Ready to take off in the now.  
This fan over this bed mine  
took me to the bridal scene.  
Where the bride wore brown.  
I wore white and was a ring  
bearer. Found them at the  
photo shoot. I wished I wax  
dreaming. I was not late for  
in this dream, the photo shoot  
was first in the events of the day.  
The helicopter had not left me when they  
went dead. Still time to stage my own  
take off.

Sarah Mkhonza

# With These Humps Of Mine

With these these feet of mine  
I have walked to the ends of the  
Earth and heard a camel and the  
Rider take the oath feared by many.

With these humps of mine, said the beast  
I thee wed and vow to walk the earth  
With you, Mon Segnor, on my back,  
In between these two humps, drought  
Or no drought, with you riding all over me,  
Till death us do part.

I swear it was the camel again speaking the vows.  
With these hooves. of mine I will thee serve  
On desert sand and oasis green, I will thee  
Carry and lay down to chew the cud when  
You have drunk of my milk. With each sunset  
We will walk this desert only if you accept that  
I am more honest than pretty, and as useful.  
You may put the ring on my finger and you  
May kiss the bride. And off they went  
Newlyweds with a just married trailing  
On desert sand.

Mon Segnor, I am tired, what about the love?  
Did you hear anyone talk about love? I am a  
Bedouin. We ride as we do. Mon Segnor I am  
Hungry. You swore not about hunger but about  
Carrying and not caring, do you see food in this  
Desert? Chew the cud, beast. Remember  
I ride you because I inherited you from my father.  
The camel sat down exhausted and the journey  
Had to wait for the calvary out in the horizon.  
The rider lay on his back waiting wondering  
What kind of beasts camels were. They had  
Less milk than goats, more meat only when dead.  
But who had the guts to kill a camel for such was  
Unheard of? Next time around, a goat for sure but  
Who will carry the load between two humps me

Included? A Bedouin must keep his camel, I swear  
For this is the way of our people.

Sarah Mkhonza

## With Uncontrollable Sneezes And Snuffles

Even when we talk till we foam in the mouth,  
The world goes on to lay down even more,  
In places where war goes on like a wheel,  
That has its own unwarranted will,  
We have to look for more things to say,  
That will quell the struggles that go on,  
Where we are helpless with this power,  
Of the sneeze that is imminent,  
For we will let it out and live again.

You and these lines written in your hand,  
Are heading for the place where we will land,  
For we have chosen to walk the path of angels,  
Who will meet us when they hear us sneeze,  
For ours will be the loudest sneeze,  
For we smoked ground tobacco of the mind,  
And sniffed it into our depths.

When you look at your hands always remember,  
In them is written this story of life,  
That is waiting for you to tell the earth,  
For you raised the hands to smell fragrances,  
Rubbed into them by the times from which we came,  
Which carried us unknowingly to this now,  
Where one minute we laugh and another cry,  
For these smells of what our ears hear here.  
Forces us to keep up these loud snuffles,  
We cannot hold down for one day longer,  
For we cannot stop their causes.

We can cry for the losses we see daily,  
Of these dear lives we with were here  
That have been made to pass to tomorrow,  
And wish we were not feeling this friction  
That goes on in life all of our days here,  
Where we rub the hands in our frustration,  
Holding no weapons we wish were not firing,  
But look at the air which blows into our eyes,  
This endless smell of friction in the air.

This lone walk we choose to go on,  
Is one where we can meet the ruler,  
And ask how to measure the story of misery  
That he can quell by uttering this sneeze,  
For sneezing together can end this agenda  
Where the guns send out words with a gong,  
Changing fragrances into bloody smells  
For we cannot stand it anymore,  
Even with all the salutes of soldiers,  
Whose hands honor the fighting not the smells  
Of the flowers whose fragrances filled the air,  
Just after the rains that grew in our meadows,  
Where buildings now lie ripped into rubble,  
That will be thrown into lasting heaps,  
That will tell this story of war.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Woo! Wow! There Goes A Pedigree

This bloodline that flows in you, so you,  
Came from rare combinations pure.  
This personal strain you carry daily,  
Whose lineage long has brought you  
Here to read about yourself and what  
You stand for is the whisper of someone  
In your family tree. They are telling you  
That you come from a special place where  
Descent and descend do not mean one thing.  
You ascended into this space you call a world  
In a time of extraction from a bloodline rare,  
So rare that it has no double, for nobody  
Who stands on two legs has your gifts.

Your extraction was like rare coffee from  
Saint Helena, so rare that it is not available  
Even on the island where it is grown. Yours  
Is a long story, filled with obstacles and trials,  
For a rare thing is hard to grow, ask the  
Coffee growers of the most expensive  
Coffee in the world. Your background  
Has no back to look back at, for you  
Face forward always and look at the  
End of this life of yours and say, what  
A life! What a love! What a Pedigree!  
You are so special, words fail even  
Poets who try to tell you to get up and  
Keep running, for with your eyes on  
The finish line, people will know and  
See the end of the last strides of the  
Special, done deal you came here to  
Be. It is still time to run against the wind,  
Pure breed, real and rare for in you  
Is a person special.

