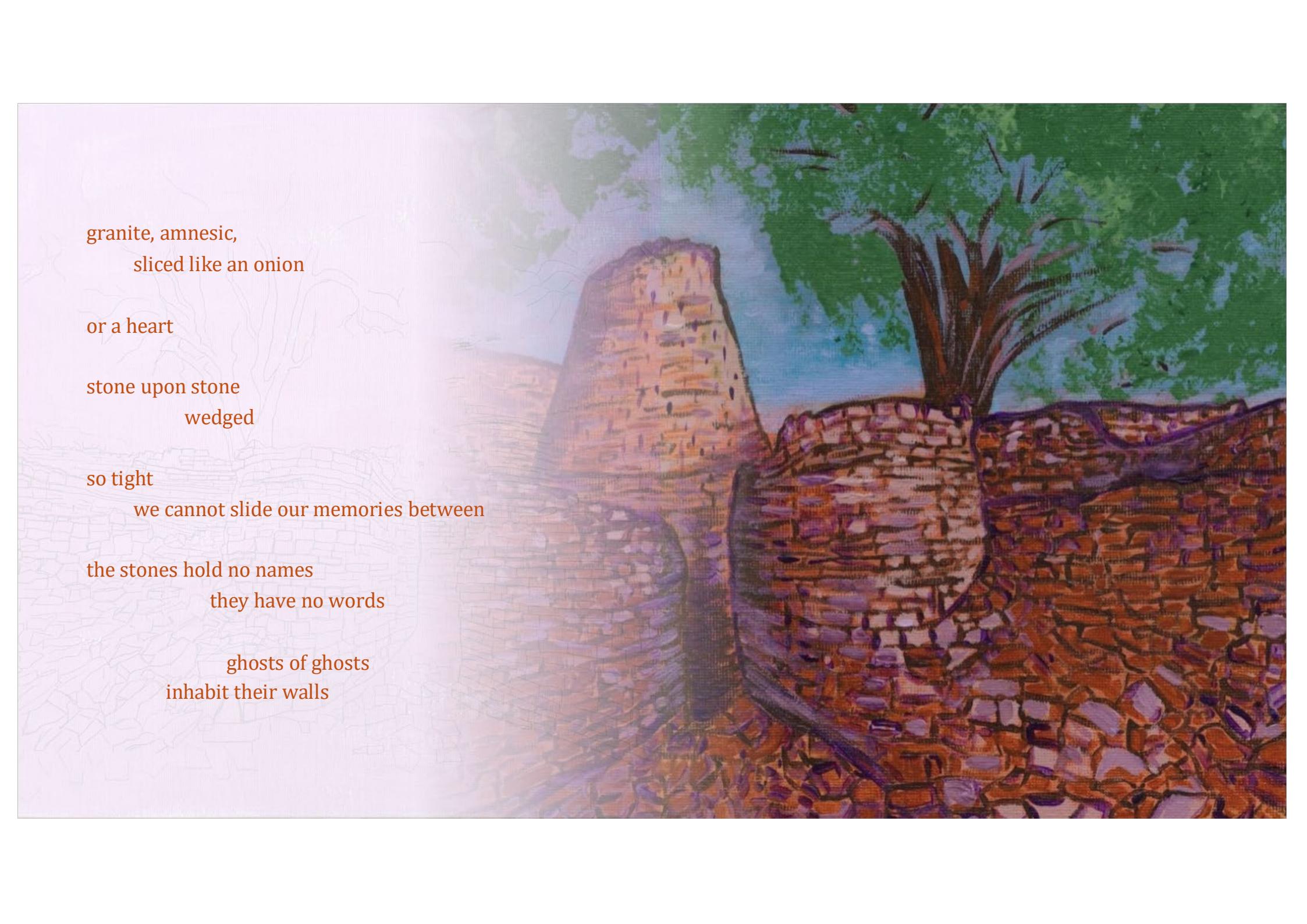
A landscape illustration featuring a stone wall in the foreground, constructed from reddish-brown stones. The wall is topped with a layer of smaller, irregular stones. In the background, there are several leafless trees with intricate, tangled branches. The sky is a dark, muted greenish-blue, suggesting a hazy or overcast day. The overall atmosphere is one of a desolate, rural setting.

HOUSES OF STONE

Art by Samantha Rumbidzai Vazhure
Words and photograph by Marian Christie

A colorful, abstract painting of a stone wall and a tree. The wall is made of large, textured stones in shades of brown, orange, and purple. A single, gnarled tree with vibrant green leaves and pinkish-red flowers stands behind the wall. The background is a soft, blended wash of blues, purples, and greens.

granite, amnesic,
sliced like an onion

or a heart

stone upon stone
wedged

so tight

we cannot slide our memories between

the stones hold no names
they have no words

ghosts of ghosts
inhabit their walls



we trade

sunlight
for gold

moonbeams
for ivory

myths of generations
haunt these passageways

still
there are years

when rain
will
not
fall

Names change. Granite endures.

The soul of a country is embedded in geology. It finds expression through topography, vegetation, wildlife, people. Music. Poetry. Architecture. Art.

The sprawling complex of Dzimba Dzemabwe – Houses of Stone – emerges from a landscape of lush woodland punctuated by giant outcrops. Generations of craftsmen quarried granite blocks from the surrounding hills, shaped and dressed them, then fitted them neatly together; stone against stone, layer upon layer, bound only by gravity, friction and a precision that derives from great skill. The massive curved walls have endured, silent and secretive, for hundreds of years.

In English, this extraordinary complex is known as Great Zimbabwe. It is not far from Samantha's home town of Masvingo, and features in several of her recent paintings.

Connections can form along unexpected paths. When Marian last visited Great Zimbabwe over three decades ago, she took a photograph from the same vantage point that Samantha chose for her paintings....

