

## between transitioning and the end of the world: a poem

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“why can’t you just be a butch lesbian?”  
my mother asks  
as i try to explain my transition plans

*I had announced the embodied, affective, and sensorial crossing in, in which I have insisted for a few years now as a program both for self-destruction and for self-invention. (Mombaça, J. 2018)*

*Transición es el nombre dado al proceso que supuestamente lleva desde la feminidad a la masculinidad (o viceversa) a través de un protocolo médico y legal de reasignación de identidad de género. La persona trans es representada como una suerte de exiliado que, habiendo dejado atrás el género que le fue asignado en el nacimiento (como quien abandona su nación), busca ahora ser reconocido como ciudadano potencial de otro género. El estatuto de la persona trans es en términos político-legales semejante al del migrante, al del exiliado y al del refugiado. Todos ellos se encuentran en un proceso temporal de suspensión de su condición política. Podríamos decir que trans y migrantes se encuentran en la paradójica situación de pedir ser interpelados como sujetos por los mismos aparatos ideológicos del Estado que les excluyen. Lo que trans y migrantes solicitan al pedir cambio de género o asilo son las prótesis administrativas (nombres, derechos de residencia, documentos, pasaportes) y bio-culturales (alimentos, fármacos o compuestos bioquímicos, refugio, lenguaje, auto-representación) necesarias para construirse como ficciones políticas vivas. Pediríamos ser reconocidos (y por tanto sometidos) para poder desde ahí inventar formas de sujeción social libre. Estoy en transición. Estoy en la sala de espera entre dos sistemas de representación excluyentes. Son los sistemas de producción de verdad, de ciudadanía política y las tecnologías de gobierno del Estado-nación, así como la epistemología del sexo-género binario, los que están en crisis. Y es el espacio político en su conjunto el que debe entrar en transición. (Preciado, P. B. 2016)*

frustración

sentir que doy todo de mí  
para que alguien entienda  
una realidad fuera de su alcance  
diferente  
(a lo que pensábamos posible)

el dolor  
de ver que mientras más me encuentro  
más lejos estoy  
de ciertxs amadxs

and yet

el amor trans que me sostiene  
me ha abierto los ojos  
me ha abierto las puertas  
a una existencia placentera

que no estoy dispuestx a sacrificar

y al mismo tiempo  
qué impresionante  
cuán diferentes pueden ser  
las percepciones de bienestar

The wellbeing coming with the life I've chosen and built for myself feels alien still.

A sense of grief appears when you realise you were not taught to inhabit yourself in that space. Facing infinite sadness the moment you realise that feeling at home in your body is so unfamiliar; new and therefore strange. Heartache triggered by the realisation that you're not used to listening to the desires coming from deep within. That for years you neglected that part of yourself, that was just trying to guide you towards a general notion of peace and fulfilment. And now that things are falling into place, now that you get a taste of tranquillity, the drop of adrenaline leaves you almost hungover. And in the raw undertow, you're forced to feel every inch of your awakening body, and listen carefully to it.

You try to decipher. And you realise you've been running.

*Running towards an illusion of comfort and stability, trying to save myself from a thing from which I cannot be saved. I remember working as if I was running, and I also remember working as if I could reach the velocity needed in order to cross bridges yet to be made—as if, by running, I could exist in-between asymmetrical worlds. (Mombaça, J. 2018)*

Asymmetrical worlds—a comprehension of human societies that resonates as I stare into the void. Colonisators, colonised. Colonisation, decolonisation.

Who gets to decolonise their mind?

Even decolonising yourself remains a privilege.

Even in a decolonizing era, the world remains asymmetrical.

Jet lag after the (internal) revolution. The mourning process after a sudden or big reality change. A mismatch between new understandings coming and old habits wanting to stick around. I notice my body's confusion the further I step away from what I was taught. Or an, almost ironic, surprise from my rationality when I gain consciousness about something my body has been telling me for a while now.

*La revolución (la nuestra, la vuestra) es siempre un devenir trans: movilizar un estado de cosas existente hacia otro que solo el deseo conoce. (Preciado, P. B. 2016)*

Un devenir trans. A burning desire deep within me. Waiting to come out. Because being trans is truly one of the most punk things one can do. Denying 'god's creation' and making yourself anew, moulding your body into a home, taking full autonomy over every little inch of flesh of yours and carving out what does not serve you...The embodied dichotomy of loss and joy: the further we step into our trans-identities, whatever our transitions looks like, the more we risk losing from our cis-perceived lives: people, places, accessibility, security...And yet, trans-joy feels like home, a breeze of fresh strong wind, and the first spoon of a delicious meal, all together. So of course, how could we not step into it? How could we not allow it to inhabit us?

*It does not matter whether I want to be changed, because I am changed. A new voice is pushing itself out of my writing, full of the closeness I feel to death, the awareness of my own mortality, so finely threaded, so acute. A new urgency. An impermanence in the air. I must write everything now, because who knows how long I have? (Ngozi Adichie, C. 2020).*

In fact, just a few of us know how long they have. I don't. And it threatens me.

Not death. But the possibility of not being able to do what I need to do.

Hyper aware of my own vulnerability. Almost constantly in survival mode.

I've been running. With urgency.

Running to achieve. To fulfil expectations. To perform a role I was assigned at birth.

Woman. Older sister. Golden child.

