

MAGIC 50 COVID-19 POEMS by Sandile Ngidi and Yuri  
Kageyama (Aug. 31, 2020 ~ April 5, 2021)

1 (S)

Poetry kins us to these basal stems.

Moisture is life.

Gardens petals fresh & resilient.

Mother breathes songs of roots strong.

Words curate a healthy leaf mass, fruits defying leaf scorch  
defining these heavy seasons.

Plumes as words dancing in the winds.

2 (Y)

Dragonflies flutter by the slowly swelling river.

Moisture is life.

Blue-green of their wings play in the light.

Mother cries songs of currents deep.

Leaves of Grass bend soft with the seasons, shining dew  
recalling these tears of birth.

Plumes as words dancing in the winds.

3 (S)

Far in the somewhere of dazzling seas,  
nothing stops the seasons of fruitful friendships.

Dancing field to field feeding the imagination,  
it's the spring of delights, radished words.

Grass gesturing towards well-shaped flower leaves,  
moistured mosaics of words.

Life.

4 (Y)

Plumes as words dancing in the winds,

Tiny sparrows warble, not in fun but fear,

Scattering like debris, dirt, weeds and words,

Over oceans and deserts, swamps and streams,

The now of Dreams connect the All of history, the eternity  
of Forgotten nightmares.

Yes, Life.

5 (S)

Across seas the rooster is red,

Crowing in the weeds.

Greek sea edge sinking Black lives.

The wind is nightmarish.

In drying Eldorado Park, slain Nathaniel Julies is rising.

Fresh gardens strut their stuff,

A poetry skyline in full sun,

greening the eversick landscape. Life.

6 (Y)

Poetry whispers in tanka and haiku,

Across oceans, red, blue, yellow and black,

Repeating of pain, repeating of life,

Repeating of love? Repeating,

Iwao Hakamada just smiles and believes

In God.

7 (S)

After the soft rains,

Blooms fresh.

My epistle is no flower.

Naked, Black and pregnant,

Woman shot beast-like on a darkened Mozambique road -

Drowning soldier-savagery

Shamed seasons.

Lizalis'idinga lakho,

God of Black women now rise,

in tanka-maskandi cries.

Poppies.

8 (Y)

She is duped and gets easily used;

She is defiant and easily explodes;

She is vain, obsessed with appearance;

She let herself go, looks fat and shabby;

She is too quiet and can't speak up;

She is psychotic and can't shut up;

She is all these things, all at once,

Deranged.

9 (S)

Would you dance naked on your veranda

seeing madigras brass band

mad boots on grass,

killing your soul's shongololo?

Beyond the gleam of your silverware, the sun still shines.

Shun the sun if drunk in the polemic of your vomit.

The palm tree is tall still,

yet peaceful.

10 (Y)

Her robe translucent like briny waves

An ancient pagoda zooming to a giant moon

She will never come back

To an earth that's unjust, unequal, unfree;

She will never look back

At those who have sought to capture her

Her eternal dance

Gagaku

(11) S

We hello each other,

a morning ritual.

He walks into the dew,

whistling with the ancestors.

Mapholoba, a shepherd breathing poverty.

This dark mist, common as whites walking their dogs.

Seeing them pee with glee.

Peace.

His dogged legs a plea.

Ulaka lwabaphansi.

(12) Y

Four an unlucky number,

sounding the same as the word for “death,”  
the 442 has two fours  
and a two,  
any even number unlucky,  
divisible, inevitable separation coming,  
and Go For Broke they did,  
from desert Camps,  
to win what they never had,  
the right to be American,  
not an enemy.

13 (S)

Casting a warm eye on this land  
my line to kiss her forehead  
give her gladness sandwiches  
water my mother’s spinach  
add black pepper to the seasons  
good taste into the bowl

a poetry pot firing the broil  
simmering hope  
the slow dawn of a brighter day.

14 (Y)

Taking a lazy walk next to this river  
the gulls kiss the tips of the water  
children laugh in floppy hats  
I remember my father's beatings  
my mother's Edamame  
cooked in Salt, served with cold beer  
a poetry pot firing the broil  
simmering hope  
the slow dawn of a brighter day.

15 (S)

Stratus clouds in the skies  
Wishing blue skies smiled  
Chuckled like Louis Armstrong

The air was friendly

Night undaunting

Unbanning lazy solitude strolls

Poets oets perching in trees

Chickening every silly sunset

Dazzled by darkness

Her seductive light.

16 (Y)

Skyscraper windows

Unblinking light

Dot the aging skies of night

With stories each window tells

That age-old face of every city,

Tokyo, LA, Johannesburg,

Breathing suicidal loneliness

With violence smoothed only by time

His seductive weeps

Await the trickle of dawn

17 (S)

after a long trip is a place

where one returns

changes into fresh clothes

puts the heavy load down

drinks cold water

eats porridge and amasi

while the dog licks wounds back to health

where suicidal fantasies die

hopelessly lacking any poetic imagination.

