

Fragments



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Publication details

Acknowledgments

Fragments



Fragmentation – splitting or being broken into tiny pieces.

Lives are fragmented by many forces.

Some pieces can be reconnected, even regrown.

Many shards are lost.

We find ourselves incomplete, unrecognisable.

The pandemic that started in 2020 has scattered us,
disconnected us from ourselves and each other.

I try to reconnect, to find the whole in the fragments.

Thorn

In the vastness of this
Speak for no one
But do not be silent
Describe your fragment
The thorn on the aloe
That you cannot touch
The view from the door
through which you may not walk
The wailing of your heart
On the wind.

March 2020

[#reconnect](#) [#solitude](#) [#fragment](#) [#loss](#)

Photo description

A close shot of the red-tipped thorns and grey-green leaves of a giant aloe, photographed in a Harare garden in March 2020, when COVID-19 hit Africa.





Remnants

Recall the smallest detail
Overlooked in the lost world of before
The cheese and oil beneath the fingernails
The remnants of the bread
Torn seven times in half
Passed from hand to mouth
The question left unasked
Until the never of next time.

April 2020

[#fragment](#) [#bread](#) [#alone](#) [#beforecovid](#)

Photo description

A morsel of blonde ciabatta with a golden crust on the
edge of a white china plate. Beside it, a faint smear of
balsamic vinegar and a few specks of peppercorn. Seen
from above, on the grey slats of a
weathered wooden table.

Royal Natal Yacht Club garden, March 2020, the week lockdown
was announced.



Paradox

Puce and pomegranate plumes
Fold over the Umtamvuna
Only clouds and birds
Dare cross this resurrected border
Paradox of a pandemic
Indiscriminate division.

May 2020

[#umtamvuna](#) [#sunset](#) [#solitude](#) [#lockdown](#)

Photo description

A blazing sunset infuses layers of soft cloud with every shade
of flame and smoke.
The silhouette of a tree breaks the uneven line of the horizon
above a narrow band of darkened landscape.



Harbour walk

Shadows cast light
On layers we might overlook
Holding us with patterns
Where we would not pause.

[#durbanharbour](#) [#shorelines](#)

Photo description

A small section of the Durban harbour at a 45-degree angle, looking down from the harbour wall. Winter sunlight throws a sharp silhouette of the bright blue wrought iron railings onto the wall. The filigree stencil of shadows forms a diagonal line between the rough grey concrete and the velveteen water rippling from deep indigo to dappled cobalt.



Heartlight

If I could fold your light
into the petals of my heart
it would look like this.

June 2020

[#rose](#) [#heart](#) [#fragment](#)

Photo description

Close-up of a yellow rose in full bloom. The petals curl softly
around its centre. Deep orange shadows contrast with sun-
tinged edges.

One rose outlasted the bunch my sister sent for my birthday.



Under the palm

White glare of winter sun
Glints the fronds of coconut palms
They shake and shimmy from the shoulders
At the base of one sits a charcoal man
 gesticulating fiercely,
 forearm jerking hand to mouth
As if signing hunger to the horizon.

July 2020

#durbanharbour #shorelines #fragments

Photo description

The narrow silver-grey trunk of a tall palm tree stretches up to its umbrella of leaves, the circle of fronds fanned out against an azure sky.



From the earth

Ages are cradled here
In my unheld hand
Seed, shell, stone
Scratching my soles
My heart needed
To smell soil again.

9 August 2020

[#soil](#) [#lockdown](#) [#fragment](#)

Photo description

Fingers outstretched from a hand loosely clutching dry,
crumbly soil that is full of decomposing organic matter.
A sprinkle of late afternoon sunlight catches a
few specks of earth.



Jade vine

Dusk invites
Tumescent tongues
To delve for nectar
Seducing the jade vine
Till waxy flowers droop
Their heads,
Anoint their pollinator
The bat, who bears unseen
A crown of golden grain
Message of life
Between generations.

Photo description

A close-up of the waxy bright blue-green, scoop-shaped flowers of the jade vine, with their violet receptacles.

