

Gracious Poetics
June 4, 2006 Khaya, Durban

As part of a creative writing exercise at our first writing workshop we wrote poems. We walked until an object drew our attention. Then we wrote about what that object meant to us.

My fish poem...

Colourful and elegant
Your movements like sunrays
Your bright colours shining through
dreary dark waters
Your curvy, lithe body making graceful
movements
So confidently curious and content
So full of life, is it because you carry life
in your belly?
Or are you very aware of the important
place you occupy in the planet, in
life? The power you hold?
Move on live on and enjoy your special
place
You belong you are powerful

wanjira

Is this stem a long, lonely journey
Or a channeling of our thoughts, ideas
That burst from a point
Of coherence?

Anne

The Green Leaves

Green, Green, Green gives life,
Green is blossoming,
Green is Life,
Green is everything.

Come see the Life in Green,
Come and Live with Green,
Come find Life in Green,
Yes Green is the fountain of Life.

Come understand life with Green,
Give life some meaning with Green,
Life is all that it is with Green,
Because without Green there is no life.

Kazanka

Description of my object - butterfly

The interesting part of my object is that it starts from the larva to a caterpillar and to a butterfly. Butterflies are not like other insects, which will have different breed but its colors remains the same e.g. bees. Butterflies have variety of breeds and variety of colours. And in my case it's a white butterfly with black dots. Its a very cool and peacefully insect. A butterfly can fly higher; anywhere in the country can sit on anybody peacefully without any harm. It's a friendly insect to all the creatures in the world. It's an insect once its disturbed where it was it will always fly higher from the level where it was. It's in its own world it's a beautiful thing, a very neat insect its friendly to all the animals and nature. It's not a pest.

Oh butterfly look at you
Beautiful, cool, patient, pretty, flying
higher in the air,
I wish I could fly like you butterfly
You are so friendly to every creature,
You mingle with every creature
You are harmless
I want to be flying high like you butterfly
Ever happy with life
Interacting with every creature
Friendly to every creature
You love every creature
Butterfly you are just a beautiful thing
Oh butterfly Oh butterfly

Grace Bwalya

Graciously shading the light
The female form all over you
Your uniqueness holds the stem
together

This was the first poem. I realized it was a poem only for this moment and this question: "what does Grace mean to me and what do I mean to Grace?"

And Buhle helped me with pointing out that the form of the fruit was also phallic. So it was obvious that it did not only represent the chalice, but also the blade. Then I looked at the top of the cone and saw that the top was a five pointed star, the star of healing.

Then I also realized that I had not spoken to the fact that it was a seedbud and that the vagina and the womb represent fertility and creativity.

Then the need for another poem was born, and because we want to publish these poems, another context, another audience presented itself in dialogue. Then the metaphor "spilt over" to that other context:

The context of why I do the work I do (such as Grace) and because of the coherence between those areas, the metaphor also works in the new poem, but it has become invisible, its meaning made more sublime:



Only when the women of Africa
Bring their creativity
In uniqueness together

Will the chalice and the blade
Come to healing and wholeness

And transcending the distinctions
between all the shades of brown
Will the continent become a light unto
itself

Or:

Only when the women of Africa
Bring their creativity
In uniqueness together

Will the chalice and the blade
Come to healing and wholeness

And will the continent
Dark-brown-pale
Become a light unto itself

Ineke

*Here's my poem: object is a white lily
(will try to get a photo of one, mine
faltered, they last max. one day)*

You are white, white with yellow lickings
White with a purple heart
I have hurt you bringing you to me
Hurt you being mesmerized by you
Are your black stripes a notion of a dark
presence?
Amidst your graceful glory?
Please recover from my inflicted wounds
Let your feathery strivings engulf me,
engulf me upwards
To the beauty of your perfection

Lily, glorious Lily of my soul.

Leila

Nature genereuse pour qui vient
du Sahel balaye en permanence
par l'harmattan.

Pays du voyageur emerveille
par le relief accidente de Durban
qui donne charme et reverie
a celui qui sait ecouter et voir l'invisible
qui surgit de nulle part.

Generous nature for those who come
permanently from Sahel balaye.

Country of a traveler amazed by Durban
nature which inspires charm and
dreaming.

For the one who knows to listen, and to
see the invisible which comes out from
nowhere.

