

An illustration of a woman in traditional Xhosa attire, including a red headwrap, a red dress with black and white stripes, and multiple beaded necklaces and bracelets. She is holding a bow and arrow, looking upwards against a blue sky with white clouds. The illustration is signed 'H.S.' at the bottom left.

UMALUSI (THE SHEPHERD)

EDWIN T SMITH
'KWEDINI SIMITI'

**A COLLECTION OF
XHOSA POEMS**

*With artwork by
Mbali-Enhle Khaya Smith*

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INTRODUCTION

In Xhosa, a shepherd is *Umalusi*. As imagined in this poetry collection, shepherds mind their charges. Furthermore, communication connects people. Speech and writing are material expressions of experiences, thoughts, dreams, fears, aspirations, and wonders. With the diversity of languages in South Africa, access to people's experiences and thoughts is often limited and constrained through one's command of language, spoken and written. As a result, there can be hurdles to connecting with one another. Language can divide, separate, and alienate us from one another. Consequently, a shepherd's responsibilities in this context are multifold.

The poems collected in *Umalusi* were conceived and written in Xhosa because my mother, the central subject of the collection, is a Xhosa woman and spoke Xhosa to me throughout my life with her. This is how I learned the language without formal instruction in school. Through writing the poems in Xhosa, I gift the original giver her treasures in return. In essence, *Umalusi* is an amalgamation of my formal learning to read and write Afrikaans and English in school and my mother's tuition by immersing me in the culture and traditions of her people.

Although I was initially unaware of it, the annual Mother's Day celebration is the well from which this collection springs. It is made more profound as Mother's Day in 2020 was also the tenth anniversary of my mother's passing. As a dedication to her, *Umalusi* is my celebration in honour of her life and meaning to me. *MaNdlouu*, as my mother was known because of her clan name, passed away on Mother's Day on 9 May 2010.

One of the threads holding the collection together is the pervasive experience of love, loss, grief, and the eventual getting on with life. Certain memories and moments captured in the poems in this collection mark and articulate various aspects of this journey. It is an unfortunate truth that many people can relate to these seminal life-shaping experiences

of loss in some way or another. Life offers these as part of the process of becoming, of growing up, of living, and of making meaning of it all.

Among other things, through these experiences we gain great insights into and about ourselves and our world. We learn about our vulnerabilities, our inter-connectedness and dependence on each other; we learn the meaning of the relationships we have with family, friends, community, and society at large; we learn to hurt, to break down, to cry, to trust, to hold on to each other, to support one another, to encourage and challenge each other and in so doing enable life for us all.

We also learn that the first act of love, seeing that love is a gift, is to expect nothing in return. Therefore, love is given unconditionally, without prescription or expectation. It does not require the recipient to need, want, or oftentimes even appreciate it. It is a gift for those fortunate enough to receive it. All that remains is for them to make the best of it by infusing it with meaning in their lives.

Though *Umalusi* was intended to be a collection of poetry published in Xhosa only, the translation of the collection into English is necessitated by the reality of the diversity of my community. It is also demanded by the need to share this gift with as many people as possible, which is how *MaNdlovu* would have preferred it. She was a giver to a fault.

Then there is the reality that my only surviving child is American by birth, having been born in Philadelphia while I was still in exile. With the best of intentions and efforts, my daughter cannot read Xhosa. But she needs to understand and appreciate this dedication because it concerns her as well. Ultimately, it is about her grandmother, whom she knew and loved.

Furthermore, I also live in a community of remarkable people who share my interests, aspirations and work. They often also welcome the opportunity to experience and share my poetic endeavours. Then there is the general public for whom humanity and our experience are key and central concerns. That they do not read or understand Xhosa cannot be allowed to prevent them from communing with their fellow sufferers just because of the limitations and proliferation of our languages.

While *Umalusi* was conceived and intended as a Xhosa collection without an English translation, this exercise enables the translation of the poems into English for sharing with a broader, non-Xhosa reading community without, as far as possible, compromising the original intention. Aware that much can be lost in translation, I translated the poems true to their original intent within the limits of language and with the simple wish to multiply the eyes and ears my words can reach and nourish.

South Africa's African languages, though enjoying official status in the post-apartheid context, continue to languish in our new democratic dispensation. This is a complex problem with no ready-made and easy solutions.¹ With the over-arching and critical focus on the nation-building project in post-apartheid South Africa, ethnic prerogatives often take a backseat in the interest of the greater good.

Much of this is the legacy of our inheritance. However, what we will bequeath to posterity will fundamentally depend on what we do with the gifts with which we have been endowed. Like love, we must not expect anything in return but to give our best with the hope that whosoever receives our gifts, will treasure, nurture, and multiply them within their means and as a reflection of their appreciation.

Other than telling me family stories and some folktales, I do not remember my mother ever reading me a poem or reciting any traditional Xhosa poetry to me. She never referenced S.E.K. Mqhayi² and the other great Xhosa writers. She did, however, take me as a child to tend the graves of the Siyos and Rubusanas³ in our neighbourhood cemetery in

1 Kaschula, R.H. 2008. The oppression of isiXhosa literature and the irony of transformation. *English in Africa*, 35(1).

2 According to Jeff Opland, 'S.E.K. Mqhayi [is] the greatest figure in the history of Xhosa literature: Opland, J. 2007. The first novel in Xhosa. *Research in African Literature*, 38(4): 87.

3 Ngqongqo, S.J. 2008. Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana. In: *African Intellectuals in the 19th and early 20th century South Africa*, edited by M. Ndletyana. HSRC Press, Cape Town, pp. 45-54.

Duncan Village. I would later, on my own, learn about these giants from my community.

However, I clearly remember the pride that shone through her eyes when she introduced herself with her clan name. The music of her name, the tonality of her declarations, and the cadence of her pronouncements all provided the music I lived for during those times. That I was able to recite her clan name during her final church service as we laid her to rest, marked, for me, an acknowledgement of her as my source of being—the umbilical cord that connects me to her lineage and heritage.

In its own peculiar way, from its conception to its ultimate production, this collection further marks the relationship I have with my mother beyond her life among the living. Through poetry, the bonds of life live steady and strong. Her memory, her laughter, her tenderness, and her care all live in my heart each day she no longer walks beside me.

Through writing about her, I remember and celebrate her life and the gift she was to me. While I do not here remember any harm or hurt she ever caused me, as my mother, she was not short on setting me straight. What I remember now, because I chose to and can, are all the things I cherish and think are wonderful about her. But in truth, she was wonderful and remarkable simply because she was my mother.

Every act of creation has a story and so too does the making of *Umalusi*. At the commencement of the Covid-19 lockdown, I suffered an inexplicable urge to write poetry in Xhosa. Not having any real idea or reason as to why at the time, I composed a poem, which I read to Desirée,⁴ my wife. The poem was inspired by a young Xhosa woman at a breakfast we had attended. The young lady was decorated with the

4 Apart from being my wife, Dr Desirée Tesner-Smith, holds an Honours degree in Journalism, a Master's degree in Creative Writing, another Master's and Doctoral degree in Urban and Regional Planning. For all her academic achievements, she inadvertently also earned herself the dubious privilege and burden of being my first reader, audience, and writing enthusiast.

traditional Xhosa *umchokozo*.⁵ The image triggered something familiar and reminiscent of *MaNdlovu* and her people.

