

## 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», dépeint 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.