Note

The jade vine reproduces through chiropterophily, that is pollination by bats. Nectar bats are attracted to flowers with luminous petals, large blossoms, fruity aromas, and lots of nectar. They have long tongues and can hover like hummingbirds. The bats poke their tongues in for nectar, causing the flowers to tip down and drop pollen on the bats' heads.



Heartrest

Heartrest in the curve
of a broken shell and
the vanishing point
of beach and ocean.

January 2020

[#umtamvuna](#) [#heartrest](#) [#fragment](#)

Photo description

The weathered skeleton of an uprooted casuarina tree lies across golden sand. In the background, a line of pale dunes and a mound of natural forest abut the estuary mouth. A distant line of surf breaks beneath a vast blue sky, streaked with feathery cloud.

Photo: Umtamvuna estuary 12 January 2020



Leafprint

Secret light of plants
Pathways connecting life
Osmotic breath
Source, resource, coursing
Through all our veins.

February 2020

[#pawpaw](#) [#durbansummer](#) [#fragment](#)

Photo description

The underside of a pawpaw leaf about 60 cms wide,
spread like a green parasol against the Durban
summer sky. The veins are illuminated like yellow
latticework across the 7 palmate lobes.



Tethered

We become
By nature
By design
By habit.

January 2020

[#fragments](#) [#lyme regis](#)

Photo description

Mooring ropes hang slackly into still, green-blue water. The ropes, garlanded with weed, are reflected on the surface, with patchy cloud, creating curved, triangular patterns. The harbour, Lyme Regis, Dorset, England.



Stone

We stand on our past
Trample it
Rarely look it in the face
Until it smothers us.

August 2017

[#fragments](#) [#botanic gardens](#) [#nairobi](#)

Photo description

Four sculptures of heads carved from sandstone pillars, with trees in the background, branches stretched across a patch of cloudy blue sky. Three of the heads face each other, eyes closed, expressions serene, inclined towards a smaller stone head between them.

Photo: National Museum of Kenya Nairobi
Botanic Gardens, June 2017.



Longing

Let go the longing
drizzled into untrod earth.
Lest the vision of what will come
Obscure the beauty of now

June 2020

Photo description

Footprints of an Egyptian goose lead across an undulating estuary shore to converge with ripples of sand, contoured by the tide. Silver-blue water laps at the top-left of the image. A casuarina twig lies in the foreground, a red stone and a pale gold leaf opposite.



Weighted

Step lightly in the thin spaces between worlds
Where fossils press feet against buried ages.
Wind and water salt-lick skin, sculpting the future.
Descend respectfully into the ocean of time.
It holds the spirits of those who slaved
Whose memories have evaporated.

January 2020

[#fragments](#) [#lyme regis](#)

Photo description

A view of the hewn boulders set into the stone wall,
forming a stairway to the top of the Cobb at Lyme Regis.

Photo: Dorset, England, July 2019.



Horizon

Instinctual stretch
Paraphrasing the parallels
Sand, ocean, sky
Standing close enough
To inhale the infinite.

February 2020

[#shorelines](#) [#fragments](#) [#horizon](#)

Photo description

A thin band of ocean divides a rectangle of pale beach from a rectangle of powder blue sky. Sand waves ripple and puffs of cloud drift by. On the horizon stands a figure, a boy aged 15, facing the sea. He wears a wide brimmed hat, white t-shirt and navy shorts. His arms are outstretched like a bird about to fly.



Sunrise

Sunrise erupts in bloody streaks.
Veins of vermillion pulse across
the shoulders of the sky.
Grip the horizon in a fierce embrace.

25 January 2020

Photo description

Fingers of flaming cloud stretch across Durban harbour at dawn. Lights make a dotted line through the darkened buildings beside the dock. The masts of 100 small yachts spike the water like black reeds. On the left, unlit apartment blocks breach the skyline.



