Haiku and Tanka for Harriet Tubman

By Sonia Sanchez

1

Picture a woman
riding thunder on
the legs of slavery ... 

2

Picture her kissing
our spines saying no to
the eyes of slavery ... 

3

Picture her rotating
the earth into a shape
of lives becoming ... 

4

Picture her leaning
into the eyes of our
birth clouds ... 

5

Picture this woman
saying no to the constant
yes of slavery ... 

6

Picture a woman
jumping rivers her
legs inhaling moons ... 

7

Picture her ripe
with seasons of
legs ... running ... 

8

Picture her tasting
the secret corners
of woods ... 

9
Picture her saying:
You have within you the strength,
the patience, and the passion
to reach for the stars,
to change the world ...

Imagine her words:
Every great dream begins
with a dreamer ...

Imagine her saying:
I freed a thousand slaves,
could have freed
a thousand more if they
only knew they were slaves ...

Imagine her humming:
How many days we got
fore we taste freedom ...

Imagine a woman
asking: How many workers
for this freedom quilt ...

Picture her saying:
A live runaway could do
great harm by going back
but a dead runaway
could tell no secrets ...

Picture the daylight
bringing her to woods
full of birth moons ...

Picture John Brown
shaking her hands three times saying:

Picture her words:
There's two things I got a
right to: death or liberty ...

18

Picture her saying no
to a play called *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*:
*I am the real thing* ...

19

Picture a Black woman:
could not read or write
trailing freedom refrains ...

20

Picture her face
turning southward walking
down a Southern road ...

21

Picture this woman
freedom bound ... tasting a
people’s preserved breath ...

22

Picture this woman
of royalty ... wearing a crown
of morning air ...

23

Picture her walking,
running, reviving
a country’s breath ...

24

Picture black voices
leaving behind
lost tongues ...

Source: *Poetry* (April 2018)