Mamadou

The Bottle Seal

*It is used to tighten bottle lids of
different liquid products including
water, fruit juice, and liquid soap among
others. The bottle seal protects the
liquid inside the bottle from leakage
incase the lid is not tight enough. It is
also used to protect the product from
contamination, forgery and duplication.*

The bottle seal

You are never recognized as important
You seem so small compared to the rest
You come last in the production chain
You are immediately destroyed after
offering your services
You are thrown away, trodden upon by
those that you fight to protect

It is all about ignorance

But let us think again

Without you, the process is incomplete
Without you, they are not recognized
Without you, their works are rejected
Without you, their health is in danger
Without you, their faith is useless
Without you, life is nothing but anxiety

So, I choose to celebrate you
For you are the seal to our lives.

Susan Bakesha

*The object is a sprinkler that is no
longer serving its purpose and has been
thrown away*

The Untapped Potential

Before I was birthed I was an idea, a
thought process.
An idea born of knowledge and potential
Through creativity and focus I was put
together
And out of me emerged a course and a
purpose that had to be fulfilled.

The achievement of my end was a
reality
When bits of me were put together to
the final product.
I diligently served the purpose for which
I was created
And derived satisfaction from the
knowledge of it.

Time saw me slowly depreciate and
lose my value
I lost the purpose for which I was
created
And was rejected and termed as
worthless

So here am I, in need of recognition
And hope is what keeps me going.
That the potential in someone will notice
and realize
The untapped potential
And a new process will begin leading to
a new birth

Sally

*The teabag was decayed, dry, turning to
soil and lodged in the green grass. It's
life had begun when the tea plant was
planted, it's leaves picked and then
processed in a factory, shelved in the
shop it had been picked at random used
to brew tea and now, there it was in the
green grass discarded*

TEA BAG THE PERSON

Used teabags what use have we of
you? Dry and rot, turn to dust and
disappear for you are of no use.

TEA BAG

Oh you who use me, know you not that
my destiny has always been beyond
you? My decay after the rain is the
source of the earth's life that you enjoy
everyday.

Fare well and live on, a new life for me
has now begun.

Kiss

My friend, what this sudden meeting,
The partner of my soul, why this long
absence,
How many times you did not honor the
date!
Yet today here we meet!
Without reproach, without anger,
I met you as if we have never been
separated before,
You, like I have always imagined you,
You light of spirit and of steps,
Beautiful in my eyes,
You break all patterns,
You attract every one seeing you or
approaching you,
With your modesty, sweetness and
intelligence.

Amina

Life

Listen most often to things than to human beings
Life is beautiful, it is magnificent
Listen most often to things than to human beings
Life is full of happiness, joys and hopes,
Listen also to human beings, there is a shiver, this sound
Remember that something will happen,
It is the wind which in our heart that will transform the world

This wind will shake the world,
One day, these things will water our minds
These things will change the life and together,
We will thank God,
The world is ours,
Hope, hope, hope.

La vie

Ecoute le plus souvent les choses que les etres,
La vie est belle , elle est magnifique,
Ecoute le plus souvent les choses que les etres,
La vie est faite de bonheur, de joies ,d 'esperances,
Ecoute aussi les etres,il ya un frémissement, ce bruit
Rappelle que quelque chose va se passer,
C est le vent qui est dans notre Coeur qui va transformer le monde,

Ce vent va faire bouger le monde,
Un jour, ces choses arroseront nos esprits,
Ces choses modifieront la vie et ensemble,
Nous dirons merci a dieu,
Le monde est a nous,
Espoir, espoir, espoir !

Ibou

A qui la faute ? Who is to blame?

Sous un temps clément et doux
.Ce jeune homme en plein cœur de Durban, je l'ai rencontré
Le long de cette route où Dieu avait prévu notre rencontre.
Dans la vingtaine il semblait être
D'avoir enduré la douleur et la misère depuis un siècle.
Il semblait convaincre et paraître

Visage boursoufflé, le regard hagard, inquiet et désemparé
Sur la tête chapeau en laine tricoté à la main
Devant moi, en sens opposé il marchait
Dans une démarche pas très certaine.
A mon niveau, il s'arrêta, me regarda pendant quelques instants.
Se dégageait de lui, une forte odeur de tabac.