Having written the poem, I then asked Desirée how many poems one needed for a poetry collection. We checked and discovered that one needed at least 30 poems to produce a respectable collection. I decided right there that I would write enough poems to produce a collection of Xhosa poems, which was a first for me. I wrote 32 poems in two weeks. This was in the middle of April when Desirée suffered me reading aloud to her every poem I composed, often as soon as it was written.

Following her agreeable nod, I took my collection to my friend, Kanyo Gqulu, who is a first language Xhosa speaker and a great authority, in my view at least, of Xhosa and Xhosa writing, albeit he greatly favours classical Xhosa writing like that of Mqhayi and his ilk. After weeks of prodding, my Xhosa fundi eventually confessed that he preferred my English poems to the Xhosa ones I had written and shared with him. He, bless him, tried to console me by saying that Xhosa poetry is very difficult. It is full of abstractions and obscure idiomatic phraseology, *et cetera, et cetera*. I, however, knew exactly what he meant.

What I intended by writing in Xhosa was not to mimic or emulate the Xhosa writers of old. I love and adore Mqhayi but never in my wildest dreams did I imagine myself ever equaling his command of and skill with Xhosa. For reasons not yet clear to me, I sensed the need for “modern Xhosa” accessible to the contemporary reader I have spent my entire life around. My general feeling was that even those first-language Xhosa speakers from rural upbringings and backgrounds, who somehow found their way to the urban centres in our country, spoke in a new Xhosa idiom I have not really seen clearly captured and reflected in modern Xhosa writing. Though I do not claim to be an expert in modern Xhosa writing, I have a sense of the language from my exposure

5 Tough generally translated as a dot, *umchokozo* is the make-up or facial decoration Xhosa women, and sometimes men as well, wear of beautiful and elegant white dot designs they paint on their faces, usually with calamine lotion or a similar cream.

to the culture and traditions of my mother and her people.

Nonetheless, what I sought was precisely the opposite of what my dear friend thought was a weakness in my Xhosa writing. In a spectacular paradox, he confirmed my intentions and spurred me on with the enthusiasm that I had achieved what it turns out I had set out to do. I then took a sample of the poems and shared them with a master's student in plant sciences in my residence who I knew was from the Eastern Cape and was a first-language Xhosa speaker. I explained to her my exercise and asked that she read my work to let me know if it made sense and whether she thought it appealing to her generation of young Xhosa speakers. After a week with my work, she had managed to read a few poems and pronounced her verdict: she had two or so poems that she really "loved".

On Friday, 8 May, I "googled", literally as I got into bed, modern Xhosa writing and got a few hits. Upon scanning the listings, I jumped out of bed with the simple intention of only downloading the list for future reading. In accessing the listings I found on Google, I read Jeff Opland's article on Xhosa poetry published in 1975⁶, which led to a 1991 article by P.T. Mtuze.⁷ In addition, I also discovered online news reports about modern Xhosa poets in the Eastern Cape coming out of the Rhodes University MA in Creative Writing programme. This was a 2015 report on four Eastern Cape poets, who read their work at the National English Literary Museum (NELM) at Rhodes.

Among other things, the report stated that modern written poetry in Xhosa had for a long time been constrained by the depleted language and structures of traditional forms, with content that extols Xhosa culture. It furthermore stated that, however, in recent years, this started to change, with the emergence of new poets who have widened the scope of Xhosa

6 Opland, J. 1975. Imbongi Nezibongo: The Xhosa Tribal Poet and the Contemporary Poetic Tradition. *Modern Language Association*, 90(2): 185-208.

7 Mtuze, P.J. 1991. The mute voice of the modern Xhosa poet. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 11(1): 14-20.

literature which includes, among other things, the use of urban Xhosa, the lyrics and rhythms of maskandi and jazz, and the influence of poetry from other languages.⁸

Another report of 17 November 2015 about Mangaliso Buzani, one of the poets mentioned in the previous article who had won the national poetry award for his book written in Xhosa, was titled, *Xhosa poet challenges rigidity of language in SALA win*.⁹ I was hooked and only emerged from my office the next morning with a collection of poetry now thematically ordered into a discernable and structured collection with a suitable title, “*Umalusi*”, to boot. Through reading and reworking my writing, my collection morphed into a poetry collection with intent, form, and meaning. Through my overnight labours, I discerned an idea, theme, and message in my collection.

By this time, it was the early hours of 9 May and Mother’s Day was on Sunday, 10 May in 2020. For me, Mother’s Day had taken on a very different hue after my mother passed away in my arms while we were on our way from Cape Town to Pretoria following her discharge from Groote Schuur hospital in Cape Town. On our way, at the BP petrol station in Touwsriver, she died in my car due to a heart attack from an embolism. My mother passed away on Mother’s Day, 9 May 2010, and this was the 10th anniversary of her passing. Suddenly the poems I had written coalesced, thematically, into a memorial for one of my greatest losses ten years earlier.

What further lodged the experience in my mind was the peculiar fact that my mother was formally declared deceased at the hospital in Laingsburg 80 kilometres from Touwsriver. While the doctor on duty refused to release her body for me to return her home because he was

8 Azlan. *A celebration of new isiXhosa poetry at the Eastern Star on Friday*. <https://www.grocotts.co.za/2015/06/04/a-celebration-of-new-isixhosa-poetry-at-the-eastern-star-on-friday/>

9 Anon. *Xhosa poet challenges rigidity of language in SALA win*. <http://www.thejournalist.org.za/art/xhosa-poet-challenges-rigidity-of-language-in-sala-win>

convinced I was traumatised, I “gently” changed his mind by letting him know, in no uncertain terms, that if he wanted to traumatise me, he should force me to leave my mother in the middle of nowhere by preventing me from taking her remains home with me. After consulting with the local coroner who was also at the hospital to collect my mother’s remains, the good doctor conceded it wise to let me take my mother home with me.

As I embarked on that arduous journey to return my mother home on our last trip together on Mother’s Day, I instinctively reached out to her people, her relatives I had known in life who had also passed on to join her ancestors. Among others, I called on her father, Kosele, her mother, Nobantu, and her brother, Mz’uvukile, by name. With eyes blinded by an endless flood of tears blurring my view of the road in front of me, I recited her clan name out loud, beseeching her ancestors’ guidance to help me find my way home with their child who had, unceremoniously, abandoned me along the road in the middle of nowhere.

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I wrote these poems in Xhosa, which is my mother’s language. Among her people, my mother was often referred to by her clan name, ‘MaNdlovu’. *Ndlovu* is an elephant in Xhosa. Among many of the qualities, traits, and features referenced in my mother’s clan name is the notion that they, as elephants, graze near their home for want of a shepherd. Ostensibly, and without any forewarning, I was the shepherd my mother needed to get back home to her people, hence the title of the collection.

Because I wanted *Umalusi* to be a Xhosa collection of poetry, I did not want to translate the poems into English, certainly not in the same book. I then became preoccupied with how I could share this body of work with an audience wider than only the Xhosa speakers I knew. Desirée and I explored different approaches. She also felt “left out” of this writing experience because even though she converses in Zulu to a certain extent, Xhosa presented a whole different challenge for her.

