

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

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"Rape-X Imperialism"

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Purple orchids are left disembodied
Thick green stems now yellowed husks, brittle as dust
Rich blossoms, their brilliance once enrapturing, harden to browned buds;
Winds never to tickle their faces, the seeds sterilized
Roots die slowly underground, white and webbed, cut off from the sun,
suffocating, disintegrating into barrenness

The air is undisturbed. Shrouds of insects, invisible as plagues, swarm,
killing the noise. All that hears is the jackal, sensing the promise of blood,
but staring dumbly, death staining its teeth.

Bodies fall to the earth, one tops the other; the figure epileptic. A serpent
slides across the dry ground; its mind holds no deceptions, no hateful trickery,
discarding the mantle of long ago. The python only acknowledges heat as
its winding body delivers it down into the underbrush.

Hands bear down on parted lips, transmuting pleas to mangled gasps
Hands shackle hands, chaining movements, burning the wrists raw
Hands plummet down, balled and heavy, striking the face as if to produce sparks,
every blow echoing, a whimper

Legs parted, the black hair singes, the branding shame taunts and twists,
Eyes become orphans, begging and pleading, their tongues ripped out,
Writhing nakedness erupts from tattered clothes, black flesh panting;
minds are gone
Seconds agonize under the match; all collapses into bodily voids; destined
for long imprisonments
Two lives, now cell mates, nightmares of each other will hack sleep to
pieces,
Recourse is lost, now and forever. The seal is broken

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But preparations have been made for her desecration,
Lives, hellish, undertake demonic characteristics to lash torturers,
From swelling eyes, she inspects the face hovering, now completely agape,
the soul about to spill out,
Inside her, it has been waiting; the transplanted flowers bloom,
But there is no blossom, no petals or fruit surrounding, no pistil or stigma
inside,
There are only thorns, and she is but a field of thorns,
A sheath of latex, knives ready to skewer the sword,
A web of spiders, jaws wide for blood,
His penis lunges into the gouging teeth, splitting and penetrating its flesh,
Poison quills lodge into the mind, impaling his brain with razored confu-
sions, screams coagulate in his throat,
She feels the blood gurgling inside her before he yanks himself out, and
she passes jagged crown to him,
For the bloody artifact is embedded into his flesh, like a manacled being
speared by arrows,
Separated at last, they repress the urge to curl up into fetuses,
Instead their voices collide in a collective gasp.

Sounds erupt suddenly, appalling their ears; howler monkeys screech,
their fangs mocking them,
Bleeding, ragged; scalding adrenaline gagging their muscles, their limp-
ing figures flee, scavengers giving chase, lapping up their blood trails with
tongues flecked with drippings of ghosts,
The distance between flailing shades becomes immeasurable; in time, they
will return to homes of dislocations, to heal without healing, to die with-
out forgetting.
The earth too will never forget; its memory thrashes underneath, like a
hanged man, as the ground cries with blood and betrayal; gagged with the
salt of this union, caustic granulates rot the soil infertile and white, mark-
ing a bed where no flowers grow

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Poetics of the Rape-X Female Condom

For a woman, there is no cruller fate,
In her name, we fashion this alliance.
God respects each new order we create,
With laws conjoining justice and science.

Harvesting the power of simple things,
The jungle flowers, our inspiration,
Implanting the spiked pit, the needled rings,
Ensuring all rape ends in castration.

And she will have no choice but to bear it.
Depraved minds will degrade her flesh no more.
Flesh remaining whole after we tear it,
Dinah will not be treated as a whore.

Children of rapists will remain unborn,
As we seal her womb with a wall of thorns.

A Doctor's Visit

The loneliest place, a civilized holding cell. How long have I been waiting here? Clock hands rotate backwards. Glowering alone, seconded by my discomfort, the old brown spotted gown—coarse, wrinkled, carelessly washed—slumps and stinks, its weightlessness disconcerting. I'm not even sick, but health requires continual validation, even as I jeopardize it, waiting here. Still glowering, I paw the outdated magazines crammed into slip shelves along the wall. Retrieving a *Newsweek* from last year, my placid skimming sculls over the headline: "Rape-X Condom, The Last Line of Defense." Narrowing my eyes, I read of Africa, of genocides, of warlords, of rapists, of spiked condoms, of skewered genitals, and I feel my stomach accumulate stones; my heartbeat's uneven, and I feel tumors gather in my throat. I am most certainly ill.

My voyeurism is interrupted; an unfamiliar doctor enters, already examining my chart, her face possessed by a sleepwalker's confidence. We exchange pleasantries. I'm afraid to divulge too much. Her face unearths an inexplicable fear in me, and I forget myself. Peering over the magazine's precipice, her black eyebrows arching, smiling to grunt, she says, "If the slaves had those, Jefferson wouldn't look so smug on the two dollar bill." I nod, fairly certain that is the only appropriate response, fear still half-clogging my gullet when moments later, she squats on a stool and her shadowy hands run up between my naked legs to examine me for hernias. I don't have any.