If you doubt what I say, try to answer this  
One question: how many special people  
Are in your lineage from way back who  
Passed on the flow of blood that runs in

You now? If you lose count when answering  
This question, I win so take the truth  
And use it for what it does. They say  
It came to set us free, so that we can use  
The freedom to breathe and do the best  
unhindered by the traps that lay in our way.  
Get rid of the traps, by telling them one  
phrase, 'I am a Pedigree, I breath Pedigree  
Walk and talk Pedigree. I will get to the finish  
Line Pedigree. Unleash your good strain,  
It lies dormant for you had not heard these  
Words, let alone this time when you can  
say them to yourself daily.

Sarah Mkhonza

## Words Just Sit On My Lips

When I looked at her coming up to the place,  
My words would just sit on my lips,  
For wanting to speak them was so much,  
I pursed my lips harder as I looked,  
Legs approaching in steps taken,  
What was I going to say,  
Words sitting on my lips,  
Not jumping up and down,  
To do the thing of speaking,  
That they were meant for.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Words Of Praise From Another World

These handlebars of a bicycle  
That goes down the road on its own,  
The cyclist with hands in the air.  
You who has a beehive hairdo  
So round it is that of a Zulu woman,  
Whose red lips are like the beak  
Of the smallest bird on the tree,  
That sucked nectar out of every flower,  
And spread it as far as the eye can see,  
Leaving pollen powdering the air.

This daughter of ours that bathes in milk,  
Whose ears shine in the sun,  
That appears and draws out laughter,  
Even out of the saddest person.

She who rules with the tail of a horse,  
Swatting fungus out of the air,  
Making life more of what it is,  
This spirit of the people of the land.

The tallest shrub that graces the land,  
This orchid so yellow it raises things,  
Up skyward when they are lying down,  
This sinless, sinful member of ours,  
That the clan of those who came from afar,  
Gave us.

This handle of the walking stick  
Cut out from herbal trees that are bitter sweet,  
That came from across the blue oceans long ago,  
And rubbed into us its bitterness  
When we did not know that in bitterness,  
Lies the power of the herbs that heal the land.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Working The Silence Of The Earth Lost.

When I sit and work the silence,  
It opens up avdoor of the ruins,  
And takes me into every corner,  
In a world once full of light,  
And now left with the lease,  
From yesterday's brew so bitter,  
It has left us all drunk.

We drank the liquor of the mind,  
We got near drunk and talked to each other,  
In languages only the group knew,  
We continued to imbibe our silence,  
Till it poured out of our ears,  
Without pinching the flesh,  
To ask if it could still take anymore,

Sponge drunk we stagger on,  
Wondering if the tunnel of silence,  
Will lead to a brighter place,  
For we have to get somewhere,  
With these shuffles of feet tied,  
With the ropes of money lost,  
That got tangled into our legs,  
Tying even the toes.

This silence that pays the piper,  
For the noise he makes in space,  
These itunes from heaven like drops,  
Keep dripping into it constantly,  
Making us wonder why so slowly,  
This dropping of dulcet sounds,  
So silently this money peeps in,  
When the notes are so green and so blue,  
As the sky looks at itself in wonder.

Questing come into this darkness,  
Licking into it like pure milk,  
Wanting to know why so silent,  
When the fury of work is so loud.

Whoever said the sky would never rain money,  
Whoever said we lived in a silence of holes,  
Like termites working the ant heap,  
That ever hardens yet it has holes,  
This porous rock that sees deep into us.  
Here where we live and work the silence,  
Walking on tip toe afraid to wake up angels,  
Wanting answers that will ring our names,  
And make us look like the princes of the earth,  
When we go to the ATMS of this blessed world,  
Where everything is a figment that melts into nothing,  
And leave behind silence, time and money,  
For they never grow old like the body of humans,  
Who drain their blood into vessels with no veins,  
No heart pumping out anything for them to live on.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Write My Story On The Trees

Write my story on the trees,  
Dig it out from down there,  
Where it lies with me in the grave,  
Spread the red ochre on the trees,  
Power them till they turn red,  
And Write on every leaf,  
I want to rustle in the wind  
My welts like veins on a leaf  
Written on all the mountains,  
For I no longer live contained,  
Plant me on every meadow,  
Like grass I want to to sway,  
Cast me on the rivers,  
My leaves floating on the river,  
Going into all corners on the bank,  
Like logs that float undirected,  
After these stormy floods we saw,  
For they cluster on the banks,  
Like confused thoughts in a brawl,  
That ends these disturbed sad stories.

Knowing the teller of the story,  
Is the daily killer of their story,  
Wash my tears off me with the floods,  
For I died too young to do it myself,  
But went and left the very world,  
That buries my story down here,  
In this silence away from all,  
That will tell my story to the wind,  
When they see storied trees singing,  
About what once grew on the branch,  
That we call our own piece of earth,  
That beat me and left me scarred,  
Then left me bleeding on the ground,  
Till to death off I went silent,  
Only to be revived in the words of the dead.  
Who are speaking in the trees.  
Make up what went down a story,  
That will be told by all daily

For you made my face and head on the crown,  
Of the tallest trees and shortest ones,  
Which will tell of my muffled cries  
With the dignity that nature gives our life,  
And leave an unmoving silence to be revived  
By the few who write like you.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Written On Tablets Of Gold Hidden In My Heart

This poem unfolds on a church bench,  
Where the tablets of gold lay. Open  
On my side and when I look I see only,  
A word God has sworn is about me also,  
For I had been let loose to try my hand  
On opening the book to the chapter where  
Love is written about on tablets of gold.

