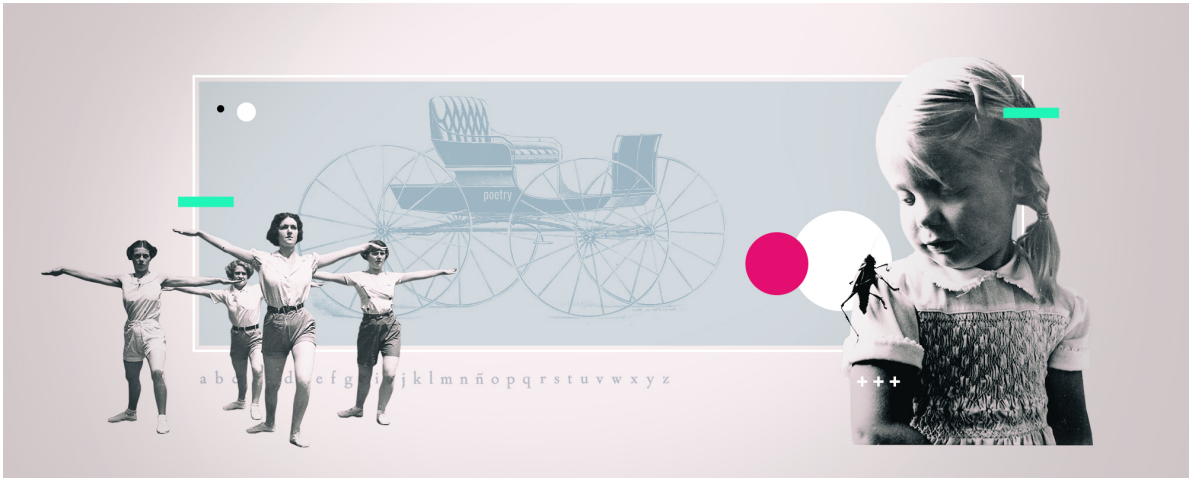
ANTHOLOGY OF FEMINIST POETRY

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 dissappear 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 mammies 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.