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The Castrated Order

They sit in jagged half moons, a shivering multitude,
Naked, indifferent to Edenic connotations, their bodies rock and sway like discarded
idols trapped in storms,
Faces cannot betray agony, a lizard's stillness paralyzes,
Blood seeps and dribbles from between their legs, droplets gathering in pools
Fingering their wounds, gouging the ring of thorns, all manner of healing is rejected

Children are born around them, falling out of wombs, delicate skin splitting,
Men glance thoughtlessly as aggressive phantoms carry their wailing sons away,
No child will fulfill messianic prophecies, no such prophecies exist
Some will be dashed across stone walls upon the first breath,
Others open their eyes to fear, and it will keep their eyes until blindness,
Shadows fall on some; they will sit in the slivered circles,
Some will not be born

Taskmasters' laughter drones in their ears as they listlessly swipe at pestering gnats
Castration, the sentence from foreign judges, the word becomes a blight of locusts

Hands cannot feel the women they touch

Hands crippled, deprived of gentleness

Hands incapable of invention, suited for only clumsy destruction

Barely suited to stop their ears to unspoken lamentations

Tribes, distanced by hatred, communicate by blind rifle shots

Nonsensical miasmas smother the sacred voices of storytellers

The Land, traces of its dust in our flesh, unrecognizable; the Apocalypse has already
taken place,

Sex, now a grotesque thing, infested with diseases, engorged with terror, wails its inces-
sant song that tortures men into demons,

Daughters are raped by their fathers; screams only awake scavengers

They will not keep commandments,

Bloody covenants shed more blood,

Dead before they reach judgment, cathartic redemption gasps, guilt and consequence are
cast into wastelands

They will not keep commandments,

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Gnash laws into their flesh, untranslatable scars mutilate them, stealing their limbs, leaving their minds a mirror of erosion

They will not keep commandments,

Primeval order—evolved, contorted—guides their hand, delivering them to embers

Outsiders forgot it long ago when it dissolved into the oceans,

But the hot ash festers in them, indestructible suicide,

A nearly inaudible whimper escapes their pursed lips

Only seeking eyes will see it,

Only open minds will believe it,

Martyrdom engrained in their black scarred skins

Misunderstood for evil, misunderstood even by themselves, these men—lifeless, castrated, madly ruinous—martyrs, one and all

Hearts pulled out on garbage altars, sacrificed to gods long dead, the worms of martyrdom consume them internally, and in their unquenchable hunger, the order's blood will stain pages of anointed books and all will fear the black chapters

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Her Echoed Salvation

The women's hands are missing fingers,
Garnered by caressing explosions.
No soldier could live with their bravery;
no warrior could carry their hearts.
Days' journeys up ragged mountains,
All to bring down meager ounces of water,
Just enough for one life.
Cupped in cracked, disfigured hands,
Exhausted, trembling, she puts them to his mouth,
so he may drink, so a moment of thanksgiving may pass,
A moment before he caustically spits her labors back into her face,
And stabs her hearing with barbed curses and mocking laughter,
Kneeling beside him, her head bows,
Once strength returns to her legs, she will go up again.

Africa, life still cascades from your indomitable womb,
All life begins and ends with you,
How weary you must be,
How must you ache,
Is that why your trodden valleys sag so?
And the Nile water is vague with mud?
And your children disregard you?
Death is one of your husbands; you have never feared him;
You wisely blessed his eyes, ensuring generations,
How could you have known? How could you have foreseen?
Life's inglorious rebellions, its curious, backward mutations,
Our woeful imitations, the needless, hopeless complications,
Imperfect as you made us—arrogance, wickedness, suicidal obsessions,
These things didn't come from you.

Although hostility invades her body, your emissary clasps virtue to her breasts,
No measure of degradation can taint her spirit,
She is you, and above all others, the breath of life passes from her lips,

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Mother of mothers, few dare to unravel your heart's disquieting mysteries,
With backs steadfast, you carry the world through slaughter, humming enduring songs,
And your passion evaporates hatred, fists opening in submission, accepting your embrace,
Your love glints with a martyr's madness, with life's sustaining insanity,
Desert aridness and jungle flowers are sanctified by your tears,
Elder animals yearn to serve you still,
Your body, imbued with the fertility of paradise, is eternal,
No manner of iconoclasm can shatter it,
Lions' jaws, the knives of the wind, crash harmlessly against your arms,
Serpents' venom, the scourge of parasites, wash across your legs unnoticed,
The rapist who clutches at your thighs will be swallowed by the ground,
And the deceitful languages, seeking your face, will dwindle to nonsense, then to silence.
You watch as genocides whimper at your feet, impotent as languishing dogs,
And your smile condescends to greedy schemers carefully crafting their treachery in vain,
For life torrents from you, from your eyes, mouth, and mind,
>From your palms, breasts, and heart,
>From your spirit, ghost, and womb, everlasting life overtakes the dried bones, making them anew.
For you, resurrections hold no miraculous luster. You rise again!

But beware, the cold allure of unnatural desecrations,
Your lesser daughters' misguided rhetoric,
Vengeance does not become you; it mournfully contradicts you,
Blood should not streak your temple door;
You exact no pleasure from men's pitiful shrieking.
Futile attempts at god-killing, precarious logics, they only insult you,
A bat's sightless screeching holds more utility,
Politics—empty, filthy bowls,
Grotesque medicines, no better than witchcraft, cannot alleviate your burdens,
We, but infants, can only offer infantile aid,
Ignorant, lost in murky fantasies, your suffering would consume us at first touch,
Deafen your ears as we reach for your skirt hems,
Waste no breath, no thought, in acknowledgement.

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Listen instead for the words of your creator,
Mouth opening as your womb opens,
Intentions, natural and divine, singing within your being,
Pains that hum sweetly in your lips, beckoning joyous tears,
Feel sacred breath as it whispers across your legs,
The orchid's purple flesh spreading, the prelude to an oasis,
Prelude to your God's word, echoed by your child's cry.