Je pris peur et pendant le même temps restai immobile incapable d'avancer.
Puis comme mue par une force intérieure, je m'éloignai,
L'obligeant on dirait, d'en faire autant.
Comment s'appelait-il ? Paul ? John ? Peter ? Peu importe !!!
C'était un jeune homme ! C'était un homme !
Ayant droit à la dignité humaine, au respect et à la vie

Injustice ? Exclusion ? Mauvais sort ?

Jeune homme, force de lance de ton pays
Jeune homme, fleur d'aujourd'hui, espoir de demain
Jeune homme, symbole de vie, symbole de joie
Jeune homme, acteur actif du développement futur de ton pays
Toi marchant, exerçant et donnant l'impression d'aller dans l'impasse
Toi qui désemparé dans une nature à la fois douce et rude

A qui la faute ?

A la nature ? Oui serait-on tenté de dire
A l'Homme ? Facilement, on peut
l'accuser

A tes parents ? C'est très facile de
l'affirmer

A ton pays ? La critique semble facile,
mais l'art difficile

A toi ? Tu diras que tu n'en es qu'une
simple victime

Alors à qui la faute ?

Elise



A plant which carries three personalities, and yet has its own distinctive personality!!

A shrub, with the red looking like petals (resembles two other plants in a very different way)

The stem has green as a base with small red hairy on the stem. The green leaves have red veins, which probably manufacture the red petals, but its only the few leaves at the top which turn red and the rest remain greenish with red veins. The back side of the green leaves, is pale green, contrasted with the red veins, while the back of the red leaves is pale red. The leaf is connected to the stem by a small hairy bud. Probably the location of seeds.

What strikes me from the beginning is that this plant resembles two different plants in my own garden. First, there is a shrub with similar leaves except for the red veins, but does not end up with red petals, and another one with different leaves and stem but has similar red petals. This is a puzzle to me. Initially I thought this is genetically modified, but a close examination, and by instincts, it does seem to be a natural plant.

(In our human life, we probably carry similar personalities and yet we hold our own identity)

The green in my cultural context stands for peace, and red for blood, sometimes, violence. And yet, blood is the source of our being, the life . And yet, the plant stands so peaceful that an association with violence does not exist. The red and the red veins resembles our human veins with blood feeding into our bodies. But the paradox is, the scientific process of

manufacturing food in plants (from my traditional biology knowledge) results from photosynthesis which works with the sun. This is yet another puzzle to me.

Poem:

You puzzle me the way you carry three personalities,
The red leaves with red veins,
The green leaves with red veins,
Like red rose without the cent of a rose,
Like my garden shrub without the red leaves,
Like the garden shrub except for the red leaves.
You puzzle me as you symbolize peace,
You puzzle me the way you symbolize life,
You puzzle me because you have your own identity.

Ruth

My Object – The Ant

A small, but ever-busy creature on earth. It has a shining body whatever its shed is, whether brown or black. It crawls on soil and dusty ground. You wonder how it then keeps itself shining given the environment it stays, work and stay.

Always moving with speed from one direction to another. It is very tiny in built and you wonder how it survives, where the food it eats goes and how it breathes and so on. Everything about its survival is amazing; it leaves you wondering with its tiny body, which looks like just a string that joins the head and the other end. It is amazing how an ant plays its part in gathering food; it works with its team members to create a habitat and carrying food from wherever to its destination. In creating a habitat it leaves a very visible mark in form of a heap of soil with a hole usually in the middle. The heap of soil is usually visible because the soil will be coming

*from underground and will be different
from the soil on the surface.*

*It is a creature that crawls and works in
danger. There is danger of it being
stepped on by living creatures and
moving objects like cars, but it does its
daily activities as if there is no danger.
You only find out that it knows that there
is danger when you touch it, it moves
with speed such that you can quickly
lose track of it especially when you find
it among its fellows. Fun how it appears
dead when you put it between your
hands, only to see or feel it moving
again as if it wants to run away. If you
keep it for long between your hands, you
feel it moving its legs and if you loosen
up it will start escaping.*

Poem

Ant Ant! What an amazing creature you
are



The Wedding Drum

Jocelyn Muller

Listen, Listen to the beating...