We then agreed that the idea of writing about my collection, where I could contextualise the poems, would be the best and most acceptable

way of doing this without marring the actual collection with English between the covers of the same book. Desirée has been a constant and consistent companion in my writing life, particularly over the last 15 years or so. She also translated my first published collection of poetry, *Immortal*, a poetic memento for my late son, into Afrikaans, which we published as a bilingual collection in 2016.¹⁰

The need for an English translation was further underscored when I shared the collection with my daughter, who does not read Xhosa. She asked that I translate the poem I dedicated to her in the collection. I included a poem for her in *Umalusi* because her name, Mbali-Enhle Khaya Smith, means “a beautiful story of home” in Xhosa and “a beautiful flower of home” in Zulu, her mother’s language. Also, my mother had travelled to the United States when I was still in exile to be present at my daughter’s delivery at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), which created a rather special bond between my daughter and the memory of my mother in my life.

Finally, my Professor of Historiography, Dr Ian Macqueen, wittingly or unwittingly, infected me with the notion and need to avail South African writing, and in this case history, to a larger audience through translating these texts from the black indigenous languages into English. He raised this point when we were considering an academic article about debates on the story of the cattle killings in the Eastern Cape associated with *Nongqawuse*¹¹ of which there was a lot of work done and published in Xhosa newspapers, which, according to him, was a seriously under-

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10 Smith, E.T. 2016. *Immortal: A poetic memento for Vuyisile Miles Smith*. Preflight Books.

11 According to Jeff Pieres, ‘[t]he story of Nongqawuse, the young girl whose prophecy of the regeneration of the living and the resurrection of the dead caused 100,000 Xhosa to kill their cattle, destroy their crops and slowly starve to death, is one of the most extraordinary in human history. So extraordinary that it defied historical explanation for over 130 years.’ Pieres, J. 1989. *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7*. Ravan Press.

used and under-examined archive due to it being written in the Xhosa language. While I learned a lot from my professor about global, African, and South African historiography, I also clearly heard his indictment!

I enjoy and treasure South African writers and writing. Among some of my favourite South African writers are Bloke Modisane and Bessie Head and their books, *Blame me on History*¹² and *The Collector of Treasures and other Botswana village tales*,¹³ respectively. I often reflect on life and our experiences through these ideas. While I can imagine that I can “blame [myself] on history” and be “the collector of treasures”, my mother moulded me into her shepherd so that she could be certain she would always come back home, regardless of how far she strayed. *Umalusi* is, in essence, a story of my shepherding her home.

What follows here then is my attempt to enable access to *Umalusi*, which celebrates the Xhosa maiden who gave me life, for my non-Xhosa speaking people. I have also included here the “Preface” and a note “About the Author”, which are part of the Xhosa version to help contextualise the poems in the collection. With this gesture, I wish *MaNdllovu* and all the mothers in our lives a happy Mother’s Day, every day.

All that remains now is to echo James Welsh from Sinamatella Productions¹⁴ when he so eloquently invites us to:

12 Modisane, B. 1986. *Blame me on History*. Simon and Schuster.

13 Head, B. 1992. *The collector of treasures and other Botswana village tales*. Heinemann.

14 Sinamatella Productions is an African-focused visual storytelling company. See <https://sinamatella.com/>

Iza uhambe nam

Amathambo adiniweyo, amaphuph' alambile
Mehlo arhawuzelayo, ndiwa ndigaqe ngamadolo

Amafu awacaci, ulundi alubonakali
Manzi ahambayo, kuneth' imibuzo

Kuthi nomoya udanise, uguquguquke
Kusus' uk'phuma kwelanga
Kuphel' uncumo kutsho kuqal' ibali

Usizi luphele, uphononongo luqhubeke
Aba bantu, ezi ndawo
Ukudelela, ubuhle babo
Intshiseko yam, sis'phakathi sabo

Abona nton' amehlo?
Lunyathela phi unyawo?

Kwixesha besikunye, iingcinga zibunyamalala
Ukutya kwenziwe, amazwi amatsha ayavakala

Amava ayahlangana, into engapheliyo
Amathambo adiniweyo, Amaphuph' alambile
Iza uhambe nam

Come walk with me

Tired bones, hungry dreams
Sandpaper eyes, dropped to my knees

Clouds of uncertainty, obscure horizons
Treading water, raining questions

Then the wind dances and turns,
and clears the dawn
A smile escapes and the story is born

Pity dries out and the exploring begins:
These people, these places
My assumptions, their graces
My edge, their centre

What has the eye seen?
Where has the foot stepped?

Time shared, memories blurred
Meals made, new voices heard

Experience folds into self, unending
Tired bones, hungry dreams
Come walk with me

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Intshayelelo

Ndiliyilo ngendalo, yiyo le nto indenze ndakhetha ukubhala imibongo yam ngesiXhosa. Andiyiyo imbongi, nasemaphupheni. Ndzalwa lilawu elingenasiko. Ndincedwa apha yintombi yakwaPoswa, uNomzamo, uMaNdlovu, owatshata notata. Ngabazali bam ke abo. Ndingunyana wabo wesibini kubantwana abathandathu. Abantu bakulomama bamamkela utata bamthiya igama elinguMntuke, ngenxa yovelwano. IsiXhosa sam ndisincance ebeleni lale ntombi yamaNdlovu. Esikolweni ndafundiswa ukubhala isiNgesi nesiBhulu kuphela. Ndisebenzisa olo lwazi ke ekubhaleni esi siNtu ndisibhala apha ngoku.

Ndoyame, ndixhomekeke kugxa wam nakwabanye abathe bathatheka banovelwano ngeenzame zam. Ndithetha ngomtakweth' uKanyo Gqulu (uLimakwe, uShweme, uZanemvula) noKhololwethu Cetyiwe (uMamgebe, uMduduma, uHolomisa), inzwakazi yaseWestbourne, eKomani, noNozuko Precious Stemela waseBhayi. Ngaphandle kwabo, le mizamo yam ibiza kuba ngamanyala nokuteketa kosana.

Ngalo mqulu, andinqweneli ukuthelokisa iinzame zam nomgangatho ababhala ngawo ababhali besiXhosa neembongi. Ndabuvinjwa ubuchule bokudala izinto ezintle ngamagama olwimi lukaMama. Apha ndiqhutywa yintliziyo nomnqweno wokubhiyoza ndinika imbeko kumzali wam owasweleka kwiminyaka engaphezulu kweshumi eyadlulayo, ngo-2010. Le ngqokelela sisipho sam kuye, kwaye ingumvuzo wakhe wokundibumba nokundipha ubomi ngothandokazi olungako.

Le ngqokelela yemibhalo iqala ngemibongo engoMaNdlovu. Ilandelwa yimibongo emalunga nobomi bam. Kubekho embalwa ethetha ngabantwana bam, nonyana wam ongasekhoyo. Ndiqukumbele ngo-'Bathi, ndithi' oqala isahluko esithetha ngemivo neengcinga zam.

