



African Literature 4 Africa

The Birth of Shaka

by Oswald Mtshali

His baby cry
was of a cub
tearing the neck
of the lioness
because he was fatherless. 5

The gods
boiled his blood
in a clay pot of passion
to course in his veins.

His heart was shaped into an ox shield 10
to foil every foe.

Ancestors forged
his muscles into
thongs as tough
as water bark 15
and nerves
as sharp as
syringa thorns.

His eyes were lanterns
that shone from the dark valleys of Zululand 20
to see white swallows
coming across the sea.

His cry to two assassin brothers:
"Lo! you can kill me
but you'll never rule this land!" 25

<https://war-poetry.livejournal.com/857657.html>