18 (Y)

sighs of exhaustion breathe through

the night, screams of wind choked silent,

kissing pleats on rain-filled waters,

river to river, sea to sea, blood to blood,

is it dawn somewhere else?

do the birds care enough to remember  
the messages from that somewhere else?

19 (S)

He says hi

inkabi back from jail

straw grass world

exhaustion

brute storms

leopard lonesome

blood-heavy yoke

motherless calf

can't be licked for first milk.

He's a local

no hate blues.

Do I offer my hand

to the killer-ox

talk weather

disgust Bushiri?

20 (S)

Body seducing sleep

Swinging on her axis

Tell the night be tight.

Behind the sun sleep is light.

In dreams lovers kiss the ground in flight

Saliva no dread on Covid lane.

Children dance the morning dew into song.

Laughter.

Phezu komkhono!

Bujitsu!

21 (Y)

That needed daily fix of kimchee,

Granpa's growling snores

Rattles the shoji screens,

Like gently shaking maracas:

Where miso soup cooking,  
And cooking and cooking  
Wafts through  
The peppermint morning air.

22 (Y)

Memories repeat  
Even in dementia eyes:  
A ring that sparkles,  
Gem of yellow,  
Rainbow and diamond,  
Promising a love eternal,  
Fool-proof, never betrayal,  
Like the immeasurable,  
Unfailing Worth  
Of Truth and  
Freedom.

23 (S)

In a deadly pandemic  
blackened skies  
hellish eyes  
greed so pathetic  
so trump-manic  
muzzled jingle bells  
Wakashio in Mauritius  
shits oil  
kills marine life  
kills food  
kills kanji  
even after Fukushima  
drills invade the Okavango  
kill life  
kill laughter  
Pula.  
(24) Y

Death nudges closer

The pandemic world we share,

Skin cracked of disinfectant,

Sweat dripping on masks,

Prayer and hope,

Remembering music:

Winston Monwabisi "Mankunku" Ngozi

(25) S

Pain pierces the heart like an assassin's knife.

See the restless sea.

Shingled memories, the coffee blues.

Rumours of Christmas in the warming moist air.

Humming with the moon, its tears.

Pleading for the lost lotus flower seeds.

Impepho.

26 (Y)

one pandemic year

blurs

into the next,

those who hate

must hate

blinded to truth and fact

but we recognize

more than ever

what is important,

and who

27 (S)

America, poop fools climb walls in tantrums.

Haters copiously eat garlic.

Whiteness is no guesswork.

Hard stools on TV.

For COVID-19 deaths to be sweet & swift.

Trumps.

In my hood, the owl headlines death.

A cry for a strong midrip.

Palms.

28 (S)

The stubborn heaviness in our shoulders.

The bloodshot eyes, now we know,  
our lives are being irrevocably torn apart.

Those who are ill, dying and dead, are familiar names.

Family.

Friends.

Beloved ones.

Death is no longer a metaphor.

The nightmare. The nightmare.

The nightmare.

29 (S)

Since we are already here.

Poetry of faith at the full.

Kindly keep these sandwiches, too.

To be shared at the golden hour  
That poets dream of,  
Even as it madly thunders.

30 (Y)

Our poem will end  
When we overcome;  
We will celebrate  
For once,  
An end  
As we always do  
With beginnings

31 (Y)

Laugh, belittle, ridicule,  
Call me naive  
Over-blown  
Narcissistic,  
Easily duped,

Those names,  
Whatever is up  
Entitled sleeves,  
To silence stereotype enslave.

32 (S)

The dread of your dying wick.  
A single lung blighting all joy.  
Memories of your dead mother.  
Your pus-filled body.  
A cry for green stones of home. Hot springs.  
Jail is sad.  
Prisoners die at this cursed hour.  
Now on my kneeling mat, milling the moon.

33 (S)

At the local dumpsite, I flinch  
improvise a mind-soul spin.  
Kids playing atop the site,

happy-hip outdoor crib with a view.

Good times rolling like Kamala Harris,  
dogs fighting over smelly nappies.

Kids running away, stained condoms  
popping up.

They are doing it.

34 (Y)

it used to be simple

getting on a plane

breathing without a mask

touching a doorknob

and not being afraid

it used to be simple

laughing on an elevator

just going out

hugging someone

you love

35 (S)

Ziyagiya ziqethuke.

Mqombothi plastic cups.

Lives dangling on the lion's jaws.

Ease the storm beloved ancestors.

We miss the magic of hugging the clay pot.

The odd belch.

The tickling cold stir on lips.