Ndithemba ukuba umfundi ngamnye uya kuzicaphulela ngokumfaneleyo, ahluthe emphefumlweni.

Edwin Smith

March 2023

Preface

I preferred writing my Xhosa poems because I am not an eloquent orator by nature. I am not a praise poet, not even in my wildest dreams. My father is of mixed descent and has no traditions. I am aided here by my mother, Nomzamo, a maiden of the Poswas; a *MaNdlovu* who married my father and bore me as their second son out of six siblings. My mother's family embraced my father and nicknamed him a person (*uMntuke*) out of compassion. I sucked the Xhosa language from my mother's breasts. In school, I only learned to write English and Afrikaans and relied solely on this tuition to write these poems.

I am supported and dependent on my good friend and others who took an interest in my efforts. These are Kanyo Ggulu (*Limakwe, Shweme, Zanemvula*), Khololwethu Cetyiwe, a young woman from Westbourne in Queenstown, and Nozuko Precious Stemela from Port Elizabeth. Without their support, my efforts here would simply be gibberish.

With this collection, I do not wish for my efforts to be compared with those of proper Xhosa writers or traditional poets. I was not endowed with the skill and craft to create beauty with words in my mother's language. Here I am driven by my heart and the wish to celebrate and honour my mother who passed away over ten years ago in 2010. This collection is my gift to her and her reward for moulding me, and giving me life with so much love.

This collection opens with poems for *MaNdlovu*. These are followed by some about my life. Then there are a few about my children, including my late son. I close the collection with 'They say, I say,' which introduces the section about my reflections and thoughts.

I trust each reader will take from this what best satisfies their need to nourish their soul.

Edwin Smith
March 2023

UMALUSI (THE SHEPHERD)

Umchokozo wakho

Njengelanga lihlab' umkhosi
amashiy' akho axhentsa nomzobo
okhaziml' ebusweni bakho
andikhumbuz' iintsikelelo zakho
njengeenzwakazi zasekhaya

Ukhany' ebumnyameni
ilanga kudala litshonile
abantu sebehambile bebuyel'emakhaya
ndisele ndodw' aph' emalandalahla

Uphakamis' umoya wam
kude nekhaya apho ndingaziwa khona,
apho ndingenabuhlanti nanja
kodwa ndinawe nomchokozo wakwaNtu

Your beauty¹⁵

Like the sun lighting the day
your eyebrows dance with designs
sparkling on your face
reminding me of your blessings
like the maidens from home

You shine in the dark
with the sun long gone
and folk no longer around, having returned home
leaving me alone in the middle of nowhere

You raise my spirits
far from home where I am not known
and have no standing, let alone a dog
but I have you and the beauty of our heritage

15 Though loosely translated as a dot, I am unable to find a suitable English equivalent for umcokhozo, the make-up Xhosa women, and sometimes men, wear of beautiful and elegant white dot designs they paint on their faces, usually with calamine lotion or a similar cream. 'Your beauty' has been dragged, kicking and screaming, to title this translation of the poem. I apologise for the limitations of our languages. Maybe like 'henna', umchokhozo will one day also be absorbed into the Oxford English Dictionary, particularly if more people write about it.

Umthandazo

Nto zakulomama
ndiyani biza namhlanje
Indishiyile intombi yenu
aph' emalandalahla
apho ndingazi mntu nanja

Nithi niziindlovu
ezidl' ekhaya ngokuswel' umalusi
Le ndlovu yenu ihambele kude nekhaya
ngoku ndingumalusi wayo

Ndibiza nina zinyanya zam
ndicela nosul' amehlo am
ndizokuyibona indlela ebhek' ekhaya
Ndicel' nindikhanyisel' indlela
njengeenkwenkwezi ebusuku
ndigoduse intombi yenu
Lo mzali ondishiy' endleleni

Ndithandaza nina zinyanya zam
njengomzukulwana wenu
ndigodusa le ndlovukazi yam
njengomalusi wayo

Prayer

People of my mother
I call on you today
Your daughter abandoned me
in this unknown wilderness
where I know not a single soul nor dog

You call yourselves elephants
that graze near home for want of a shepherd
This elephant of yours strayed far from home
now I am her shepherd

I call on you my ancestors
beseeching you to wipe my eyes
so I can see my way home
I ask you to light me a path
like brilliant stars at night
so I can take your daughter home
this parent who left me by the wayside

I pray to you my ancestors
as your very own grandchild
I am taking my elephant home
as I am its shepherd

Isithembiso sakho

Thath' igama lam
ulijjele ngolwimi lwakho
Ndibize ebumnyameni
ngentliziyo yakho emsulwa
Ndenze ndibenegugu
lokukholwa ngamandla
ebuntwini bethu njengezolo
ngoku ubundithanda
njengamanzi, umoya, ilanga,
nomphokoqo onamasi

Amehlo am adiniwe
kukukhangelana nawe ez' ncwadini
ezingaz' igama lakho
Andithethi elam nelikabawo
Kodwa andisoze ndityhafe
kuba wandithembisa
ingomso nosuk'u olulandelayo

Ndihlel'apha
ndijonge ngaphesheya kweentaba namathafa
Ndilinde isithembiso sakho
ezantsi kobuhlanti bukaBawo
Kuba nguwe wedwa owandithembisa
ubomi nendyebo.
Nguwe kuphela onokundibuyisel'
ekuqaleni

Your promise

Take my name
and wrap it with your tongue
Call me in the dark
with your innocent heart
Make me proud
to fervently believe
in our humanity like yesterday
when you loved me
like water, air, sun,
and mielie meal pap and sour milk

My eyes are worn
from searching for you in books
that know not your name
Let alone mine or my dad's
But I will not give up
because you promised me
tomorrow and the next day

Sitting here
I gaze across the mountains and valleys
waiting for your promise
below my father's kraal
Because you alone promised me
life in abundance
You alone can return me
to the beginning

Isinyanya/Ancestor



Isinyanya¹⁶

Namhlanje ndambeth' igama lakho
ntombi yooNdlovu
Akukho mini ndingakucingi ngayo
Iinkumbulo ngawe zisisithunzi sam mihla le

Xa iimini zindisinda, ndizifihla kuwe
ngoba nguwe wedwa olikhakha lam
Ukho ecaleni kwam,
akukho endingakwazi ukukufeza

nokuba andiqinisekanga
ukuba ndiza kwenza njani
Uyawukhuthaza umoya wam

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Ndiyavuya, ndiyabhiyoza
kuba usisinyanya sam
Akusekho okunye endikudingayo
ngoku ungasekho emhlabeni

16 uNomzamo Poswa (uMaNdlovu) ungumzali wam owatshona nge 9 zika May, ngo 2010.

Ancestor¹⁷

Today I cloak myself with your name
daughter of the Ndlovus
Not a day passes without me thinking of you
Your memories are my shadow day by day.

When my days are daunting, I hide in you
because you alone are my shield
With you by my side
there's nothing I cannot accomplish

Even when I am unsure
of what to do
You encourage my spirit

I am happy, I rejoice
because you are my ancestor
There's nothing more I need
now that you are no longer on this earth

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17 Nomzamo Poswa (MaNdlovu) is my mother who passed away on 9 May 2010. Having transitioned from this life, she now is my ancestor.

