Woman on the Cross

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Crucifiée
Collier d’os

Le corps féminin en tant qu’objet, ornement et en tant que commodité au service du désir masculin est exploré dans ces poèmes et ce, à travers sa représentation et sa construction dans le discours chrétien. «Crucifiée» a pour sujet le scandale créé lorsque l’Église Unie a exposé un crucifix à figure de Christ/femme. Le poème débute sur le corps persécuté d’une femme crucifiée et poursuit avec le moment où on la détache de la croix, où on la descend du piédestal et qu’on l’enferme dans une grotte. Étendu sur le sol, son corps est refondu dans ceux de Marilyn et de Ève. Ses enfants la regardent ensuite refaire magiquement surface pour préparer le souper. En jouant avec l’image d’une femme sur la croix, le poème révèle les effets matériels de la double objectivation du corps de la femme décrit comme étant à la fois pur et souillé dans le discours chrétien. Le deuxième poème, «Collier d’os», dépint de façon succincte l’objectivation du corps des femmes : ici, parce que leur sexe est vertueux, les femmes sont des amulettes que les hommes portent autour du cou. Une femme-collier d’une part et une femme crucifiée de l’autre décrivent toutes deux le corps féminin chrétien.

(Upon hearing the commotion created when the United Church displayed a crucifix with a woman/Christ figure.)

She bleeds monthly for unconceived sins. On the cross she feels the flesh give under the soldiers’ thrusts, the pulse of pain in her loins, the crown thorns like ribbons in her hair.
She is surrounded
by the white wailing mouths
of lilies as large as Gabriel’s
trumpet. The smell of ripening
flowers and decaying green seeps
into every breath, she dreams
of her carrots, her garden.

Soldiers prance below in khaki
uniforms. They flex, probe and watch
her breasts jiggle like jellyfish
jolted by the sting of sticks
on her ribs.

They are young, she could
offer a trade, a taste
of her flesh, Redemption. But that wouldn’t
be ethical, be done and besides this show must go
on and on and on, no tampering
with traditions she has
rehearsed her lines. This is her big
break, her chance to make
an impression, a miracle:
“Eli, Eli Lamma Sabacthani” – the secret
is in the waiting, like comedy
the timing is everything.

They bring her down
from the cross, her pedestal and wrap
her like left-overs for tomorrow’s lunch.
They smooth the white linen over
her flanks, her stretched marks, her cellulite
and make her up like Marilyn
a madonna imitation of herself.
They lock her in a cave, her rock
coffin and roll a boulder
to seal her in. They wait
for her magic, her tricks, the cough
that brings the bite of apple
up and make her rise like dough, like Snow
White or fail and fall

like Eve. Her children have
come to watch her Houdini act, see
if she’ll do it again
this time and be home in time
to fix the peas and carve
the lamb. Like a chorus girl
out of a cake she pops
from her cave and the crowd swells
with Hosannas and Amens.

Unbelievers poke
her palms, beg for psalms.
Some explore her holes, those dips
in the fold of her flesh, while others
wait for a signal, a neon sign
announcing a peep show.

Her family, her worshippers kiss
her cheeks, glaze her feet with sandal
wood as she scrubs pans and feeds
this multitude. No mere bread and fish for these,
they’ll not be happy with less
than croissants and bouillabaisse. Each has
a prayer to be granted, a need to fill, a thousand
Lazaruses, lined up like loaves, await
their rising. Miracles are expected. This is no
Paradise, next time
she won’t come back.

* "Eli, Eli Lamma Sabacthani" is Aramaic for "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)
Bone Necklace

By virtue of my sex, I am an amulet. Men wear me on a chain around their necks, as if to make up for the Edenic loss. Pressed so close to their ribs, I can hear rattling in the cage of their chests. Oh my sisters still trapped, those that were left behind.