Towards success—which with the education I had, meant also running outside of my country. So I did. And once I left Ecuador, once I had achieved everything I thought I had to achieve, I was lost and unhappy. Scared that I had put all my energy into a project that did not fulfil me as I thought it would. Disappointed at myself for having put up with so much in order to follow a narrative I was taught was the 'correct one'. Hurt by having forced myself to fit in everyone else's ideas of success instead of asking myself what my own fulfilment would mean. As if I had betrayed myself, and put great effort into it, I was left exhausted.

*The pain is not surprising, but its physicality is, my tongue unbearably bitter, as though I ate a loathed meal and forgot to clean my teeth, on my chest a heavy, awful weight, and inside my body a sensation of eternal dissolving. My heart—my actual physical heart, nothing figurative here—is running away from me, has become its own separate thing, beating too fast, its rhythms at odds with mine. This is an affliction not merely of the spirit but of the body. Flesh, muscles, organs are all compromised. (Ngozi Adichie, C. 2020).*

But the good thing about being so close to burnout is that the body speaks clearer than ever. It demands rest. It demands pause and listening. It required me to become picky towards what I spend my energy on. The less energy I had, the less I could lie to myself, the less I could pretend being someone I'm not, the less I managed to try and figure out what people wanted from me and build a persona from there. I reached a point where I had no energy left to contort myself in order to please others or to spare them being uncomfortable. I was no longer shrinking myself to be digestible. But I had to relearn what shrinking was. And how to stop it being automatic. Tuning into myself took its sweet time. And a lot of painful unpacking. I saw my colonial catholic capitalistic education unravel before my eyes. I saw all the pain I had put myself through. And although I was happy not to be there anymore, there was a sense of loss by leaving it behind. A sense of unfamiliarity leaving the patterns that had held me for so long in comfort. The internal revolution sometimes felt like I had lost it all.

*How is it that the world keeps going, breathing in and out unchanged, while in my soul there is a permanent scattering?* (Ngozi Adichie, C. 2020).

After a while, I felt like I could finally breathe. I hadn't realised I was holding my breath.

And I began to write poetry

*Poetry is an act of translating the unspeakable inside us. Each word is our breath translated.* (Shivangi Mariam Raj)

and to eroticize daily life.

*Erotizar la vida cotidiana: Desplazando el deseo que ha sido capturado por el capital, la nación, o la guerra, para volver a distribuirlo en el tiempo y en el espacio, hacia todo y hacia todos.* (Preciado P. 2016)

Even pain can be eroticized.

Sometimes I choose to put myself through body experiences that are somehow equivalent in pain to things that have happened to me where I didn't have the choice.

The need for decision-making power.

Or the illusion of it.

Acknowledging that part of my desire to live is dependent on the possibility for change.

Concrete change. Self-inflicted change.

I inhabit the pain completely and willingly—yet there's still things slipping away through my fingers. But it seems coherent when I look back and see all the little re-appropriation rituals I have made for myself in the past. From them, in/decisions remain on my skin, and the intuition remains beneath it. An intuition of the source. The fire burning below the pain. The same fire that can help me release it. A void in my stomach. Infinite appetite. A mixture of rage, anger and determination to burn it all.

*At this point, it is unavoidable: as a fury in the chest, as an urgency running through my veins, as a perpetual spasm in the main muscle, it will come and it will last for right now and forever. Because it is already here: the unstoppable instant of anxiety, the inextricable knot of desperation. Again and again, vibrating regardless of immobility. As a revulsion in the world which is also a revulsion of the body, of the body against the world, of the body against the body itself, and of the body against the text. It is unavoidable in the sense that to write about anxiety with anxiety is necessarily a form of writing beyond anxiety and against the text.* (Mombaça, J. 2018)

*I do not write, however, to save myself from anxiety. Rather, I write to save anxiety from me, by liberating it from the all too historical and all too position-specific circumscription of my subjectivity.* (Mombaça, J. 2018)

I write on paper.

I write on my body.

I write on/in the world.

And there's no urgency left.

Rather fascination.

Organic, pleasurable and terrifying.

Still an ongoing rapid pace.

The wheel is turning, and I'm in it, trying to experience every angle as fully as I can. Running after/within my own evolution. Never having enough time to process it, fully understand it. Trying to keep up with the rhythm at which things are happening. As if I had let a beast loose, or I triggered a domino, and now everything is falling into place on its own.

There's so much space for nuance between each piece, between each fall.

*I am unequivocally stuck at the border of the violent sociality that holds cuir black experiences under the restrictive force of modern-colonial determinacy. Wounded and creative, precarious and productive, equally rotten and triumphant in my escape route, diseased with desperation, and yet safer than those for whom access to geographies of privilege such as the global art world and academia are blocked by structural economies of power: I cannot help but think that the condition for my own cuir black inclusion in this world is to buy slow death with acceleration.* (Mombaça, J. 2018)

Wounded and creative, precarious and productive, on the slowdeath avenue.

Slow becomes almost a gift

—so that we get to feel the joy of transitioning before the end.

Bought/but for me or for the world?

*Just like the process of decolonizing, it might just be that in any transition there is, more or less implicitly, a demand for the end of the world, without that necessarily meaning—other than as a promise—reassurance regarding the world to follow.* (Mombaça, J. 2018)

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