Clouded

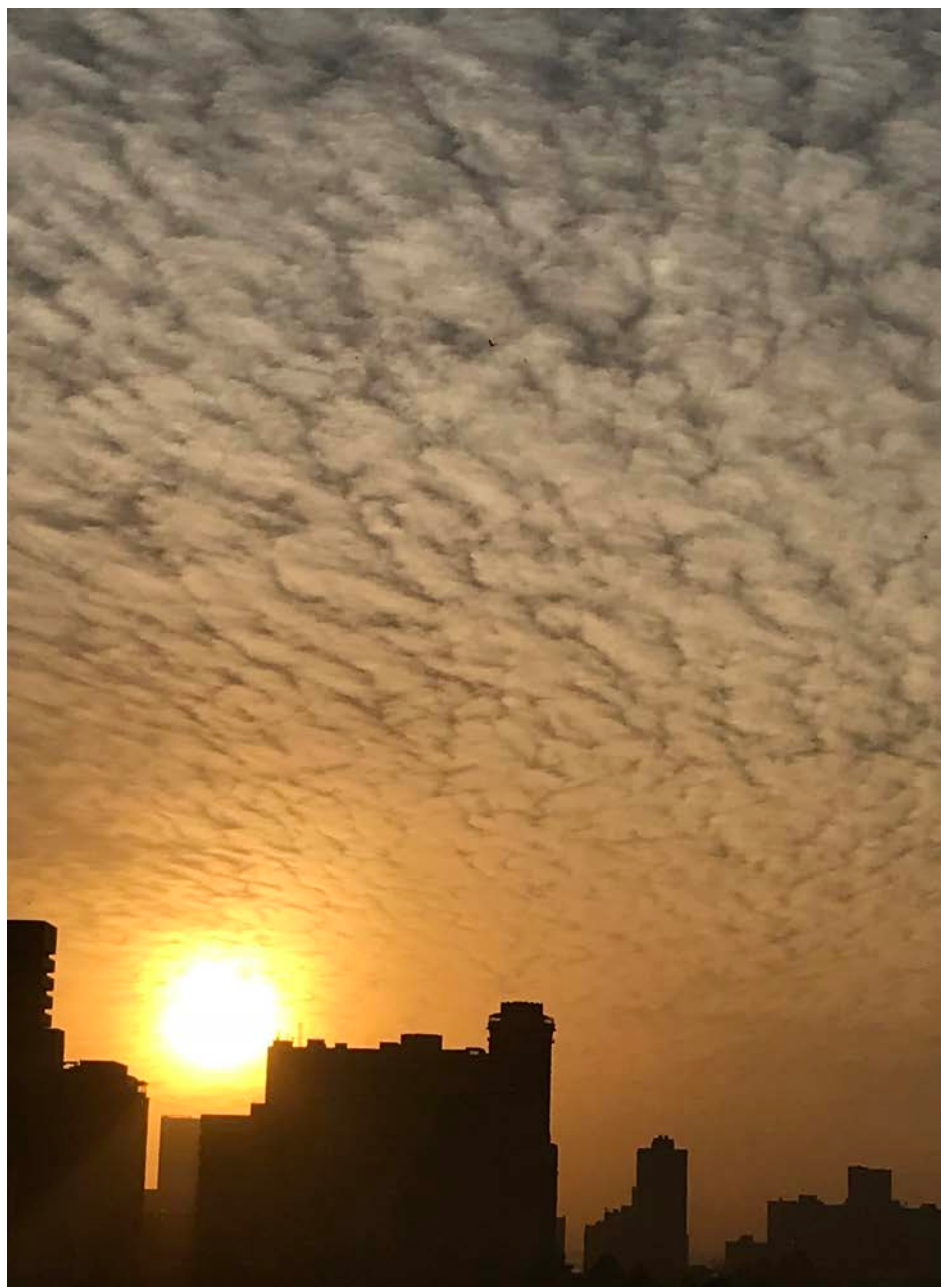
Cream and apricot curdling
over the edge of sunrise.
Gold-flecked puffs of cloud
Lift eyes and thoughts
above the bobbing plastic
and the throbbing trucks.

2 February 2021

[#shorelines](#) [#fragments](#) [#sunrise](#) [#harbour](#)

Photo description

A fluffy patchwork of stratus cloud fills the sky. Cool greys
brighten into a soft blaze around the sun, rising huge and
white behind the silhouetted apartment blocks
opposite Durban harbour.



