Poems

Ashley Anthony

Ashley Anthony is a young Indo-Guyanese engineer with a passion for poetry.

HAIR

I run my hands through the thin,
terse waves of unnatural brown
Dyed forcefully in a small act of rebellion
Against what I can’t remember now,
And I can feel the calmness of when
My hair jet black and thick, was plait
Left-over-middle-over-right
Falling down my back, each bump from
the root to the tip
Dwindles down
And
Reminds me of the inherited pain
That has trickled into my little life
Reminds me of the
Subjugation
Of a culture –
Broken and
diluted
Twice over;
First on the plantation
And again through the shame
Of the smell of coconut oil
And churail hair.

KANAIMA

I took the Metro North one day
Freezing cold, red and white metal
Clanging along the tracks
In transit to JFK –
Homebound
I watched the New Haven trees peel away
Into grey suburbia
A woman got on
Her voice carried like discordant feedback
Loud, grating and, and –

Guyanese
The accent seasoned her words,
Familiar twang falling; creole flung
As she chortled
‘Well girl hol’ on lemme siddung’
Interspersed
With boisterous laughter
‘Well yes yes, of course ah remember she sista’
I stared, jolted by her sudden appearance
– Almost intrusion –
I wondered should I
Introduce myself or would it be presumptuous
I looked down
She prattled on and I
Accidentally made eye-contact with a slender white girl
Enveloped by her college sweater
Two seats away
Who in return smiled halfway
As if to say –
How annoying am I right?
And I suddenly became aware
Of the Yale blue T-shirt I bore,
Its fabric pulling, pulling
Tighter until I could not
breathe
That night
I fell asleep in the Bronx
And I dreamt
Of the woman on the train staring at me
Mouthing a word which I could not hear
Only feel;
Kanaima
Kanaima
She accused me.

THE REMAINDER

Sometimes even this megalith of a country manages
To compress itself into something recognizable
I see things that I know in small spaces
Like the slick of sweat in the summer as it sticks to you
Melding your body to your clothing
And in this empty laundromat as I stand for the first time
The heat I feel is the same
That I have felt for years
As I stood rooted in fields with grass whistling around my ankles
Baking in that midmorning Caribbean sun
When the rain falls on the tarmac of a rest stop
Everything that I am just now taking in;
The fast food chains never stepped in
How close these stores are to one another
Yet far away from everything else
And how big a country must be to even need rest stops
Begins to smother –
My thoughts
But all at once
This is superseded
By that rain
Running through the grooves of the cement
And suddenly
I am flowing with it through the rivers of my mind
Pooling into the memories of
Warm May–June rain falling
On fresh dirt, asphalt and zinc;
I think –
Yes, this rain is the same;
And the smell is the same
And I am left
What a strange thing it is to be an immigrant.
Surrounded by novelties and firsts
Yet always –
Searching for traces of familiarities
Tying myself and understanding this newness from the
Framework of memory
As my image distorts
I am left
Staring at my fragmented reflection
In the shifting inch of water
Wondering
What is left?