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Taylor, Rachel Lee

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Waiting Rooms

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of

Fine Arts

in

Writing

by

Rachel Lee Taylor

Committee in Charge:

Professor Ben Doller, Chair
Professor Michael Davidson
Professor Camille Forbes
Professor Charles Thorpe

2014

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Waiting Rooms

by

Rachel Lee Taylor

Master of Fine Arts in Writing

University of California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Ben Doller, Chair

Waiting Rooms is a collection of poetry broken into five sections, each containing a separate intention of form and content. These five sections remain in conversation with the overarching themes of the collection as a whole. This collection maps the multiple types of violence perpetuated against women in domestic and institutional settings, as well as its historical presence in literary fiction/poetry and pop culture entertainment. Taking cues from Modernist poetry, Shakespearean plays, and Southern Gothic/Noir traditions, Waiting Rooms situates Poe's Gothic conception of a woman's 'beauty in death' in a modern Midwestern locality.

Waiting Rooms

“The death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover.”

- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Philosophy of Composition* (1846)

I

Girls at Home

“The uncanny first impression was again one of private hells coexisting in public space.”

- Patrick McGrath, *Asylum*

How I Slept Away Sixteen

there's something
wrong asleep

in your stomach
orange sunset

wake and hear
a mother's heels,
hardwood floors

Sold Houses Hold On

a knife is a real thing. it is small and it is blank, it is smooth and

real

and this kitchen is the real thing too, and it is maple, it is marble, it is ceramic and granite
real and not real, ghosts of rooms in chambers never realer than then

than when I was living in the dream of the dream of living.
and now in the dream of the real I pile up pictures of things that might be could be but
wouldn't matter if they had

become negatives of

what they may have been to someone else

this is really the room in which it happened, the tile floor where
you found it, the door and the lock
that held it

in

and in those chambers they echo softer now

in these rooms hands are bound with cables and chemical
ties that are unreal, imaginary too and if I printed it all very carefully every page,
would it fill a carton, weigh a pound, signify what

and if I

hand it over and say go ahead and say what if I had? and say what
would I leave behind today that I couldn't leave behind at seventeen in the bulb lit kitchen

the green doors
the frozen daffodils
all in rows

Platitudes

Everything happens for a reason. Everything happens to *you* for a reason. You are the reason everything happens. The reason everything happens to you is you. Anything that happens, happens for a reason. Anything can happen as long as there's a reason. Anything can happen with a reason. Any reason for everything to happen has a reason. Any reason for everything happening is a good enough reason for you. You'll take any reason for any happening. You'll take everything for any reason. You'll take it, for some reason. For some reason, you'll take everything that happens to you, for any reason. For some reason, anything and everything can and will happen to you.

Hospital Rooms

Ocean and river
where we meet, nothing thrives

drunken boats
reeling reeks of
casual damage

oceans
 and
 rivers

Maniac

heart beatpounds itpounds itpounds poundspunch the-thing the-think betterbuybook
outwrite deathdrug mytell the pissstory always always againcut your face upcry vomit
cryrun em downscratch it til it bleedsneeds those eyes on their eyes on youroadkill on the
shoulder I
pray my mind
could lift it
up godgoodby-

droppingfalling through your fingers like pearls to clatter rollaway

Hospital Rooms IIII

take the blue one for that

a blue body

blue veined our

blue

ashes

on the green door

take the green one for that

the green pill makes

violets red under green grey snow

Don't Cry

Don't cry they said its just a needle they said don't cry. Don't cry they said this won't hurt they said don't cry. Don't cry he said I'm not even yelling at you he said don't cry. Don't cry she said just lie still she said don't cry. Don't cry we've been over this with you before don't cry.

Don't cry just a needle don't cry. Don't cry won't hurt don't cry. Don't cry even yelling don't cry. Don't cry lie still don't cry. Don't cry over this don't cry. Don't. A needle. Don't. Hurt. Don't Yelling. Don't. Lie. Don't. Over. Don't. Don't cry they said that was the end they said don't

Hospital Rooms II

plastic kidney bowls

vomit receiving chalices

rubber tubes flow icy streaks

drying alcohol

Wake Up

Wake up cold. Go to bed hungry. You decide. To. Do it like that. Wake up sweating. Vomit up your bile. You didn't. Plan. On that. Wake up in the dark. Listen when they're awake. Be careful. Who. You tell. Wake up on the bed. Wake up the thing no one else remembers. Remember. Her. Handing you the knife. Take off your shoes. Leave them on the side of the road. Hear the. Sirens. Come.

Just tell it. Like. The truth.

