

Coming back (In His name)

I am back in my hometown.
I read in the newspaper that a sixteen-year-old trans girl killed herself.
The article uses her birth name and gender.
As I remember that, she “rests in peace”,
a luxury only granted to those bodies
whose death put an end to the violence.

I am sitting in the chiropractor’s waiting room,
hoping that, this time, I can get a diagnosis for the chronic back pain
I developed this year.
Next to me, there is a woman in her sixties.
At that moment, I think that this is also a place to experience the intimacy
of a man’s touch, as if he really cares.

Then I get it.
In this city, certain acts of transgression are allowed,
as long as they are wrapped in money or some biblical quote to justify them.
Last year, I started to identify myself publicly as non-binary,
then recently as trans.
The doctor does not know it, but my mother does.
However, if she could use a negation as a pronoun for me, she would.

We live in a Caribbean and colonial city.
That means there are crosses hanging on every wall of the doctor’s office,
and biblical quotes displayed in several fonts, like Comics Sans or Impact,
apparently used without any irony.

In that moment, I think
how amazing it is that a symbol and a font can mean
different things to two people:
their decoration, my cliché,
their birth certificate, our search warrant,
our femininity, their mockery
their cross, my classmate Alba.
Alba who, in my first year of college, told me
I would rot in a pit of burning sulphur
if I did not embrace Jesus Christ.

The doctor touches the muscles of my back
and asks me if I have had an accident.
He needs an explanation of how it is possible
that something that feels so irreversibly broken still works.

My doctor seems to consider pain an exception.
What a privilege it is to navigate the world thinking that way!
As if pain is something you can identify and eliminate,
As it was not the only thing that reminds you that you have and are a body.

This is the city where I tried to kill myself when I was fourteen.

I did not have the words to describe it at the time.
Just a tightness in my chest,
an echo in my voice,
and a large dose of tranquilisers.
There were no words for the reasons,
there was only this body, its religion
and a biblical quote inside me.
I did not know what I was doing,
but I knew why I was doing it,
and that felt enough.

Sometimes I miss that pure conviction.
Today, I have all these theories to explain
how this doctor, his god, and this city
made this body discover dysphoria,
that dysphoria would find my hand,
that my hand would find some pills,
and the pills would find me...

But I do not have that conviction anymore.
It comes from the subjugation of your own body,
from listening to it that way,
from leaving it quiet,
keeping the pills in my stomach.
Today, I know all the theories.
Why they would have called it a “suicide” and not a “homicide”.
It is to clean all the blood from their own hands and their cross,
as if we hate ourselves because we choose and not because they told us,
as if we killed ourselves because we wanted to and not because we followed their instructions,
as if we were not following a prophecy made in His name.
In the name of their God.

“Doctor, the only accident I suffered in my life
was the moment I was proclaimed ‘male’ and ‘black’ at birth,
and since that moment, I have tried to recover”.

The thing with this body is that they will use words
like “anxiety” and “stress” to diagnose pain, instead of “race” and “gender”,
and all the other words that never reached their bibles or medical texts.

I carry these diagnoses as commandments written on my back,
since a man who looked like you
told my mother that I was born
but forgot to mention that he also proclaimed my death.
How often life is not about an accident, an insult, a hit or a suicide,
as if violence, trauma and gender
were an episode that starts and stops.
No, it does not work that way.
It never stops.

Most of the time, they feel boring, quiet, and... normal.

They root so deep inside ourselves that sometimes we cannot differentiate
between depression and our oppression,
between violence and our gender,
between sin and our own skin.
The pain we feel does come from an accident.
It comes from the norm.
We are not broken.
We behave the way we were told we should.

I tell the doctor that I slipped and fell
for the same reason I let my mother use the wrong pronouns.
The same way I tell people that I am happier now
because I moved away from this small, Caribbean and colonial city.
The same way that many of us learned to pretend when we were children.
And we never stopped doing it because it hurts less that way,
and sometimes, that is enough.