The art of impermanence

Making the world
For one moment
Perfection in presence
Celebration
Without expectation
All remains
Even memory
Hurled into the wind
Like sand.
Connection with dissolution
Stains, sustains.

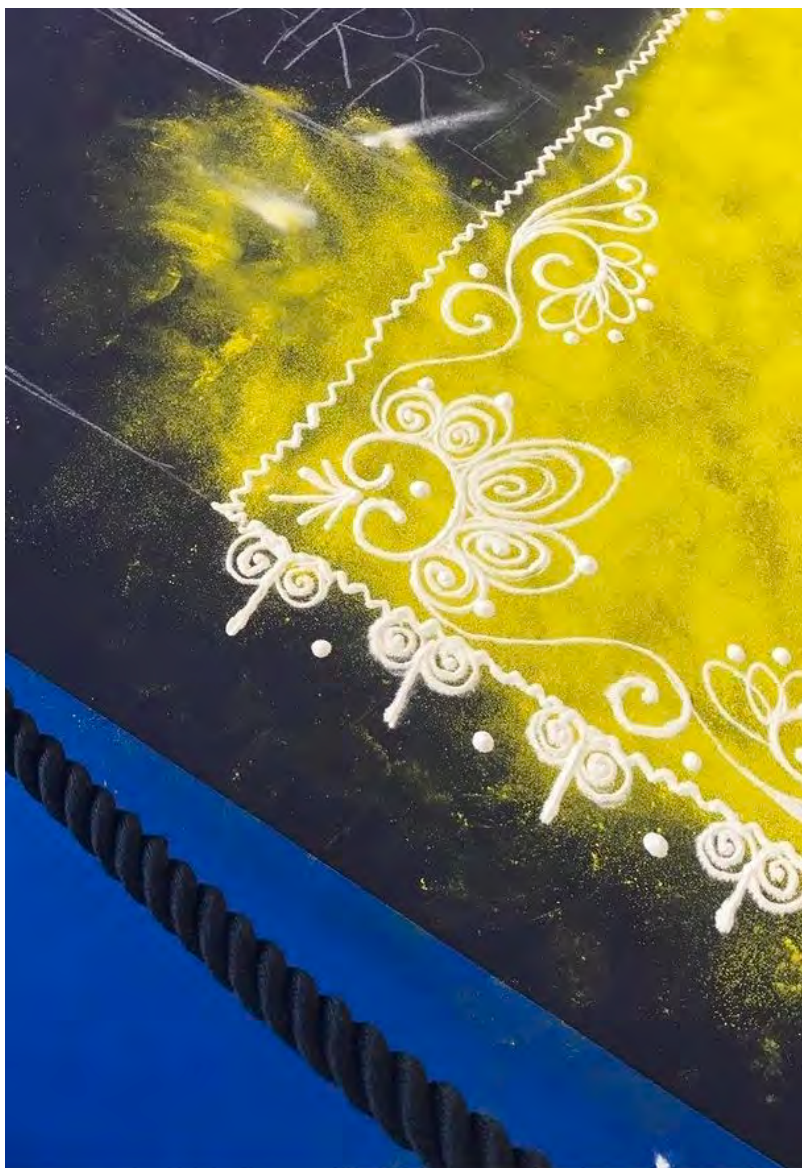
January 2021

[#shorelines](#) [#fragments](#) [#mandala](#)

Photo description

A white lotus design on yellow forms the detail of a sand mandala. The colours smudge the edge of a black mat. The bottom left corner of the photo is a triangle of royal blue carpet, cut across by a navy stanchion rope.