The Details

This is what it looks like when you get there. Everyone is behind glass but us. It is all quiet but for me. I am unquiet. Thank god for you, and you are kind. We can call out but the phone doesn't work and why should it? We sleep on chairs in the lobby I guess you would call it if you had to call it something. This is what it feels like when you get put in. This is your box your toothbrush already has toothpaste your soap like a little hotel soap and that is all. Press the button and when the water gets warm get in. I've always liked to cry in there. Get yourself cleaned up, get yourself ready to go to sleep. Stop it in there we don't want to hear that you'd better. calm. down. This is what it feels like when you go to sleep. The bed is plastic and you can hear it and you can hear it when someone else comes in. Its dark but its not that dark and we look in at you like the school nurse maybe when you went and had to lay down between classes how many years ago. This is what it feels like when they get you up. Or when you get yourself up, really, you ask permission to wake up. You ask permission to go puke in the bathroom. What time is it? No one else is awake. We have those little half pints of orange juice. Just you and me and we are at a round table. It feels like a school in here maybe or just one more waiting room. You want me to try and eat but I'm sick and I can't. Thank god for you. This is what it feels like when you get out. I think that maybe I never knew quite what you were like. You brought shoes. We put the bloody things in a bag. I'm afraid I'll bleed on the car. This is what it feels like when you get home. I remember what it felt like when I got home another time years ago and how the cold air was like icy water and how good it felt clean in my dirty hair.

A One, A Two, A One Two Three Four

I take the green one for that. I take it I can. Take the blue one for that. Take the pink one.
If you take it you can. Take it you can. I take the white one. Take what you can. Take it.
You can't. Take two, take one, take them all. I. Take the half one, I take the two one.
What you. Can't take the one two. You take the can't I. Take the can pill. The half pill.
The can pill the green pill. The pill can't. Can't take the whole. Can take the one. The pill
can't what. One, two, three, four. One two three four. Onetwothreefour. onetwothreefour
unless I don't

Imagine

I came here in the
 middle of the night.
 I was here first.
 But not for long.
 I wasn't here for
 longer.
 They took my
 clothes.
 I wasn't wearing
 any shoes.
 Shouldn't think.
 I don't think.
 I couldn't sleep.
 It was four five six
 in the morning.
 I couldn't sleep.
 I was in the bed by
 the door.
 In the bed I
 couldn't sleep.
 I couldn't not.
 Couldn't not cry.
 I said I had a
 family.
 I said do you want
 to sit down?
 I got up.
 I couldn't not.
 I couldn't not see.
 How could I not?
 That was all I said.

We're here because we don't think.
 You didn't think, did you?
 We came here at two three in the
 morning.
 They told us to sleep.
 No, there was no window.
 We were waiting for the morning.
 They said the doctor comes when the
 doctor comes.
 We were waiting for the doctor.
 We were waiting to go.
 We wanted to leave.
 We couldn't not go.
 They said the doctor doesn't like it when
 you cry.
 They said don't.
 We said yes, sir ma'm.
 We said we understand we understand
 why of course we do we won't do it
 again we promise.
 They said we don't belong here.
 But we couldn't not belong here.
 We're here because we belong here.
 They said don't I won't she won't come
 back.
 That's all we said.
 That was all we said.

She came here in the
 middle of the night.
 But she came later, in
 the morning earlier or.
 She came next.
 But she wasn't here for
 long.
 They cut the straps off
 her dress.
 She wasn't wearing any
 either.
 She was asleep.
 She slept for a long
 time.
 She couldn't not sleep.
 She was in the bed by
 the window.
 She was not.
 She was asleep in the
 bed by the wall.
 She said she had a
 family.
 She said she had a
 family that loved her
 very much.
 She was shaking.
 She couldn't not shake.
 She said no, thanks.
 She said no.
 That was all she said.

Try

gently herded into locked
wards weeping promising
anything
to softly spoken
trustees

trying to sleep
trying to eat
trying to anything
begging to try
anything

Hospital Rooms III

tug veins find a vein blue veined
the bloody things in a blood building
shot to
quiet blood
little drops of blood
to stain
red red red red red red
red
cratered
murdered
you violets
withered
one murdered
you, just
red
velvet like a king
shattered
grey snow

Happens All The Time

Cold rush rush, head to hands, gush down white front. Soak thin blanket black, river river pool. White white, red, red red black. Sit sit, water wash, hang down head. Soap pink rinse, stain brown black. Black red brown pink, white. Wake wake, sleep tubes. Tug veins, drag drag cords, roll. Break pills, fragmented bones. Cut the throat back, water waits down down. Red red. Test it, stab it, blot it, swallow it. Cough it, spit it. Choke. Choke.

White Out

and then I just
sort of white
out. And then waking up
sometime after they
cut off clothes
cold with piss and
then I just sort of
white out

and then waking up
sometime after they
find a vein, but the
IV is just sort of
jammed in there and
I sort of white out waking
up sometime after
Mother touches my
face saying my name and I
sort of wake up

but not until later after
I had really woken up that
and they say I didn't really die
but sort of

The Fisher Queen

suffocating inside
burning sand castles
'the nature of the wound'
sick and indolent
queen of bees

Hospital Rooms IIIII

quiet blood river
chalices

nothing thrives
icy streaks of vomit
drunken rivers casual damage

oceans
 and
 reeling reeks

Your Scars, or How You Got Them

Tiny flick hollow
bone below
miniscule port to saline.

