

BLEACH, CREAM, AND OTHER DOLLS

by

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DEDICATION

I'd like to thank and dedicate this to all of the wonderful teachers I've had at Boise State University and at the University of Arkansas—Dr. Martin Corless-Smith, Janet Holmes, Kerri Webster, Dr. Dora Ramirez-Dhoore, Ashley Anna McHugh, Dr. Gwynne Gertz, Davis McCombs—the list goes on. My fellow peers from 2012, Michael Wanzenried, Zeke Hudson, and Indrani Sengupta—thank you all for being a wonderful support system that kept me motivated and challenged me to question my writing. Dr. Sandy Rankin, you were my first inspiration and I owe a lot of this to you—thank you for opening me up to new mindsets and always being so supportive. To everyone else that put up with me—this is for you too.

ABSTRACT

Bleach, Cream, and Other Dolls questions current rape culture and the political power plays that take place behind it. As a whole, this work also investigates how the positioning of a speaker affects the ability to communicate, build and participate in relationships. Through this problem each speaker's identity becomes skewed and the speakers struggle to find their identity through various mediums—revenge, death, penetration, definition, nature, skin and disintegration (among other possibilities).

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BLEACH AND CREAM

“The sovereign exercised his right to life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing, he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring. The right which was formulated as the 'power of life and death' was in reality the right to *take* life or *let* live” (Foucault 136). As such, this type of power, Foucault observes, was wielded mainly as a mechanism of deduction, making it “essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself” (Foucault 136). That is, power was fundamentally a right of appropriation— the appropriation of a portion of the wealth, labor, services, and blood of the sovereign's subjects— one that culminated in the right to seize hold of life in order to subdue it.

—Jonathan Xavier Inda, “Biopower, Reproduction, and the Migrant Woman's Body”

Rain brings their bloom from poisonous roots,
and their redness, whatever that means
to be red, the boy follows it.
Lining the river the color hovers
above others and swells in warning:

the flowers may never meet the leaves again.

The boy hides flowers
behind wire bushes. They're rare,
wastelanded, he thinks,

some other child should take
a peek and smell them before each

go where all the tampered flowers
go behind bushes and into them.

He wills his Father and so he shows.
He holds his bow,
 just so
and hides the flowers,
 well enough.

All the dead white girls say so.

As one of the dead white girls I should begin by saying,
Togetherness is not total as it should be, not instantaneous or still, until
that lad stands above you and offers you to yourself on top of yourself and I consider
the fundamentals of constructing walls and creating space.
The others, the youngers, still say *God is good*.

There is the boy, and rusted chair
stood up from, and gears left over

from clocks and other once ticking
objects filling the boy's pocket
along the way he hopes to fix them
among what might've been spider lilies.

The boy always hunts for them,
he doesn't comprehend how it is to be
hunted and cut down and laid to ground
differently like we do.

The boy is used to closing all the doors after
he leaves Father to do the bidding and savaging
and better the whole of what is
 left but a storm spreading
 closer this way scavengers scuttle
 across the lawn to listen.

The boy bars the doors and thinks, more
than he ought to, how clouds bruise the sky.

And because the boy must question we console him because who else could
console better than a fertile ground made more fertile by his own hands.

Unquestionable hands are everywhere.

The boy doesn't speak.
He knows to approach the intangible
with question would hurt what's been thought

to be hopeful he makes tea
from the bulbs of spider lilies.

He washes his hands.
And he holds his speech
close, closer, more closely.

If English words are pioneered to be exact then there should be something said of this.

The boy remembers the first one,
back when they were more vulgar and barbaric.
She was made fetal and tied with her anus left wide.
Her head was tossed on top.

To be dead is to be beside yourself
and not hold your own hand.
It's not even that.

The boy was glad ideas had changed since then,
though they were no more beautiful than they had been.

Language makes us all disappear less assertively.
The People can find equal ground with me there,
that's the very least they could do.

Father makes
tame violence.

One bullet to the head
makes them lame,
creates the dead.

I get upset thinking about the things
that have not happened, but have the potential to.
Maybe they have occurred to me before.

The boy gets upset thinking about the things
that do happen and more upset that others won't question
what happens to them once they're all gone?

\

I assumed that the older we get, the shallower
the hole we've been dug becomes.

Theory: Negated.

I should be able to feel A) sun or B) shadow
by now one of them must not exist anymore.

Oh to be enclosed
in brackets full of sic.