Amsterdam ICC. July 2018. International AIDS Conference



Orchid

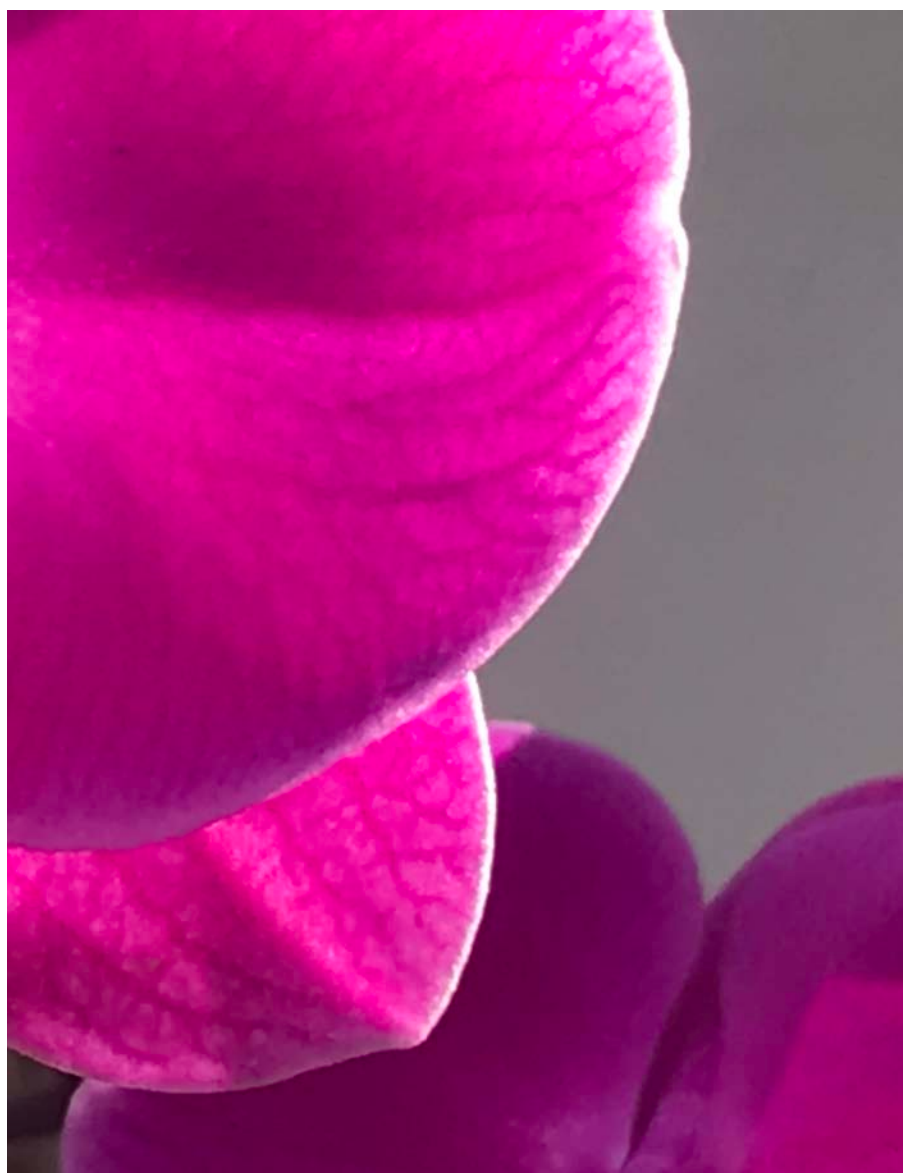
Beauty overlooked
is not lost or lessened
The beam of judgment
dims only the judge
We are overshadowed
by ego, not comparison
Light runs through us
Brightens our veins
Like the petals of
the unpicked orchid

January 2020

[#shorelines](#) [#fragments](#) [#orchid](#) [#light](#)

Photo description

Close up of scallop-shaped sections of cerise orchid petals. In the foreground, the petals are outlined by white light and the network of violet veins is visible. Shade on the petals in the background renders them a dull purple, all detail unseen.



Orchid 2

If death would come as gently as a curl
If we could see our dimming as a shading
Not as a loss of colour, fading
We too might flash and float and flutter as we furl.

October 2018

[#shorelines](#) [#fragments](#) [#orchid](#)

Photo description

The drying petals of a fallen orchid flower rest in the palm of a hand. Vivid violet gives way to soft pink and lilac hues. Dark veins bleed, marbling the wafery edges of the curled bloom.



Connected

I will walk in the harbour
when the tide is out.
Alongside the bait catchers
With my children,
perhaps with someone who
loves me as much as they.
I will watch ships pass
within metres of our muddy feet
and stand connected
to the world through water.

