

What holds poetry together in this city, what holds me together.

[Genesis - we were trying to build a home / reflection]

Koleka Putuma

we begin with fragments / or / in the in-between / or / at the root / canals must be dredged to be treated / or / rooting /
where or / who are your anchors? / *roots* / synecdoches / [suh-nek-duh-kees] / parts accounting for the whole / or /
wine routes winding through cemeteries / history's tendrils twining / we begin in ceremony / blood / water
fire: our language of protest / or refusal / we begin with the inevitable: endings / we begin with excavating / what the
ground could not hold / what it reluctantly offers up / accumulative grief / waste / treasures / ruptures determining who
/ or what disappears / who / or what stays /
we begin with mother / what was given / to her / what she gave / to you / where and how it was held /
until we learned how to lay it down / who to carry it with /
the suffering / yours / hers / ours / Christ's / women / gays / broke/n bitches / who cannot afford to live in this
airbnb-infested-paradise? / *paradise* to/for whomst? / "We begin with plein and pleasure, let it be known... Between
us lust sits in burgundy. We are easily movable in the work of the Lord."¹ / Castle of Good Hope / Green Point Tennis
Courts / temporary belongings / removal residues / red ants: *we are easily movable in the work of the lord* /
there are many ways to be excluded / from / being
seen / attractions / sites for sore / disguises / cathedral of cranes / its gods:
profit and developments / more room for capital / less space for people / expansions into margins / a new dawn is still
coming? / asylum ruling fuels unrest / who gets to be here while ~~they~~ we wait / a glimmer of something adjacent to
hope / Tafelberg ruling / what else to hold onto? / "What holds poetry together in this city, what holds me together, is
the knowledge that I cannot resist seeing; what holds me is the real look of things. If I see someone I see the ghost of
them, the air around them, and where they've been. If I see a city I see its living ghostlines — the stray looks, the
dying hands. I see its needs and its discomforts locked in apartments, its time that no one has — the growing citizenry
of homelessness..."² / walls / drones / illusions of order / a new state-of-the-art digital nerve centre to coordinate
public safety / we are a culmination of nerve centres / unnerved / nervous conditions /
surveillance states / heightened states of being / in a
body / in a
body / in a
body /
body /
body /
pulled from rivers / dumped near waterways / *I am still here* /
In my body / between presence and disappearance / not disappeared / we
begin by mapping the ways we live / we begin
with song / notes on survival:
grieve to renew /
resist to renew /
rage to renew /
burn to renew /
submerge to renew /
care to renew / tending to / tenderness / is our heritage too /
adorn the face, not to conceal / to enshrine / weave
foliage, cattails and canola / around where it hurts / where it is healing /
place an Ikebana on the grave / *what holds poetry together*
in this city, what holds me together: / you / us / fellowship / around dinner tables / on the dance floor / Saturday
morning markets in neighborhoods changing / rapidly / walks through a farm blooming with arum lilies, watsonias,

¹ Nondwe Mpuma, Eden, Peach Country

² Dionne Brand, A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging

dahlias, and freesias / gardens / ingredients for potions and medicine / for our hair / for hangovers / for nourishment / graffiti etched into concrete in a city always under construction / Sunday morning koesisters / then / Sunday lunch prepared by a lover / our hangout spot that has survived gentrification / we light it up / the beer, still at a decent price / neighbors who greet / who know each other by name / gossip between onions and sugar / *what holds poetry together in this city, what holds me together:* / loving you / being loved by you / how are you? / really wanting to know / waiting for a response while holding / eyes / hands / each other / us / always / us.