When Father upsets the ground, often he must
start over and more often he hits bone must
wash his hands:

| 1 time | for 1.6180339887 seconds |

| 2 times | for 3.2360679774 seconds |

| 3 times | for 4.8541019661 seconds |

The earth is a mother waiting to be filled up,
until at last she finally chokes. The boy waits.

There are more innards hanging from the trees surrounding the field than leaves. This is normal.

The boy packs the ground back down
precise in the angles of the shovel
so that which is touching both the ground and the boy
does not touch the bone. Only the ground may
touch the bone. The boy is patient not to make
the same mistakes. Cannot count anyway.
This goes on each day.

The earth is a mother, so the Father made sense of it.

The boy just wants to lay in bed with a dog
and not hear the screaming until the screaming changes.

Sound is always changing,
and who's to say what sound is
more beautiful than the other.

There were still books in the back
room of the house. The boy tried
to read them at night when even
the ground was sleeping. He read about
a blue house | a brick one | another made of clay.

Homes were where people lived. The boy knew that his was a house
where a person became a body and he saw difference.

My walls are dirt and
when I breathe earth
I remember she's not the reason

I'm here.

The boy became curious of origins. He followed the road
thought maybe that the lines in the middle of it had something
to do with | the house | the field |
| the coven or cult |

These were new words for the boy.

He found them in books | always emanating.

He reminds me of what the People used to be.
I will come back | I will tell them what I think.

There is nine hundred pickets
that form the gate that forms the perimeter
of the field, the boy counted. Nine hundred
is equal to the number of ligaments
in the body, the boy read. He doubted
the evenness of most bodies he'd seen nude.

The wind undressed the dirt | enough
for me to feel | what it is
to be outside once again.

I gathered my head realized
I could hold again.

Father woke up screaming about a ghost
that had sodomized him with a splintered rolling pin.
Flour still left around the rim.

I am a receptacle
dismembered and budding
to impress upon others and into them
rolling pins | irons | hambones | kosher salt

The boy notices how Father speaks
when the women are brought to him.
Chivalry still exists until the door
finds the closed position.

Father only wants to go back
to the way things were again.

One of them must've been alive when put to ground,
she moved the earth for me and again I felt.

What could the boy do
but think of his books
develop a beloved out of four bloodshot
spider lilies bent in ninety degree angles: *stem-to-flower*
stem-to-stem
stem-to-flower
stem-to-stem

Death is violent
no matter
how it is put to ground.

Nails and teeth appear to grow
once death is complete
because the skin is gone
and tendons shrink.

The uterus takes several months
without a coffin and with water.

The boy thinks the world is full of because
because there it goes again—
reason answers why but not each time.

Why are bodies delivered in bulk?
Why can beauty exist without objects?
Why does Father use literature as a coaster?
Why are there three hens and one cock?

The hallow of ground swallows
flesh that has failed us
because where was the other option
to find another kind of covering

There is a woman
who enjoyed sex.

And she was buried. The only one
who had been covered. Her tight gauze
brushed against my knee.
She was made small like me
and I could love her.

The boy wondered
if the man who had done
this to her
would be punished.

The boy wondered, not aloud,
if *all* desires were punished.

This is the list of what the boy left
outside for
us at night:

Bleach
Chisel
Hammer
Gauze
Chisel
Trowel

This man had no dream, that was obvious
by the screaming and the lack of daring.
No one, including the boy, dared
to enter the room until the wailing silenced
and there they had found him wrapped in gauze
where his blood separated like blood does
when it hits a specimen slide for evaluation.
Wide-eyed and curious and fetal and small
his upright hand coddling his penis
in reckoning his anus lay bleached
beautiful in all the whiteness.

I found myself in the debris of bleach and cream
enacting what was done to me not so differently.

And I imagine the People will call *his* rape a rape

One of the boy's books held the human body.
He thought what ugly things they all were
inside organs function
until they become cross-sections.

He had held a heart. And knew
where they belonged and where,
where did they not?

The People didn't plant seeds anymore,
but they made us wet
to help us
dissolve more quickly.

Sure, the cows did their work too.

It was hard for the boy to find trees that might have always naturally been there, but he looked for them anyway.

The boy found one full of knots. He looked as if he could look into the knots and fold himself into the spindling limbs but this was not the place where trees could speak or make | no, not anymore.

The boy saw the flowers wilt and the leaves
find their place to wait for the buds
to come again and end them at their wake.

Had winter found them,
is that what made them crawl back into themselves?