Listen to the beating, beating drum

*Listen, listen to the drum beating, beating
deep in your heart*

*Listen, listen to the drum beating, beating
one with your heart*

Listen sister, listen brother.

The drum is the messenger of Africa

Today the drum speaks of a wedding

*The drum sends a message of the marriage of
Self with Self*

Shining, like you have never been near
dust

Yet on dusty soil you crawl

You are full of life

Ever busy with your life

You are so small

But what you carry is amazing

It is amazing how you carry twenty times
your weight

Ant! You are amazing creature

Very vulnerable to all living creatures
and moving objects

There is the danger of being trodden by
human beings as you crawl

But still you carry on with your busy life
As if there is no danger

Ant! I envy your smartness, and ever-
shining look

Your energy and concentration in what
you do is my source of inspiration.

To do what I have to do against all odds

Precious



What? People say,

Yes! beats the drum

How? People ask,

*Listen responds the drum, Be silent and
listen...*

The drum beats out questions that ask:

*How can you love another when you haven't
found love for yourself,*

When your body is fighting your mind,

When your mind is fighting your soul,

When your soul is fighting your spirit?

*How can you love another sister or brother,
when you aren't one with who, You Are.*

*The drum beats that when these parts beat in
unison,*

*The power is greater than the power of the
individual parts.*

*The drum beats that when these parts beat in
unison,*

A new person is borne,

Again and again.

Today, beats the drum,

I announce the vows of Self to Self

Today, beats the drum,

I demand that all who hear my message

celebrate this marriage, this union.

The drum beats a warning to Self and Self,

*The drum warns that these vows needs to
renewed,*

*The drum warns that these vows need to be
nurtured,*

*The drum warns that you need to find the
heart,*

Of a creative and lasting union.

Today declares . . . Self to Self,

I vow to a joyous union,

*Of the top of the head with the soles of the
feet,*

The left breast with the right,

The body with the mind,

The mind with the soul,

The soul with the spirit,

Yes, beats the drum, they all beat as one,

As one, to the beat of the drum,

To the beat of your heart.

Dancing joyously in union.

Purple flower description

*My object is a succulent purple flower
with a thick succulent flower. It has two
petals that interlock to form a shell. Its
stem is succulent, a succulence
consistent with that of an aloe flower.*

*Inside the shellfish shape is a collection
of seeds, dead leaves dead insects and
etc. It is difficult to describe in detail the
content of this shell, but it is a collection
of dead plants and insects.*

*This flower resembles a snail in shape,
all hard exterior and soft core.*

Poem

Like a pre-dawn sky you bloom.
Colour emerging out of your blossom
So rich in colour
So rich in texture
So rich in body
So rich in feel.

Purple flower, beautiful purple flower
Were I to name you
I would name you Miss Purple Power
Your purple exudes power
You purple exudes warmth
Your purple exudes royalty

Yet you are so modest
Hidden in the leaves of a modest aloe
Sometimes obscured by dead leaves
Sometimes obscured by buy other
leaves in purple
Yet you little flower you drew me.

Off your aloe your life will be short
For now you are my companion
Sharing with me a life away
Away from those we love
Sad that in picking you I killed you
But would I ask you to know I loved you
To yourself you drew me
To yourself, too I draw myself

Buhle Mbambo

My Anchor My Future

My anchor
With out you there is no future
Knit together on a small stem
You were once green, ripened, slowly
opened
The seed inside came tumbling out for
the future
You stand out and show the world
You are the source of the seed for the
future
Closely knit with, big, medium and small
All for harmony and future
My beautiful
Strength lies in togetherness
Strength lies in opening up
Strength lies in giving way
Well anchored on a small beautiful stem
Old, young, women and men have a
role to play now and the future

Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo

The Lighter

The lighter brings light into my life
Oh! Oh! Oh! How beautiful this is

It gives me hope for a brighter future
It brings me closer to the person that I
want to be
It is the best thing that could happen in
my life

It guides me through the dark alleys of
life
It takes me away from the dangers of
the night
It makes me a happy person
And keeps a smile on my face.

The lighter links me with GRACE
Oh Grace, what could I do without you?
Because of you I have found light
Light in my life
Light in my research
Oh! Oh !Oh!

Light, light, light.

Let there be light always in my life
And another GRACE Part 2 to give me
more light.

Elizabeth

Ah ! Douce promenade !

