

it's easy to be a man

Nolwazi Machi

Kulul' ukuba yindoda

*Isililo sentombazanyana intswininiza
Amehlo ebhejile kudabuka izinjula zobuyona
Ziphendulwa ngosungulo longenazwelo
Obeqhakambisa uthando zolo lokhu.*

Ksasa le ngan' izobizwa ngeqhashamlenze

*Iphilaphiko ipemepeme ishaxavu
Omama befun' inkom' ingekho*

the cry of a little girl screaming
her eyes red, her deepest self breaking
stirred by the pointed weapon of the one without sympathy
who's been bragging about love only yesterday

tomorrow this child will be called *qhashamlenze*¹

the broken-wing, the *pemepeme*, the *isixhavu*
mothers will search for a cow gone

they'll complain about lost morals
they're not aware of the three minutes' force
which broke the much loved container

a day after tomorrow this child will marry
but questions about an animal who's a man still stand
how do you respect it
how do you trust it
how do you love it
and what is it

by this small stick between their legs
accompanied with its useless seeds
by growing grass on a face like a man
so easily they call it a man

(translated from isiZulu)

¹ Qhashamlenze; pemepeme and isixhavu are all derogatory words referring to a woman who has a child out of wedlock or is unmarried but has lost her virginity.