I open the pages of my heart and let in  
The warmest rays of gold cast a rich halo  
Making mine a tiara richer than that of royals  
For it is written in hidden mine walls where only  
The bravest of souls care to dig.

My joy rings out larger than the jealousy of lasses  
Who also want this love sworn to be mine in front of  
The servants of the gods who brought the light that  
Opened my doors and left them ajar on the day man reached  
The planet where we were to live all by ourselves.

How I long for the hand that dug into mine and  
left me touching this word in this chapter on love.  
Believing in the sun has had me sweating while I  
Cry inside for the dear one to write the story of  
Love for me the golden tablets in his heart.

Sarah Mkhonza

# You Are Not The Target But The Nugget

You are not the target but the nugget  
for targets of what is thrown around that is bad  
don't look like you.

Why do you look at it and not let it fly over  
your head? It is not you for you speak what  
is needed. Those who do not love and hear  
you need not satisfy themselves as having  
done it to you, for when you flinch and not  
become what you came to be, you give them  
fuel.

Drainers are holding the hose and using it  
to fuel hate and drain the good in you and  
fill you with hate. Their words make you see  
other things besides the love that is in plenty,  
and ready for you to take it and build a future  
for all. Cast out the bad and use the sift called  
the mind to bundle up a thought vault for you  
that nobody opens but you and let spill out  
of you the respect you store there which cannot  
be tainted for it is tightly woven. It just  
bubbles and sings for anyone who cares  
to look. Chew the endless gum of love and  
keep its flavor floating around you like the  
perfume you bought at the store that had  
everyone asking, what that is. You are  
never a target of what it going round but  
a beautiful nugget that if touched changes  
hearts into people who are fired to do the  
impossible.

Sarah Mkhonza

# You Deserve Better

Like a pebble that lies by the wayside,  
Hidden in the deep peering with one eye,  
Everyone passes, thinking you are sand,  
For looks deceive even the wisest.  
Hidden in you is the essence of being,  
Hidden above the earth where we live,  
Where the blind never see even at noonday.

You embody nuggets that are you, figments of truth,  
Never told of for they are rare,  
For in you is the dazzle that frazzles,  
Even the wisest from the rear.

Watch them coming one by one  
Those who will dare to drink of you,  
This cooling drink and let it run,  
Down thirsty throats that sing your name,  
With rough voices from the future  
And leave you down and without song.

Those who will yell obscenities within,  
Earshot of the grace you are  
And live you fallen and then stand inside,  
Were not meant, to go to the end,  
Hand in hand down the road with you,  
For the future calls for kings only.

They are wealth these kings for you,  
They are dew that sparkles on grass,  
Out on the lawns on which you walked,  
Eyes closed by the beauty of green.

Look harder for they have one eye,  
Cast on you, not at all sure,  
If they are really seeing right,  
This princess that threatens them,  
With a crown made of truth.  
For love you are and power too.



# Your Mushrooms On An Anthheap

So rare so sure  
These huge buttons  
Like saucers and plates  
Abandoned by the God  
Who brought the rain  
That made them pop up  
On this ant heap.

My friend the tortoise  
Has seen them too and  
Raced to eat this feast  
That has been dished out  
To any who will get there  
First. I appear and he hides  
His head and watches me as  
I make my pick as if to say  
Leave some for me for they  
Only grow once these gifts  
From God. Pick them and  
Know they will not be  
Here when you return.  
Cattle herders are hungry  
Boys who take everything  
Home that has a smell fresh.

Sarah Mkhonza

# Zebra Stripes Never Cross

Cross the stripes of a zebra  
You get a skin with shapes  
Geometrical and the eyes we  
Fear may be cross eyed and  
As for the legs they may end  
Up crossed on the couches of  
The earth.

The question comes why we would  
Want to change so beautiful a  
Coat when it serves us and them  
Well being all stripe, one  
Stripe here and another alongside  
It. For zebras are never cross for  
Their stripes help them to tell  
Their moms, dads, uncles aunts  
And cousins when the sun shines  
That even though far away the striped  
Breed is here and sound and waiting.

They wear the stripes long and  
lined for it is better to live  
The way they came from the land  
Unknown. Life continues in the  
Plains and none complain of the  
Gift they have so never will you  
See a zebra wear a dress white  
and dress red of crossing lines  
For one dress does it  
And one hue fits all.

The time will come when we will  
Learn that to survive and know  
Our whereabouts we do not need  
The new covers even for our cars  
But messages written in our hearts  
That tell us where one is for  
If species wild Can do it  
So can we.

Sarah Mkhonza