*Le long de cette allée,
bordée de mille variétés de fleurs,
je marche.
Absorbée par mes pensées,
Presque insensible à
cette nature merveilleuse,
je marche.*

*Tu que j'ai souvent passée,
admirant furtivement la beauté,
Tu jaillis exubérante, insistante
et t'impose à ma vue.*

*Tu veux que je te regarde,
que je te découvre,
Belle fleur d'un rouge flamboyant
que j'ai toujours regardée,
Sans jamais m'arrêter ?
Belle fleur qui a toujours
fait partie de mon jardin physique,
Sans que je connaisse ton nom.
Egoïste, je t'ai toujours plantée partout,
sans jamais connaître ton nom,*

*Aujourd'hui tu t'imposes à moi et me dit :
arrête et contemple ma splendeur.
Tu veux me parler de la vie.
Tu sembles si insignifiante et
pourtant, tu es si mystérieuse.*

*Tout ton être déjà ,
dans le bouton est contenu.
Il n'y a rien à rajouter,
rien à retrancher*

*Oui je vais te regarder, t'admirer,
Essayer de percer ton mystère
ou tout simplement voir comment,
amicalement, respectueusement
nous pouvons mieux nous connaître
pour mieux cohabiter.*

Gisèle Yitamben

Oh! sweet promenade!

*Along this alley, bordered
with thousand varieties of flowers,
I am walking.
Absorbed by my thoughts,
Almost insensitive to this marvelous
nature,
I am walking.*

*You that I often passed,
admiring furtively the beauty,
insistent beauty,
You spouted out exuberant,
insistent and imposing on my sight.*

*You want that I look at you,
that I discover you,
Beautiful flower of blazing red,
which I always looked at,
without ever stopping me?*

*Beautiful flower, which was always
a part of my physical garden
Without knowing your name.
Egoist, I always planted you everywhere,
without ever knowing your name,*

*today you imposing on me
and say to me stop, and
contemplate my splendor.
You want to speak to me about life.
You seem so insignificant and yet,
you are so mysterious.*

*You are already contained in the button.
There is nothing to add,
nothing to cut off.*

*Yes I will look at you, admiring you,
Trying to discover your mystery
or quite simply to see How,
in a friendly way, respectfully
we can better know each other
for better cohabiting.*

Gisele

A writer's letter to the treasured object: the Grape Vine

*The Grape Vine, you let yourself known to me in
the most unsuspecting manner. As I walked down
the road a brown van playing loud music came
behind me speeding. A few steps a head of me
the van made a weird noise and I saw something
being push behind by the force of the speeding
van. Grape Vine you caught my attention! I
looked at you and thought certainly you could
not be the object, my object. No sooner had the
van moved you backwards than a small white car
moved you a little closer to me. In my
bewilderment and wonder another small brown*

car brought you even closer to me. This time I did not hesitate but picked you up as my treasure.

My object, my treasure, the Grape Vine, how do I describe you! Where do I start to describe you? You have so many tiny/minute branches that I could never do you justice. What language do I use? What words do I use, my treasure? You look dry, dead; yes you have served your purpose. The grapes juicy as they must have been were taken off from your limbs and you were thrown away. Oh Grape Vine, how do I describe you? Where do I start? How do I hold you? Let me hold you closer to me, to see all the tiny and magnificent branches. How do I distinguish your little braches from each other? Oh what a wonder? Let me hold you with your braches facing up!

You have a centre branch of about three (3) cms and four tiny branches join the centre branch at different points and angles. The third branch from the bottom joins the centre branch at almost 90 degree angle. As such your centre branch is not straight and you appear crooked. The first two little branches join the centre branch at the same point but in opposite directions as if to balance the load you once carried. The branch on my right is much longer and thins out towards the end. This little branch has an offshoot tiny branch, as well as tiny other braches. The opposite little branch has numerous tiny branches of all sizes and shapes and about 19 in all. What is not clear is whether all these tiny braches had grapes on them. At the tip of the central branch there are two little branches; one that is a little thicker has two tiny sub-branches. The tiny branch has five tiny sub-braches. ... Grape Vine, I could never do you justice, you are indescribable but I can see you and in mind you will forever live.

