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 ...
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 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)