Ndisakuthanda nawe

Nangona wandishiya ndedwa kulo mhlaba
Nangona wanabela uqaqqa emalandalahla
ndisakuthandana namhla

Nangona imini zam zingayikuphinda zifane
oko wayibeka phantsi inqawa
ndisakuthanda nangoku

Nangona ndiyinkedama
ngoba awusekho nam apha
ndisakuthanda ngentliziyo yam yonke

Nangona ukunye nam ngokomoya kuphela
kuba selilide ithuba wasweleka
ndisakuthanda ngaphandle kwamathandabuzo

Ngeemini endikukhumbula ngazo kakhulu
kude kubengathi ndiphelelwa ngumoya
kulapho ndikuthanda kangangoko
wawundithanda nam

I still love you

Though you left me alone in this world
Though you chose to depart in the middle of nowhere
I still love you to this day

Though my days will never be the same
since you laid down your life
I still love you right now

Even though I am an orphan
because you are no longer here with me
I still love you with my whole heart

Even though you are with me only in spirit
because it has been a while since you have been gone
I still love you without any doubt

During the days when I miss you so much
that I am unable to breathe
that's when I love you
as much as you loved me

Inkaba yam

Bathi ifihlwe ebuhlanti
inkaba yam nezabanakwethu
Kodwa zange ndayibona
naxa ndibuza ekhaya

Bathi mandikholwe
kuba izinto zenziwa njalo
ngabantu basekhaya
nokuba zange ndabona mntu
efihla inkaba yomntwana naphi na

Kodwa ekugqibeleni, ndiyakholwa

My navel

It is hidden in the backyard, they say
about my navel and those of my siblings
But never have I seen it
not even when I ask at home

They tell me to believe
because that's how things are done
by the people of home
Even if I'd never even seen anyone
hiding their child's navel anywhere

But in the end, I believe

Izimbo zakho

UMaNdlovu omtsha uthengel'
umntwana wasesitalatweni ukutya
kuba wasifundisa loo nto
akukho mntwana oza kulamba ujongile
akukho mntu oza kulala esitalatweni unendlu
akukho ntombi eza kuhamba ze unempahla

Izimbo zakho azipheli

Your idiosyncrasies

The new MaNdlovu bought
a street urchin food
because you taught us that
no child will go hungry while you watch
no one will sleep on the street while you have a house
no girl will go naked while you have clothes

Your idiosyncrasies endure

Iculo lentliziyo yam/My heart's song



Iculo lentliziyo yam

Ilanga malingatshoni ndingakubonanga
Imvula mayingani ndingakubulisanga
Umoya ungavunguzi
ndingakuphekelanga mngqusho
ofana nowakamama wam

Intliziyo yam ineculo elitsha
kuba unam mihla yonke

My heart's song

Let the sun not set without me seeing you
Let the rain not fall without me greeting you
and the wind not howl
without me cooking you samp
like the samp my mom used to cook

My heart has a new song
because you are with me every day

Ndibhabh' emafini

Ndivuka ndinothando
olundigcwalise njengomoya
Ndihamba ngeenyawo ezinamaphiko
ngenxa yothando lwakho, Bhelukazi

Imizuzu yemini iyandilandela
mihla yonke phandl' apha
Nemini iye incume xa ndivelayo
ndiyijonga ngegugu nomdla

Ndileqwa kukhutshona kwelanga
ndide ndibuyele kuwe ekhaya
apho ndiza kuphumza khon' intloko
esifubeni sakho esifudumeleyo

Floating in the clouds

I rise with love
filling me like air
I walk with winged feet
because of your love, my beauty

The minutes of the day stalk me
through my every waking hour
Even the day smiles when I appear
facing it with pride and glee

The setting sun chases after me
'till I return to you at home
where I will rest my weary head
on your warmth-filled breasts

Umthakathi omtsha

Siqhula ngeziqhulo ezitsha
Amakhosikazi ethu awasenaziduko
Sikhumsha imini yonk' emakhaya
ngokungabikho kolwimi lwabantu bakuthi

Kodwa akutshabalalanga nto
Abamandulo bath'
induku entle igawulw' ezizweni
Yiyo loo nto nam ndixhentsa
nomthakathi wam omtsha

The new sorcerer

We tease in new ways
Our wives no longer have clan names
We speak English the whole day at home
in the absence of our people's tongue

But there's no harm here
The old adage goes that
a fine stick is picked in foreign lands
hence I too now dance
with my new sorcerer

Ubukho bakho

Bekungasoze kufane
kuba awukho aph' ekhaya
Uncumo lwakho lwalukhanya
luqharhazisa indlu yonke
Izandla zakho zazithambis'
intliziyo ezidakumbileyo

Akusafani aph' ekhaya
ngoba awukho phakathi kwethu

Your presence

It was never going to be the same
you not being here at home
Your smile used to shine
brightening our entire home
Your gentle hands balming
fragile and battered hearts

Here at home things are no longer the same
because you're no longer with us

Nangamso

Ndithi nangamso kuwe Bhelukazi
Namhlanje masithandane
Sikhuselane, sikhuthazane, sibambane

Amehlo akho akhanya njengeenkwenkwezi
ezindikhanyisela ebumnyameni
Mawakhanye, aqhakaze

Uncumo lwakho luyandifudumeza
njengelanga lasebusika
Malondl' umoya wam

Izandla zakho, ezithambe njengentliziyo yakho
mazindithuthuzele
apho ndichukumiseka khona

Ndibambe, undifukame
ndide ndizole ngaphakathi
kuba unam namhlanje,
nangamso

So be it tomorrow as well

I can't thank you enough my beauty
Let's love each other today
Protect, encourage, and hold each other

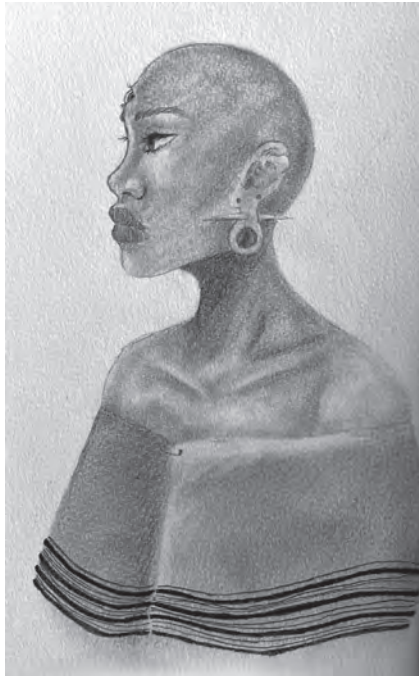
Your eyes shine like the stars
dispelling my darkness
Let them shine and sparkle

Your smile warms me
like the sun in the dead of winter
Let it nourish my spirit

Your hands, tender like your heart
Let them comfort me
where I have been hurt

Hold me close and embrace me
'till the rage inside me settles
for you are with me today,
and so be it tomorrow as well