The boy believed in spider lilies as beautiful
to him and so he followed them
along the river | over the fence | into this place

with and without dead women, filled with sound and without,
still sound made stiller, to which the boy paused
to roll his fingers over leaves of settled dew.

He felt stagnant water, he felt it, he felt
he knew how to untread ground, how to tie bricks,
and where he could drown.

TRANSCRIPTIONS FROM THE WELL

It is bad for the soul to know itself a coward, it is apt to take refuge in mere wordy violence.

— Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*

I want someone who is fierce and will love me until death and knows that love is as strong as death, and be on my side... I want someone who will destroy and be destroyed by me.

I have a theory that every time you make an important choice, the part of you left behind continues the other life you could have had.

— Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

Transcription: *Don't announce to me—what I am—the color of kneeling and taste of refrigerant—same as you—you like what you can hide—and yes I miss that you when I remember—think time—when white noise is always listening—I turned into a bargain bin and ask—what would be and what do you need but it's not fine—wake up and find yourself where—I a barnacle sucked to the dock—while you—you censor—well I think every rock is angled— and what job does that serve? I say this because—I know I lie—and I worry—I can still say that—at least I can be dead.*

[Echo]

And then she was gone.

I'll start constrained.
This place where writers
find themselves and I haven't
well we all have structures
that hold us some call it a body
and some a well.

Transcription: *I have imagined—up there—
always on top of thee—knees bent—made a
sepulcher—and you who does not answer—
listen at least—love me and I will—peel my
skin the way cicadas do—I lower myself—
your body only because—it's not erect but
still standing—feminine or no—an inverse
me could still find—mildew sweet
impressionable—well you should go stop
listening—still dead—find an orange in a
fruit bowl—and have luck with that.*

[Echo]

I am held
in a plantation in a room

facing her well
in a chair in a body

plastered I find the hallow
down there in there.

Transcription: *Back to say I'm capsized—
moved past love to mania—I guess I found a
fifth way—for you to keep air—like something
skinned—I wish we were farmers—the nice
way to put it—was you're a—so what are
you—that was dancing on glass—in accident
time—enough for me—walls fell the
building—wells don't collapse—well
enough—your knees must now bend
backwards o'er—in search of color—lighter
than white to be—beautiful and partial to
that.*

[Echo]

And to be the one not taken
I can only conjure
our hills grazing
tip-to-tip.

She and I once an idea
uninvented yet
she more shaded than I care to see.

And there was a judge for us
though less one for me.

Transcription: *I want no flowers— there is the more familiar—to be had and un—do the blades of grass cut—themselves—when there be choice—no gizzards—when there be choice—there is none and none of none even—I want grass to only grow out—these concrete blocks—and do not mold me—but cast—unless it be my bones—so I can feel close—again to something other—unyou.*

[Echo]

I think of that calm
between legs and question
what does this

pull in place

when there's another
beneath me vibrant and well
polished in slick fish scales

romancing my bones

and flaking into the crooks
between fingers and how can she
still swim with me.

Transcription: *Will you ever leave your chair
and look—more down on me—be literal
here—find my nails detached long (and
floating)—sockets sunk (and cindering)—my
uterus a bald black sack (and sinking)—much
darker than yours (to be sure)—I found myself
fortunate (and not)—I ask you see—what is
listed—question what is not.*

[Echo]

A pelvis is sexed by width,
but what is there to find by mine
widths, or lack of.

But I have discovered a reasoning,
if you could come back

I would grab each pelvic bone of yours
and twist you wider, and you I hope,
would push me close, closed, closer.

Transcription: *Had I shrunk my margins thin—
found safety in the creation of distance—from
you who were—already outside—and under
the skin—color less dark—but I'd find me
darkened—still if I could have—been more a
coward—not reached into your well—and
pulled at your pelts—maybe you could have
been—I'd say—thicker.*

[Echo]

I had to understand
citrus peel rot

before I could
make it an orange

and make *that* another fruit still.

Transcription: *I—the partitioned from—I—the
immersed in—water and salt and excretion—
swoon at the weak season—generative—you
could call us both small in our clothes—you
could—couldn't you—small outside—in chairs
staring out windows—or I—the volatile
always staring out confined seas—and you
called us us—with the sameness strained—*

[Echo]

You're cobbled and cultured
by now I can assume
you can be beautiful
with a well and without.

But I still hope to find you ripened,
unpeeled but bloomed.