27 April 2018

#durbanharbour #parallelworlds #shorelines

Photo description

An empty cargo ship leaves Durban harbour. Two tugs cling to the side of the vessel, escorting it through the narrow channel. They are dwarfed by its red and black bulk and framed in the reflection of its yellow cranes. In the foreground, tiny stick figures stroll across the shimmering sandbank at low tide, looking for bait. Palm trees jut into the bottom of the picture, marking the parallel lines between the road, the railway and the harbour wall.



Thread

Why am I not content
To be a fragile skein
In the weave of the world?
Even this severed one
Rent in its noble cause
Of mooring metal against stone.
Why, slivered yet still twined
In this vast coil, must I
Clutch the deluded thought
Of being the whole rope?

9 February 2020

#durbanharbour #parallelworlds #shorelines

Photo description

A close view of the plaited fibres that make up a mooring rope, roughly coiled against a harbour wall. Some of the strands are frayed and torn.



Lantern

None of these neighbours knows
How together, through their small choices
Of a shade of paint, a tinted light bulb
A TV screen, or a tiffany curtain
They have turned my back-street view
Into a lantern of urban life.

February 2020

#lantern #innercity #durbanatnight #fragments

Photo description

Windows in an apartment block are illuminated at night,
creating a grid of panels in pastel shades of green, blue,
orange and purple.



Green coconut

Sweet crystal sunrise
Giant heart of sugar water
Heavy on my thighs.

Photo description

A glimpse inside a green coconut. Wet fibres glint rose-gold,
sparkle around the dark tunnel bored into the pulpy belly.

Blue Lagoon beach, January 2021



Night tide

Glinting sinews stretch
muscles tense, twist
rippling sleek skin.
Dark arms of the ocean
writhe silently shoreward.

February 2021

[#shorelines](#) [#fragments](#) <#>

Photo description

Durban harbour at night. The tide is turning. Low waves advance, streaked with light reflected from cranes and ships.



Between

Looking up, I see infinite iterations

And my heart is free to fill the sky.

When I look down, I see a world

made small by hate and fear,

where I cannot move or touch.

I will not share a photo of down.

Down is your windowless room

beside the railway and the

endless earthquake of trucks.

There is a world between us.

But we both may hear the birds.

Photo description

Twenty-two grey pigeons in scattered flight across a clear cobalt sky. Outstretched wings underlit against the dark arrows of their heads.



Window

Kaleidoscopic sky.
A world of light and water
Livestreaming through my window
Each waking moment a revelation
Rearranging the pieces of my heart
into happiness.

February 2019

Photo description

Splashes of pink spill through dense blue cloud at dawn. A
line of lavender follows the orange outline of cranes and
container vessels.
Reflected light shimmers on tranquil water. In the foreground,
palm trees on the brink of becoming green.

Note: This view reminds me of the German law that all
workplaces must have a window
and I don't ever want to go back to my office.



Holding

Fraying fronds
Unravelling strands
Unthreading
untwisting
Grey-blonding
unknotting
Unseen strength
of bonding
Straining skeins,
Disentwining, eroding
Viscerally revealing
The power
of holding.

December 2020

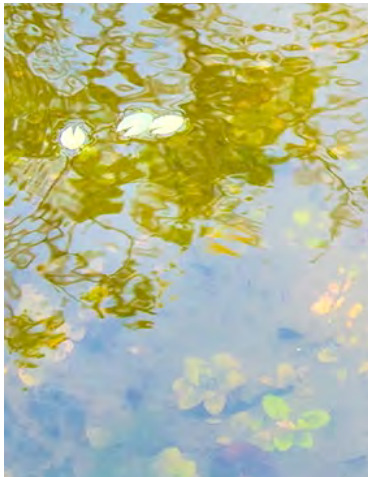
[#knot](#) [#rope](#) [#holdingon](#) [#fragment](#)

Photo description

A knot holds together two pieces of taut rope, stretched diagonally above a patch of river sand. The ropes are weatherworn. Their ends have come undone so that the knot is turning into a tangle of bleached threads.



Fragments



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