Mbal'entle/A beautiful tale



Mbal' entle

Akukho gama elimnandi
elodlula elakho ntomb' am
Iingcinga ngawe zondl' umoya wam
Amehlo akho alilang' ebusika
Uncumo lwakho ngamathaf' ooBawo-
Ndithi ulibali lemveli
Imifula izele amatshavutha akho

Ndandenzeni ukuze ube ngowam?
Izinyanya zandincumela
zandipha amathamsanqa neentsikelelo
kuba zange ndizenzele
Usisiphiwo sezinyanya kum

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Ulibali elifudumezayo, elondlayo
Uyimbali entle yasekhaya
Wena sana lwam

A beautiful tale

There's no sweeter name
than that of yours, my daughter
Thinking of you feeds my spirit
Your eyes are the sun in winter
Your smile the plains of my forebears
You are the story of my heritage
The rivers are filled with your indomitable spirit

What did I do to deserve you?
My ancestors must have been smiling
gracing me with blessings and great fortune
because there's nothing I did by myself
To me, you are a gift from the ancestors

You are a heartwarming tale, that nourishes
You are a beautiful story of home
You, my darling child

Unyana wolahleko

Akukho mzali ongenanimba
Akukho mntwana ongathandwayo
Akukho ntlupheko efana
nokulahlekelwa komzali ngumntwana

Kwilizwe lonke akukho gama
elichaz' umzali oswelekelwe ngumntwana
Sikhala sonke ngokufanayo
sakulahlekelwa ngunyana

The lost son

There is no parent without feeling
There's no child who is not loved
There's no suffering equal to
that of a parent losing a child

All nations are without a name
for a parent who has lost a child
We all grieve alike
when we've lost a son

Isikhalo sentliziyo

Ndilala ngaso linye namhlanje,
oko wandishiya ndodw' apha
Andisenanyana wondiphekela
oko walityeshel' ikhaya lethu

Ndikhala iinyembezi
zokukhumbula nokulangazelela
ubukho bakho aph' ekhaya
njejezaantsuku wawukho kunye nathi

Intliziyo yam iyakhala
oko wasishiy' ungayalezanga

The heart's lament

I sleep with one eye open today
since you left me alone here
I no longer have a son to cook for me
since you abandoned our home

I weep a torrent of tears
remembering and longing
your presence here at home
like those days when you were here with us

My heart wails
since you left without notice

Bathi, ndithi

Bathi akuhlanga lungehliyo
Njengasiphelo sobomi bekufanele
Asinamandla apho sibekwa khona
Batsho ngemilebe egxigxiza amafutha nobusi
Iminwe isindwa ziindyebo zegolide
Izibaya zigcwele iinkomo namakhoboka
Bathi bekufanele kubenjalo
Akuhlanga lungehliyo

Ndithi bubuvuvu nochuku le ntetho
Akukho mntwana ozelwe elikhoboka
Inkunzi ayenzelwanga ukutsala nje iidyokwe
Ilanga alidalelwanga ukukhanya qha
Namanzi akenzelwanga ukuselwa kuphela

Singaphezulu kwayo yonke le ntetho
Ubomi bande phambi kwethu sonke
Njengokuba usuku xa luphela ludala ubusuku
akukho miqathango kwimizamo yethu
yokubeka phantsi idyokwe
ehonjiswe ngemibala embejemeje

Ndithi kwehlile okwehlileyo
ngoba sithobebe indlala
namasiko entlupheko
esiwombathiswe ngabapath' ubomi bethu

They say, I say

What happened has happened
Even life is destined to end
We are powerless against our circumstances
They say with mouths dripping fat and honey
And their fingers heavy with golden jewels
Their backyards filled with cattle and slaves
They say it was meant to be
What happened, happened

I say that's hogwash
No child is born a slave
A bull was not only born to bear the yoke
The sun does not exist to only shine
And water is not only for drinking

We are above all this ruse
Life is spread in front of us all
Like the end of day spawns the night
there are no limitations to our efforts
to relieve us of the yoke of bondage
dressed up with dazzling colours

I say, what has happened has happened
because we obey hunger
and the traditions of poverty
we were settled with by the rulers of our lives

Tshintsha maxesha, tshintsha/Times change



Tshintsha maxesha, tshintsha

A! 'Tshintsha maxesha, tshintsha'
Namhlanje akusafani'emakhaya

Iindlela zodaka sezabanetha ngoku
Nezindlu zodaka sezanqaba
Amaxhego akasajonganga simo selali
Amehlo abanjwe yimiqhafazo kaNomyayi
noo 'WhatsApp' noo 'Please call Me' bawo

Iinkomo kudala zahamba ebuhlanti
neenkukhu azisabonakali esibayeni
Umsi waseziko sewaphaphatheka
nomoya wenkqubela phambili

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Abakhwetha ngamatyendyana
Asanuk' amasi, abudala bulishum' elinesithathu
Namatyhalarha akakaqini njengawamandulo
nezo ngcibi ezisuk' eGugulethu
ezinee-Okapi ezibuthuntu

Iintombi zingamadikaz' elali
Zibelek' abantwana ngaphambili nangasemva
ngaphandle kokwazi ooyise babo
ngenxa yokulangazelela isenti yomphokoqo

Namhlanje akusafan' emakhaya
Tshintsha maxesha, tshintsha!
Yinkqubela le?

Times change

Ah! How times are a changing
Things are not the same at home

Dirt roads have now been tarred
Mud huts are but scarce
The elders no longer keep vigil over their communities
Their eyes are glued to mobile phones
with their 'WhatsApps' and 'Please call Me's'

The cows left the kraals long ago
even the chickens are no longer in the run
The smoke from the hearth blew away a while ago
with the winds of progress and advancement

The men in initiation schools are but children
with thirteen-year-old, wet ears
and balls not yet hardened as in the old days
with 'surgeons' from Gugulethu
with blunt Okapi knives

The young women are the sluts of the village
carrying babies on their chests and backs
with no idea of who the fathers are
for want of money for food

Things are not the same at home
How times are a changing!
Is this progress?

Ndinovalo

Hayi ayingonomyayi lo
Sisimanga
Amaqhingamandulo
athatha indawo yaso,
imilingo yooBawo
ephaphathek' emoyeni

Jonga iintlanga zonke
zikhamsile
Le asintanga yamntu
Lo ngumhlola wale mihla

Umzi ngamnye kufuneka ube necebo
nemikhonto yawo
Yokohlula abafan' emadodeni
Kungase sibekrelekrele
sibambisane sikhuthazane

Lo mhlola wanamhlanje
awuntanga yamntu

Anxiety

This isn't a plaything
It's a calamity.
rendering tricks of old
hopeless and inadequate
and the inventions of our fathers
blown away in the wind

Look at all the nations
with their mouths agape
This is no one's equal
This is an epidemic of today

Each home should have their plans
and their provisions
to distinguish boys from men
Wish we could be wise
to cooperate and encourage one another

This misfortune of today
is not just anyone's match

Ityala

Ukungamameli
Ukungahloniph' izithethi
Ukufulathel' iimfundiso zekhaya
Ukuthatheka ngoonobenani
Ukuthand' amehlo
Ukuhloniph' amakhwenkwe
Ukukhonz' imali nobunewunewu
Ukulangazelela udumo lwelali
Ukungahloniph' abazali
Ukungabiyo ntsikelelo kumphakathi

