

## ANTHOLOGY OF FEMINIST POETRY

# Lebo Mashile: These hips have carried boulders

Lebo Mashile



## Body

Beyond water and bones  
 Beyond blood and breath  
 The body is the soul's physical address  
 We are light cocooned in skin  
 Sun children growing  
 In the universe's womb  
 Each of us is a star draped in human form  
 Our bodies are God's couture  
 Fleshy fabric dripping colour and culture  
 On a cosmic catwalk

This body is too much for too many  
 And not enough to be right  
 for those left to decide what beauty is  
 TV and magazines do not understand the symmetry between design and purpose  
 A masterfully crafted machine created to serve as witness to our evolution  
 All that we are  
 All that we have been  
 All that we can and will ever be  
 Is housed in a sanctuary of skin  
 No thought escapes the body  
 No emotion eludes the body

This is my home  
My transport  
My support  
My friend  
So when the world renounces by beauty  
I reply, the landscape of the body cannot be seen by the eye

My skin knows me by heart  
When I laugh thunder rumbles remixing pain into song  
Moonstones sparkle in my smile  
And I know that I need the darkness as much as it needs be to be a star  
And when I cry rain falls from my eyes  
Never touching the ground  
My waters disappear to join the air  
And I know that my heart is everywhere  
The roads in my face will tell you  
That I have withstood sand storms  
And held the eye of the hurricane  
with my stare  
These arms have hugged the wind  
These hips have carried boulders  
Birthed new life and blessed the gaze of their beholders  
This heart is a rock  
Melting when moved  
Solidifying in sorrow  
This mind is mining gems for  
Whose brilliance courses through oceans  
To wash up on the river beds of the worthy  
Work is my domain  
Beauty is my inheritance  
Skin is my shelter

When I love I give all that I am  
Four barrels of water  
Three slices of fire  
Two pounds of earth  
Bound together by air in a house of skin

There is love in washing over experiences  
There is love in offering libations  
at the altar of the self  
There is love in these hands  
Inhale beauty  
Exhale discipline  
Inhale sun  
Exhale African  
Inhale memory  
Exhale touch  
Inhale protection  
Exhale Love

## Vulva Volcanoes

“We are the grand-daughters of the witches they did not burn”

1.

What indestructible substance is a woman's heart made of  
 The heart must be a vulva  
 Bleeding  
 Stretching  
 Contracting  
 Connecting  
 Fertile  
 Infertile  
 Birthing  
 Dying with each orgasm, lost lover and unborn child  
 life hands us these hearts  
 Without insurance

At the heart of owning property is owning women  
 Neither land nor sky nor sea  
 animal plant patent nor crown can be owned  
 Without conquering pussy  
 Once we made love and children  
 As the seasons make rains and harvests  
 Unowned we worshipped wind stones blood moon and stories

Respectability & forgiveness are concepts sold to niggers & women  
 So that we do not question why we do not have power  
 With the same ferocity with which power is taken from us every waking day

There is a cross burning between your legs  
 They sell Jesus as a placebo  
 As if a revolutionary would ever endorse Pay-as-you-go churches  
 Or the asinine bullshit done daily in God's name  
 You die slowly making life easy for what is killing you.

2.

This is not the motherhood of pink & blue ribbons and fluffy toys  
 This is not an ad with women who worry more about washing powder than they do about finances  
 This is not an exaltation of asexual mummies who only know dicks in darkness that won't claim them in daylight  
 I am not a nurse maid whore teacher quasi-spiritual, quarter-to-ape with loving maternal instincts who will slowly comfort you into truths you cannot accept  
 How long have you been fucking your mother  
 Sideways  
 Over and above  
 The myths told to girl children  
 Through baby dolls that never cry  
 And barbies who breed without genitals  
 I waited for Prince Charming to save me for so long I forgot to be my own hero

I will raise my children to believe in opposites  
 If you love yourself they will hate you  
 If you can live in their world you are dying  
 If you chase their approval you will hate yourself  
 If he hits you  
 Hurts you  
 Hurls your heart against the wall  
 It's because he does not understand the relationship between blood and consequences  
 It's not your job to teach him  
 No one claps for martyrs  
 They'll build a shrine on your pain and say they did it in your name  
 Rather go mad  
 Because this 3-D world is just an asylum for truth tellers

## The Void

What happens to black boys  
 Who go missing  
 Do we even call it missing  
 Or do we just say he is gone  
 What happens to boys  
 Who hide in their minds  
 Who run across borders  
 Who live in dimensions  
 That should have remained  
 In the womb  
 What happens to boys  
 Who are unwanted

What happens to the boys  
 Who learned to die inside their skin  
 The day they learned what their fathers had done to their mothers  
 What their mothers had done to themselves  
 What they were made of  
 Pain like a rubics cube  
 Changing face but not form

Teaching boys to pray to god  
 every time they get a hard on  
 Makes boys who will bomb themselves  
 For virgins in heaven  
 Teaching boys to lie to girls  
 Every time their get a hard on  
 Makes boys who bomb girls  
 Makes earth a hellish heaven

Gaia is a woman getting raped by her own kids  
 Every day  
 Her pussy is Centre of hurricanes

Not the eye  
Crosses and bones  
At the bottom of the sea  
Are people  
We call foreigners  
When the gifted enter the sea  
They find their own  
Ready to teach them

You refuse  
Your identity as water  
Teachers rise  
claim your streets as oceans  
Wash your cities in fire  
mines stop menstruating  
the sky won't release her tides  
we wake up  
Inside the same day  
The long death past a noose  
The morning godlight is just a show  
With a sponsor  
Who is paying for the sun to show up every day  
If that nigga works for free  
Then fuck him  
Because I can't  
Who will feed the babies  
And the corpses that tend to them  
Like a man  
The sun shows up, demands applause  
And leaves everyone else to deal with the night

We stopped touching dirt  
They started touching me  
They say let go of your story  
But first you have to know it is there  
In the blood and in the body  
In the food  
In the sea  
In the goddess that is fighting a war in me  
In the twisted asana  
In the depth of shame  
In the wailing birds that give songs their names  
In the knotted hairs  
In the wild untamed  
In the peace beyond pleasure  
At the water's edge

**Lebo Mashile**

Despite being born in the United States as a result of her parents' exile, Lebo Mashile has become a household name in the field of oral poetry in her home country, South Africa. She is also a presenter, actress and a committed to supporting human rights, diversity and feminism. She wrote and produced the documentary series *The Attitude (L'Attitude)* and the children's television programme *Great Expectations*. She made her acting début in the 2004 film *Hotel Rwanda* and, alongside choreographer Sylvia Glasser, wrote and starred in *Threads*, a fusion of poetry, music and dance widely regarded as a driving cultural force in South Africa. In February 2018 she made her theatre début with a piece about Saartjie Baartman, an African woman she uses to explain racism in twenty-first-century Europe. Her first book of poems *In a Ribbon of Rhythm* (2005) received a NOMA, one of the most highly-regarded awards in African literature. She is also known for her poetry book *Flying Above The Sky* (2008) and the albums *Lebo Mashile Live!* and *Moya* (2016), produced in collaboration with the singer and composer Majola.