



# JACLR

*Journal of Artistic  
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Research*

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**Ndaba Sibanda**

**“ ‘Mabhonga’, ‘Lost In The Fire’, ‘Willow Words’ & ‘Write Me Letters’ ”**

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Ndaba **SIBANDA**

**‘Mabhonga’, ‘Lost In The Fire’, ‘Willow Words’ & ‘Write Me Letters’**

#### **Mabhonga**

The herder was always in trouble. It was agonising and disturbing to see him being at the receiving end of insults-- sometimes even kicks and blows.

Melusi was a peace-loving keeper of Mabhonga, our gigantic and energetic bull. We couldn't have asked for a better cowherd in the entire world. He loved his job.

Mabhonga had amazing strength, stamina and aggression. He was just too wild to spend a single night in the kraal and to graze with other family-owned cattle.

When Mabhonga fell in love and was on heat, he was unstoppable and insatiable. He was an aggressive, jealous and noisy lover, too. No bull dared to come close.

He loved and fought like crazy. Many a bull had lost a leg or had a scarred body because of Mabhonga`s desirous and ferocious streaks. An infamous fellow.

Mabhonga would either leap over the kraal`s log-loaded wall or rip it apart and invade a neighbour`s field to feast on the maize plants or groundnuts.

The owners of such fields would vent out their ire on poor and helpless Melusi. Mabhonga fuelled rancour and commotion but I wondered why he wasn`t sold.

### **Lost In The Fire**

chaos  
crippling chaos  
the cancerous lies  
practices and posturing  
became untenable and thorny  
the dynamics of power relations  
revealed cecity and absurdity  
people`s life savings  
went up in flames  
their pension  
cents  
were swept away  
when the economy  
melted down  
by  
virtue  
of years and years  
of mismanagement  
and looting  
and populist  
policy pranks

### **Willowy Words**

The man with a sprinkling hair in head said,  
"You can have a coconut-oiled hair or  
a lotioned body that glimmers like a star,  
and shimmer in fleshy and romantic pursuits  
but if you don't wash your body thoroughly  
you are as good as a rancid food eater who thinks  
his mouth and tummy are the refuge for freshness".

### **Write Me Letters**

You have filled me in on what makes you tick,  
took me on a tour of your culture and creed.

You have taken me to places where they dish  
out delicacies and glamour and glitz.

I cannot thank you enough for the body  
of knowledge you have shared with me.

I cannot thank you enough for the superb cuisines  
and places of interest you have exposed me to.

But now, please waste not your breath and time,  
for time for *buts and blah blah* is over.

But now, please dish out your fragilities,  
your *you-ness*, for I pour out my *me-ness*.

Write,  
write me letters...

Write,  
write me letters...

Words whose meanings and sounds

are spelt out in the dictionary of you `n me.

Those whose font sizes dance a lively tap  
to the melody and therapy of my soul.

Words whose meanings and sounds  
are meaningless and soundless to all.

Write me letters at the centre of my heart,  
letters so hot they burn into eternal blazes.

Write me letters whose glorious memories  
time and distance will not shrink or erase.

Write me letters in the hidden bowls of my mind,  
letters so mad they invent and reinvent my world.

Draw me pictures whose shadows and sounds  
and colours I will follow and fall for forever.

Draw me diagrams of the unseen and untouchable  
only seen and touched in the depth of your heart.

Diagrams reflective of the effectiveness of vibes,  
those that sweep one off one`s heart and mind.

Please me tell that our walks and chats and outings  
are the fruit we are beholden to honour and nurture.

Please tell me I am the letters and diagrams  
that have snowballed and sailed away with you.

Write me letters and diagrams about denials  
and the writing off of reality at one`s risk.

Write me letters and diagrams about what lies

beneath the wholeness of you and your life.

Let me drown in their transcendence and elegance,  
so that our deficiencies see the light of fondness.

Let me plunge into the blast furnace of adoration,  
and deal with its heat, lows and highs with conviction.

Bring me the honour and privilege to take a sneak peek  
into our lifetime displeasures and treasures and pleasures.

Bring me all our baggage of staggering secrets and frailties,  
bring them on -- for these are to be in the mirror of frankness.

Write me letters slated in for victory and celebration,  
write me letters endorsed and sealed by our hearts.

Write me letters whose weight is weightless and sight  
sightless in the face of our resolve and affection.

Write,  
write me letters...

Write,  
write me letters...

**Bioprofile of the author:** Ndaba Sibanda was a 2005 National Arts Merit Awards (NAMA) nominee. He compiled and edited *Its Time* (2006), and *Free Fall*. The recipient of a Starry Night ART School scholarship in 2015, Sibanda is the author of *Love O'clock*, *The Dead Must Be Sobbing* and *Football of Fools*. He has contributed to more than twenty-five published books.

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