Konke oku, lityala
Nokungakwazi oku lityala ngokunjalo

Transgressions

To not listen

To not respect those who speak

To ignore teachings from home

To be occupied with trivialities

To love popularity

To respect inexperience

To worship money and material things

To seek public adoration

To not respect adults

To not be a blessing to the community

All these are transgressions

And not knowing is a transgression too

Amagoduka

Nokuba sihlekisa
ngamagoduka amandulo
Sonke namhlanje singawo
kanye neemoto zethu ezikhazimlayo
nezihlangu zethu ezitsolo
neesuti zethu ezisipitsayo

Nangona ixesha lihambile
sitheth' iilwimi ngeelwimi
nesilungu esiphuma ngeempumlo
singawo nathi ngoku

Jonga umqhumo wezithuthi
uqonda ngaphesheya ngasemakhaya
ngepasika nakweyomNga
Sonk' apha singamagoduka

Migrants

Though we may ridicule
the migrants of old
Today we all are migrants
with our shiny cars
our sharp and pointy shoes
and our tight-fitting suits

Though time has moved on
and we now speak in different tongues
with our nasal English
we all are migrants now

See the stream of vehicles
over there racing home
for the Easter and December breaks
We are all migrants here

Iintlanga

Siziintlanga, ngeentlanga
aph' ekhaya nasemazweni
Ootata bethu bazalwa
ngabantu abahlukileyo
noomama bethu futhi ngokunjalo

Mna nabantakwethu
singabomnye umama
Sonke sohlukile, asifani
nangona siphuma mzini mnye

Kodwa sihlupha iintlanga
ngaphandl' apha, sizibiza ngamagama
kuba sancela nzulu kweli bele
olo calucalulo esalishiyelwa ngabaphathi

Sizintlanga sonke
ngeendlela ezahlukileyo
Ndithi, sonke siphuma esibelekweni sebhinqa

Foreigners

We are a diversity of nations
here at home and abroad
Our fathers are born
of different people
and our mothers too

My siblings and I
are from yet another mother
We are all different, we're not the same
though we hail from the same hive

Yet we torment other nationalities
out there, calling them derogatory names
because we drank too deep from the well
of discrimination we inherited from our rulers

We are all different
in our distinct ways
But I say we all come from a woman's womb

Sizelwe sonke/We were all born



Sizelwe sonke

Nokuba ucholwe endleleni
nokuba ufunyenwe emgqomeni
akekho ongenamzali,
kungekho mzali ongenanimba

Xa sidibanela kude nekhaya
apho singaziwa khona
khumbula mntakwethu ukuthi
ndingumntwana womntu nam njengawe
nokuba ndihamba ndodwa

We were all born

Whether picked up by the roadside
whether rescued from a heap of dirt
none is without a mother
nor is there a parent without feeling

When we meet far from home
where we are not known
remember my brother that
I too am someone's child just like you,
even when I'm alone

Uxolo

Njengelanga
hlab' umkhosi
ngaphandle kwengxolo

Njengentaba
thwala ubomi bakho
ngomqolo owomeleleyo

Njengomzali
khusela abantwana bakho
ngentliziyo ethambileyo

Njengosuku olutsha
zityhile ebantwini
ngoxolo nangothando

Peace

Like the sun
raise the alarm
without noise

Like a mountain
carry your burden
on a sturdy back

Like a parent
protect your children
with a tender heart

Like a new day
show up in the community
with peace and love

Inkani

Soze ikuse ndawo inkani
Nokuba kuthiwa, ophumeleleyo
sube eqhutywa yiyo ngamandla
Nokuba kuthiwa lowo onganikezeliyo
ufumana umvuzo wempumelelo
Ukubetha ichokoza lemvula ngentonga
bubugeza obuphindaphindeneyo

Stubbornness

Stubbornness will take you nowhere
Though they say the successful
are driven by serious stubbornness
Though they say one who perseveres
is rewarded with success
To strike a drop of rain with a fighting stick
is absolutely futile and insane

Ukucima kwesibane

(Sanusi uVusamazulu Credo Mutwa: 1922-2020)

Hamba kakuhle, Sanusi sethu
Uzamile ukuwavul' amehlo wethu
Uzamile ukusinqand' ezintweni ukuze singalahleki
Senza ngoku ngathi sazilukhulu kunawe
ngoba amehlo ethu aphantsi
zizibane zasedolopini

Hamba kakuhle, Sanusi sethu
Uz' usibulisele kooBawo
usithethelele kubo njengokuba usazi
kuba ubulapha nathi, ujongile
uyibona nempambano yethu

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Hamba kakuhle, Sanusi sethu
Sizenze iimfama njengeentuku ngokwethu
ngoku sikhasa ngamadolo edakeni
ngoba besingafun' ukumamela
kusekho ilanga aph' ekhaya

Hamba kakuhle, Sanusi sethu
Isiphiwo sakho sisityeshele
sahlekisa ngaso phamb' kweentlanga
kuba sileqa inkqubela phambili yolahleko

Masikugoduse ngoku
Ingas'ke sisikhumbule isiphiwo sakho
neemfundiso zakho kubantu jikelele
Sirhangqwe bubumnyama ngoku
usishiyile kulo mhlaba wooBawo

When the light goes out

(the Seer, Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa: 1922-2020)

Go well, Seer of the people
You tried to open our eyes
You tried to guard us against straying
But we think ourselves wiser than you
because we were blinded
by bright city lights

Go well, Seer of the people
Pass our regards to our forebears
and campaign for us as you know us
For you were here, among us
witnessing our madness

Go well, Seer of the people
Like the moles we've turned ourselves into
Now we crawl on our hands and knees in the mud
because we refused to listen
when the light was still among us

Go well, Seer of the people
We turned our backs on your gift
ridiculing it in front of others
with our misguided notions of progress

When we now return you home
may we remember your gifts
and instruction to humanity
Darkness envelopes us now that
you have departed from this world

Ukusinda kothando

Amagxa agobile, arhuqa phantsi
ngumthwalo wothando endiwuthweleyo
Xa ndikujongile mntana kamama
sana lwasekhaya, apho nam ndivela khona
ndisindwa lityala elinzima
lokukhumbula impatho yakho
sisakhula singabantwana
undiphethe kabuhlungu okwenkedama
njengokuba abazali bethu babengasekho

Kodwa unyoko wandiyala
Ndingazi kanti ebeyolela
ndavuma ukukhathalela
mhla wasishiya umzali wethu
Xa undibona ndipheth' iziphiwo
khumbula ukusinda komthwalo wothando

The burden of love

My shoulders are bent, dragging on the ground
with the burden of the love I'm carrying
When I look at you, my mother's child
my sibling from the same house I come from
I am taxed by a heavy load
of remembering your treatment
when we were growing up as children
and you ill treated me like an orphan
when our parents were not around

But your mother enjoined me
Unaware it was her last wish
I agreed to care for you
when our parent departed this world
So when you see me bearing gifts
remember what a heavy burden love is

Isikhumbuzo

Isikhalo somntwana
sikrazul' intliziyo
Ukukhoboka komzali
kuchith' usapho
Intlupheko ayisosihlobo!