Transcription: *Can we spread out—our—
history varnished a color—out of fashion—
call me a suffragist and say that's why—you
are suffering—at your master's sweetened
chair—oh poor the gentrified home—souled
top floor sealed—for you (and others like
you)—others because they are not like—me—
the roses bushes paler—to be wronged and
wrong at once—to memorize your feet first.*

[Echo]

Perilous is thick legs,
perilous is the unmanned,
perilous is the hoe.

When the perilous is found
here, I must place it in the well too.

Transcription: *To be only a portion of black—
stone in your memory—floating just so—I
wade in the water—tied up in string met— the
well willingly—instead— stead a whiter
hand—and hear bend—bend 'er o'er where
there be—no troubled dark water—*

[Echo]

Hand, hand hold me
the crop holding a crop and brushing
along the thick of your well.

Well, I have faith
you are listening and tiding
me o'er. My lover
who pulls me down
to make me my mother's mother.

Transcription: *Steam dissolves with—the
fathomless stars arching—the view from
below—framing—what we shall call—the
well—what shall we call we—from your
positioning—stout and sunk you say you are
that—and I am always sinking deeper—and
holding no one's—help—*

[Echo]

Like the unlit lamp
I do not breathe flame or helpfulness.

Wick my remarkable wick,
dead and shelved and de-oiled
where your body's stored.

I cannot perform normative actions,
but I can try with permission.

Transcription: *Though no burial—but trash
left unwrapped—you never could—but I was—
a bloom blackened by only comparison—to
you and those like—a numbered becoming out
numbered—feud of few—*

[Echo]

Fear inspires the killing,
the falling down wells again.

I cannot watch you
because of how you oscillate
down there you and your once palpitating
parts against my lack of
and you who are full of it.

Transcription: *Stop showing up just to show—
your fancy and what it is to be—unattractive—
what is it to be unattractive—I loved and
begat that—to what end did my breast dare—
change your expression—change you—who
are understood—easily by a chart—and what
can be studied.*

[Echo]

And what can not be our
struggle belled and tolled
across the fields I follow
my breast to yours but your bones
only find mine doubled.

And I hope you might take me anyway.

Transcription: *Your hair has slivered—easily
could mean silvered—that's the process we
make—understanding the mis—*

[Echo]

I could following the water all day,
but notice the smell first

wells have that distinction
of containment but even a river
is restricted so where do I lay
down to straighten my curves.

Transcription: *To poke rather than peni—
trite—our differences of our—s—curves the
sound and bodies intermingle around it—
making the physical representation of what a
letter should look like—that is your job—and
what do you do with it—*

[Echo]

Even if I were deserving and could
cradle myself down in your well

even then we'd be still
only bones close
and separated still at that.

Transcription: *Bear witness to the taking of tea—and the cakes were there any left—had you fed them to me while my—black was turned down—it was noon—my water had stagnated as it was my last sense—black pruned blue and I could find a lack—color too faint—to call it—hiding lumps—to call it sleep—to call it discomfort but most—let us, let us just—*

[Echo] *Sleep.*

ISLAND OF THE DOLLS

A blue prey
Bleeds softly in the thornbush.
A brown tree stands in isolation there;
Its blue fruits have fallen from it,
Signs and stars
Sink softly in the evening pond.
—Georg Trakl from *Song of the Departed* “Elis 2”

The place you create between a pointed index finger and outstretched thumb

That is where you first touch
me and fetch me out of the
river and back against the
dam of dolls made other to
me by you but you undrown
them too but me you hang me
my unformed matter
ungendered bare and high we
who were made for comfort
you find that there again in
my—

The space was made between my legs and multiplying

Moths will fill them in as
small caskets made with light
particles thinned

skin thinned too and
you, I asked to pull me down
and bring me in but the
horror the hysterics of angels
you say cannot have peace in
the home so you cover
me with clothes and the birds
still they come and elsewhere
they make new spaces for me
and my—

Follow the Water Lilies to the Others

Which are in excess should
be cleared out lift them
from the water the way he
who saved us did

once look above and
arms fill us so you think
repositioning where would
you find yourself but lost in
our faces mossed and whole
fists will find my—

That location I cannot spot

My gentile side when I
attempt to look my eyes
remain always looking in the
direction I am told to
face a limb a knot another
face I imagine it bald
and unapologetic in its
undecipherable togetherness
one day maybe he will fear
me for I am turned upside
down so I can graze my—