The Grape Vine

The Grape Vine you are small, look insignificant but you tell a story

A story of the heavy load you once carried
Veiled in anticipated success, your carry the load to maturation, you bear fruit

Yes! You bear fruit, fruit to nourish and fruit to make whole

Like you Grape Vine I have a load,

A load to carry to term, will my load mature and bear fruit?

Grape Vine let your fruit nourish me

For your fruit is my refreshment, my source of living water, my source of life, my life
Grape Vine, how can I ever give you up!
Oh Grape Vine!

Farewell My Grape Vine

Thou at old and dry, frail and unprotectable from harm

Thou art gone

Broken into tiny, little pieces

My GrapeVine not possible

But thou art gone

But thou shall live

Yes, thou shall live in my mind and this pen that writes

Farewell, Farewell for now my *Muse*

Farewell my *Muse!*

Consolata

Tree – the object that pulled me

As I took a meditative writers walk along Sir Arthur Road, I was pulled by nature specifically by a tree. Even as I tried to convince myself that this is just like any other tree, I found some intriguing feeling pulling me back to see the tree. This tree had some special features that I have not seen before and others that I have seen with other trees

The tree generally looks ugly and like one that did not really want to grow tall. So its trunk is crooked and turning east and west and half way then south. The roots were also confused and wanted to come out of the ground. The scars of changed directions are visible and of course others have been inflicted by the Durban city authorities to make it be the way they want it to grow. Eventually, when the tree matured, it has only three huge branches which give way to more and smaller branches. What I found intriguing is that the branches are just as confused as the mother tree that they keep on crossing each other. As they cross they fused and transplanted and continued growing. All this growth is horizontal and forms a wide mesh covering a wide area. The tree produces a cool shade, traps moisture to the roots which has a nice lush of green grass underneath. On top of the tree were monkeys basking in the sun. I could also see some bird nests. These features set me thinking and searching for meaning. Yes there was meaning in life we live as we struggle to find

locus and great lessons which I capture in the poem.

Meaning of life

*oh you tree
you endured the struggle of life
you struggled to find direction
first you tried to grow east in the
direction of the rising sun
then you tried west in the direction of
the setting sun
that was not to be
you eventually faced south and settled*

*oh you tree
the struggles to define your path of
growth are clear -
the ugly scars shows the difficult
decisions you had to make -
or forced to make*

*today you made a decision not to grow
taller - for yourself
you have now chosen to grow broader
you have chosen to bring forth huge
branches
the branches have brought forth even
more branches*

*in this is life and sharing
with mesh of fused branches you have
given service to others
birds, and monkeys enjoy walking on
you
grass grows greenly underneath
human beings enjoy the cool shade*

*but as you serve others you serve
yourself
the bigger the mesh the better the
moisture you capture for yourself
but so is the shade and benefits you give
to others
it's the meaning of life
to serve and be served*

on you tree

Muriuki

Gemêas

Tão idênticas
Tão iguais
Tão parecidas

Por acaso são esculturas?
Por acaso são fotocópias?

Deixa me olhar-vos
Deixa-me observar-vos

Ambas de cabelo curto
Ambas de cabelo branco
Ambas respirando o mesmo ar que eu

Ambas de lábios vermelhos,
Vermelho da vida
Vermelho da paixão
Vermelho do amor que vos fez

Não, vocês são verdadeiras
Tem vida
Respiram o ar que eu respiro

Neste dia azul
Neste céu azul
Vestidas de azul
Mostrando a beleza do azul do mar
Vocês são serenas como o azul claro
E ciumentas como o mar zangado

Abençoada a quem vos carrega
Abençoado o azul que me guiou a voz
Abençoadas são as gemêas
Gertrudes

Twins

You are so identical...
You are so equal...
You are so similar...

Are you paintings?
Are you a photocopy?

Let me look at you ...
Let me observe you...

Both of you have short and white hair...
Both of you are breathing the same air...

Both of you with red lips...
Red of passion...
Red of the life...
Red of love, that you are made of...

No, you are real people...
You have life, you breathe my air...

In this blue day,
In this blue sky,
In this blue you are in light blue
covering you...
To show that you are beautiful as the
sea...
You are serene as the light blue...
And your jealousy as the sea when
angry...

Blessed is who carried you...
Blessed is the beauty of the blue...
That made me see you...
Blessed twins...

Gertrudes