Inja ilele eziko
sisikhalo nesaziso
esithi utshaba lufikile
Qula mzi wakwantu
imfazwe yobom' ifikile

Reminder

A child's cry
pierces the heart
The struggle of a parent
destroys a household
Poverty is no one's friend!

When hunger is in the hearth
it is a cry and alarm
that destruction is afoot
Brace yourselves, my people
the battle for survival is at hand

Umsimbithi

Lo msimbithi ulinde
wena uwuthate
uza kukhusela
endleleni yakho sele uwedwa
apho kungekho nabani
oza kukunceda

Lo msimbithi ngowakho wedwa
wawenzelwa ngoBawo
ukuze ukwazi ukuzinqoba
iimpi zemihla ngemihla
xa nawe ubizwa
bubomi basemhlabeni

The rod

The rod waits
for you to take it up
to protect you
on your personal journey
where there will be no one
to assist you

This rod is yours alone
made just for you by our forebears
so you can attend to the day
and its challenges
when life calls
on you in this world

Uhambo

Oko ndivukile kusasa
ndileqa le mini ndiyiphiweyo
ingenamiqathango
namiyalelo endikhokhelayo
Mini nganye isisiphiwo
esineemfuneko nezidingo zayo

Okushiyekele kuthi
kukuqala olu hambo
lungenasiphelo
Masivuke siluqale olu hambo

The journey

Since waking this morning
I've been chasing this day I've been given
without any limitations
or instructions directing me
Each day is a gift to us
with its own needs and demands

What remains for us
is to commence this journey
without a known end
Let's rise and start this journey

Mamela/Listen



Mamela

Amaxilongo avakala engaqhelekanga
Awanamhlanje ayangcangcazela xa ekhala
ade lo usecaleni kwakho angasiva
isikhalo sexilongo ngemini yakho
esifika ungalindelanga

Gqogqa iindlebe, usule izandla
Mamelisisa, ujongisise
Bambelela ngobunono
ukuba ufuna ukusabela
xa ixolongo lemini yakho likubiza

Listen

Sirens sound strange
Today's alarms tremble
so that your companion's ears cannot hear
the cries of the trumpet of your day
that besets you, unexpectedly

Wipe your ears and hands
Listen attentively and look closely
Hold fast but gently
if you wish to respond
when life's trumpet is calling you

Zola

Ubomi buxakekile
Sivuka sisiwa kule mihla
Akukho kunikezela,
akukho kukhala—
Sonke siyasokola

Nyamezela
uqine njengendoda
enenkosikazi eyikhuthazayo
ngesikhalo sayo ngenj' ixukuxa

Thath' umthwal' uqhubeke
Nawe uza kufika apho ubhalele khona
Njengazo zonke ezinye izalamane
nawe uza kufikelela endaweni

Solace

Life is demanding
We rise and fall every day
There's no surrender,
there's no use crying—
We are all suffering

Persevere
and persist like a man
spurred on by his spouse's
anguished cries at dawn

Take your burden and proceed
You too will realise your ambition
Like all the others among us
you too must reach your destination

Inthetho ngombali

UEdwin Smith (Kwedini Simiti), wazalelwa eMonti, eMpuma Kapa. Ngunyana wesibini kubantwana abathandathu bakaNomzamo Poswa (uNdlovu, uMtungwa, uGengezi, uMalunga, umdlung' odlekayo, ndlovu zidle khaya ngokuswela umalusi, ungangomhlaba, halala mafuz' afulele) noJoseph Smith (uMntuke).

Waqethuka, wabhaca phakathi kwezidubedube noqhushululu luka-1980. Ekuqaleni, wazimela eMthatha apho wathi wakubhaqwa ngabakwantsasana, wawelela eBotswana. Udlule eZimbabwe naseZambia wade waya kuphelela eSomafo (iSolomon Mahlangu Freedom College), isikolo se-ANC eMorogoro, eTanzania. Apho waqhubeka ngezifundo zakhe eziye zamnceda waya kufunda phesheya kolwandle e-Rutgers University, eNew Jersey, eMerika.

Kulapho adibene khona nentombi yakwaSibisi, uNomsa Majola (uMahlase, uGumede, uBhovungane kaNomashingila kaBango, iZibisi ezimlom' ubomvu nabantwana bazo). Bazimanyanisa baba nabantwana ababini, unyana uVuyisile nentombi uMbali-Enhle. UVuyisile woyiswa sisifo seswekile ngo-2015 waswelekela ePitoli.

USmith ubuyele ekhaya ngo-1999 eze kusebenzela urhulumente omtsha phantsi kolawulo lwe-ANC kaMandela noMbeki, njengesithethi sikamphathiswa wezoshishino norhwebo, uAlec Erwin.

Ngaphandle kokungxama, wathabatha iintonga zakhe wabuyela eyunivesithi apho akhoyo ngoku njengomphathi wekhampasi yaseMamelodi yeYunivesithi yasePitoli.

Ekukhumbuleni kwakhe uKhaya, imbacu yaseBhayi, awayenayo eSomafo, ukhethe ukubhala phantsi kwegama elinguKwedini Simiti awayebizwa ngalo nguloo mfo beseseSomafo. Ngale ndlela ukhumbula amaxesha adlulayo, ubunzima nobumnandi bawo.

About the author

Born in East London in the Eastern Cape, Edwin Smith is the second-born child and son among the six children of Nomzamo Poswa (Ndlovu, Mtungwa, Gengezi, Malunga, mdlung' o'dlekayo, ndlovu zidle khaya ngokuswela umalusi, ungangomhlaba, halala mafuz'afulele) and Joseph Smith, nicknamed uMntuke.

Smith escaped and went into exile during the uprising of the mid-1980s. He initially went into hiding in Mthatha. Upon his discovery by the Security Police, he escaped to Botswana, passing through Zimbabwe and Zambia, and eventually ending up at Somafco (Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College), the ANC's school in Morogoro, Tanzania where he continued his studies, which enabled him to study abroad at Rutgers University in New Jersey in the USA.

It is in the US where Smith met Nomsa Majola, a daughter of the Sibisi (Mahlase, Gumede, Bhovungane kaNomashingila kaBango, iZibisi ezimlom' ubomvu nabantwana bazo). They married and had two children, a son, Vuyisile and a daughter, Mbali-Enhle. Vuyisile passed away in 2015 in Pretoria due to complications from diabetes.

Smith permanently returned home from exile in 1999 to work for the ANC-led government of Mandela and Mbeki as Spokesperson for the then Minister of Trade and Industry, Alec Erwin.

Upon completing his contract, he returned to work in higher education, where he currently serves as Manager: Campus Operations for the Mamelodi Campus of the University of Pretoria.

Remembering Comrade Khaya, a former exile from Port Elizabeth, Smith elected to write under the *nom de plume*, 'Kwedini Simiti' this fellow exile used to call him while at Somafco. With this gesture, he pays homage to his past, its pain and pleasures.



**UMALUSI
(THE SHEPHERD)**

EDWIN T SMITH
'KWEDINI SIMITI'

A COLLECTION OF XHOSA POEMS

With artwork by Mbali-Enhle Khaya Smith