The Khongisa spirit.

Songs against thunder and disease.

Rain.

(Section 35 was written by Sandile Ngidi on the day of the death of legendary South African vocalist, and his friend, Sibongile Khumalo, evoking the spirit of one her great songs, a prayer to the gods of Africa. Let us mourn in prayer this collective loss as we face a world torn by the pandemic.)

36 (Y)

Shivers of monster icebergs

Fevers of raging forest fires  
Fuzzy spikes running amok  
Vessels organs flesh and muscle  
Dropping phlegm immunity bombs  
More virus more virus more virus  
Tentacles piercing nails red-blue  
Hoping to wipe out Humanity  
Weighing who gets to live  
Which rich nations get vaccines first

37 (S)

The vaccine arrives in the rain,  
I wave on TV,  
frown lines of relief.

Puppy-happy, playing fetch

The bride is here, for  
migrants too.

Waves crash onto shore,

a swash of stars

arresting the frozen hours.

Maize seedlings ready, hands to earth.

Fresh starts.

38 (Y)

Yurikamome float like lotus

Heaven on earth

This river of fruit and birth,

Tender Flowers,

A moment in this pandemic Hell

That enslaves, rapes, steals,

Infections of greed and envy

39 (S)

Humming leaves giving rhythm to the reticent day.

Fruits.

Mapholoba off to his cattle post.

Our morning ritual in flight.

Salutes to sunrise.

Laughter shared like bread.

A mbhubhudlo bond.

Songs.

The heaven of village handshakes.

Palm leaves.

40 (Y)

Hot pink buds are shaking dew,

Airplanes roar over clouds of spring

And the weeping of sirens,

Piercing the city smog;

We wonder if it's COVID-19

Or some other emergency;

We pray for anshin anzen,

Safe and secure,

As elusive as those broken promises.

41 (S)

Sibiya's laughs are boiled maize kernels we throw in the air,  
Right into our mouths.

Sweet rain drops.

In the wasp-killing sun, we breathe dreams into the soil,  
Muting the weeping sirens.

The soil's ulnar verse spreads and breaks like seawaves.

We are silk songs.

42 (Y)

We wake up today to the Earth shuddering,  
Rumbling in fear of human evil,  
Magnitude 7.3 almost midnight.

We wake up today to water levels sinking  
In reactors that sank 10 years ago  
Meltdowns in Fukushima,  
Half-cracked containers spewing,  
No one gets close without dying;  
Remembering human greed,

Evacuating in fear of radioactive imperfection.

43 (S)

You ntanga yethu, David Sibisi.

Walking talking with stoic grace.

Broomcorn strong.

Smile bristles giving the day her delayed radiance.

Some milk cows perished in the recent hellish rains.

But you braving the forest,

giving the village her health.

Brooms.

44 (S)

It's a year since that freezing wind struck,

left its bloodied knife on the floor.

The winding path of pain, indefinite tracks on a hill.

The dead can't smell the flowers, and play with their dogs  
anymore.

Yet memory drapes each day with protean seeds.

45 (Y)

Smell the soy sauce cooking

See the squints stab desert skies

Hear the heartbeat taiko vibration

Feel the texture of kimono silk

Taste the ocean sashimi brine

So Simple: Has it been a year?

We are alive we mourn filled with love

Can you remember how that love made you afraid?

46 (S)

Empty lands,

where brutal spiderworlds

silence women.

In the name of tradition,

the kikuyu loses her green heart.

Tribesmen betray justice.

Blowing their noses at a woman,

as she cries for justice.

When her speech is chilli hot,  
her eyes a stubborn flame.

47 (Y)

Vagina warm and snug,  
Dark and tight Slant Eyes,  
Shot at a Massage Spa;  
Skin as smooth as China Silk,  
Straight Black Hair a Tightrope,  
Shot at a Massage Spa;  
Serve your addiction  
But Not racially motivated,  
Shot at a Massage Spa;  
He just had a bad day,  
The women are dead.

48 (S)

Sunny days are darkening at load-shedding speed.

Seasons of foul stench.

Skunks squealing with careless glee.

Children too happy to play outside

Far from the smell of the political millipede.

To wink at the transient sunrise.

Holding on to its warm scarlet scarf.

49 (Y)

Oblivious to the pandemic,

Sakura buds fatten,

Burst in benevolent explosions,

Millions of screams

Crying out to Stop Hate,

Pink pompoms spilling Pink Periods

On a timeless Manuscript

Of pavement and dirt.

50 (S)

right skies and the sea full of grace, heroic balsamic kisses.

Hugh Masekela's Homeric bloom.

Bliss.

It's the season of the kindest sunlight.

Petunias strutting their lot in lilac, red -

And Hughey's enduring love petals.

Hip grazing in the April grass.