Body territory that is bird feed

Me, I had found myself at my
last piece of human skin and
there it was flaking and there
it was *actually* pruned plastic
and had I known my
composition

what I would have is
what I could not have
changed by my—

Decreation or recreation

Nature graphed over skin in
graphed pattern even where
skinned even your stick
fire could not manage to
mimic us donated us
offerings us aborted
things strung up
by you for you and your
reasons and nature who
creates me again
cobweb cloth clothe
me grow a new appendage
from me and out of my—

Daily procedure

You nod at me as if all your
meaning were contained in a
movement

and what does that
mean for me

stationary being my meaning
at least at this moment this is
what I am so make me

more enveloped by her
sticky hands and hot wax
reshaped the pelvic line down
by my—

Preyed

Sprout yourself from foul
weathers when a new
one washes up on shore
wrap us in willow's
brush and water reeds and
string us up according to
favor dust me in
plenty of yours and don't
look a blue heron in the eye
I lost mine—

We who are visited

Appease the lady spirit, you
hermit who must have
filled walls filled trees and
even after you sleep you
must keep filling her
keep her as if you had
been the one guilty
of the drowning I can't see
the maggot patterns on
myself anymore, but I look
for them and where they
could be stuffed inside my—

Ceremony for Don Julian

He did not shroud our faces
but held us high until
he was found face down
drowned 50 years after he
sought me out beautiful with
a snake mapping the
peripheries of his person
made into a body
mermaids have sung of him
that this is a place. We have
become that hermitic space
for him to be remembered
and I know him best in my—

No space for another

The others won't even
whisper to me
anymore they speak
around me is that
what happens when you
are favored and separated
from the rest

I can't help
but ask and cast these
things up to where ever
prayers go and I can't
keep packing these into
my—

What of kinship

I think my brosis were more
comforting to look at even if
they do not look at me
stretched into solitary
confinement I reach out for
their loving reefs in hopes
that maybe they will love me
and drink of the pulque
milked froth instead of spit it
back into me—

Between spaces are full of us

Amorphus plastic melted as if
that would answer my
question

even looking at my
fellows does nothing but as
the lilies are cleared and I'm
found I begin to see a space
where I could drown
so I try to seep from this limb
and would stuff it and stuff it
into you to rid myself of
my—

Shrine filled with coins

They call my place a
museum that begs a visit
along Aztec canal systems
we are no longer offerings
here but instead we're left
such coinage as if I
could go spend it each of us
knows they do not leave it
out of personage since we
are not the people they are
made of but maybe guilt
does this

and the mermaids
still sing to him at night and
I have begun to wonder why
when the world calls him an
artist with a fetish and I have
no proof in my—

Straw hat sewn onto missing hair

Those that keep the island now keep trying
to fix me—is that what good keepers do?

They keep and upkeep me patch holes that maybe
didn't need patching but what say do I have when
my mouth is full of crabgrass—

and sure there are mermaids but they won't speak
to me either and I keep forgetting even holy water
can't cleanse my—

Serpentine cobble stone streets

I have heard of them though they do not belong
here they find their way to me from across the
canals—

Come watch for me to do something or say
Mama I need a kiss—

As if that will get them to keep coming back but
they do out of curiosity or kinship

They attempt to finger out so dearly so sisterly my
oh my—

Name

If I am my own self
how is that what's done to us each the same?

Forgive me, I'm not myself
today water has filled up to the fissure in my neck
and it can't take the weight of rain much longer

but I've never felt full until now and the canals
they're calling out my—

Failing body parts

I'm still hanging and my fissure it's erupting and
maybe once I've ripped

I can grow fins from my ears
and a tail from my neck

like the xolotl fish who can make each limb come
back and maybe then I can swim with him

once I have a tail and fins
I won't mind if my hair gets wet or my—

The space between wandering

Lost my mood ring, never know how I feel
anymore

exorcised from me I imagine making my way
through the canals—

I could call it a referential agreement I was making
with myself to travel despite my stationary self,

constantly making excuses because of my—

Another ownership

My legs have cracked and now they're strung
around someone's neck like a talisman and if I
could face the way out of here I would memorize
it—

And fill my mouth with strawberries and
cedar and cypress smells I would study the xolotl
fish finally take back my legs or get that tail.

But we've all been talismans at some point in time
I can just see mine—

A working definition

What do you do without eyes other than think writing will fill
the air and xolotl fish lungs could carry all of me down
the canal and release me as a siren somewhere along the border
of my—

self whole holed again fisted
protruding holy plugged spacious
stuffed damp memory packing milk
spit covered an annoyance named
without proof dirty unworthy barren
my oh my called cunt lifted and hunted
used visible fetish charmed and
nameless wet comfort.