A spade shaped hole, a cairn.
Crack the carcass.
Suck the marrow.

Hospital Rooms IIIII

Ocean where we meet and thrive
river boats damage reeling
drunken

reeks of

casual
nothing

rivers
and
oceans

Albatross
bruise the
lightest touch

flesh overrot
pale fish pale bird

white flakes
skin snow

such a thing
cannot live

II

Girls on the Road

*A handprint on the driver's side
It looks a lot like engine oil
And tastes like being poor and small
And Popsicles in the summer*

- Neko Case, *Deep Red Bells*

Nausea

snake devours itself
in panic drenched
mouth splintering dentine

nuzzle the neck
under the chin
below the ear

draw close that garrott
grieve and grieve

HJ

wake up
two fifty hours later
twenty miles
north

two feet
summer snows
drunk this whole time?

time travel?
drunk driving
drunk sleeping
drunk avocado buying
drunk teeth brushing
or time travel

whats up
you luke perry looking
motherfucker
should I stick my tongue
down your throat
hard enough to make you
bulimic?

Holding Flowers

He left. Back seat, weeping sunglasses on, goodbye goodbye.

We met. Back seat, watched from the inside, until morning.

My hands. Back seat, wake up at church, bruised wrists.

Holding flowers.

This place is like someone's memory of a town, and the memory is fading.

Side of the Road

I thought I saw a dead
man on the side of the road.
I thought I saw a blue body
bag. I thought I saw a strange
thin man waiting
on the median.
I thought I thought
but when I turned my head
to look
it almost was

Gutter

darling
darling darling find
me a fresh young
girl. I'll
gut her.
Gutter gutter
right down
like a fish a fucking
fish or shark Jake
drags up on the dock
to fry filthy in oil on
the burners. And it's said
you got in my body not
with your
but bad
enough, with your needs.
And so that's why I need her to
touch her belly
to feel up on her
insides, see, cause as
it is I can't let a hand rest
even lightly on mine

Side of the Road II

they hit a deer south
on the 40 like a meteor
cratered in the hood

tell them to bring a gun
the grandmother said
I think its still alive

I picked glass out
of her daughter's face
with nail clippers

In The Night's Mind

The devil finds the soil to
 set wild dogs running
this weeping will
 set new dogs running nightly
 you hysteric
be careful the wild dogs you
 rightly set running

No Ember

hush hush and the maples oxblood
leather like boots go thru them
crushim like a fat boy thru chips
in no embers pink lights

hush hush in this polyester bed and
rip um faces up
rip um brains up
sweat for no
reasons atall

hush hush and if you
drink it and what
might happen if it
did happen
did you happen to

Faithless

triangle jaws
rip it dislocated
dislodge it on
hinges howling gripping
up choking and
whining in winding
tunnels under this
town little darlings you
bright cool, you
young things, you
live nude girls, you
take my cagey tongue
and notch
it, take the cleaver
turn your hands
red

Girls Don't Go For Nice Guys

Dear Boss, Mr Lusk

It's an injustice,

a crime

I'm the perfect guy

They refused me because I am down on whores, asocial.

and I shant quit ripping them till I do get buckled.

I send you half the Kidne I took from one women prasarved it for you

I consider myself a rational erudite

I gave the lady no time to squeal [laugh]

tother piece

I fried and ate it was very nise.

They say I'm a doctor now

I am, in truth, the superior one, the true alpha male.

i will be on the job soon and will send you another bit of innerds

the supreme gentleman.

I

may send you the bloody knif that

took it out if you only wate a whil

longer.

The next job I do just for jolly, enter the hottest sorority house

I will slaughter every single spoiled, stuck-up, blond slut I see

The feminists have always enraged me

i was going to dror mi nife along of er bloomin throte

You will soon hear of me with my funny little games.

it's only fair.

Alea Jacta Est

III

Babes in the Woods

In moonlight lies
the river passing—
it's not quiet
and it's not laughing.
I'm not young
and I'm not free
but I've a house of my own
by a willow tree.

- Lorine Neidecker

Good Morning

white dawn draws
linen curtains

such sweet
sleep home

white fog draws
fading warm sheets

Young Winter
in the moment
before you freeze to

death, seize the pale
smoking breath

your trunk full of fashion
magazines

gravel and shoes
creaking snow

Fellowship

two animals
junkyard's edge

trees to scrub to
rusty fence,

a coyote and a fox
eating sardines

baked beans out of
dented cans

Lydia

girl-
hold my skull,

brown coyote
black ink creases
coming in beneath
your eyes, our eyes

you carry rocks up
and down the mountain
swim the cold river

the only silence since
children playing in the creek

*it ain't no sin, to take off your skin
and dance around in your bones*

Katie Casey

on the train
the women, whose hair

spins sugar
burnt caramel

Southern California
skies are porcelain

and you, good thing,
your feathery ribs

The January 10th Blues

shattered a shot
glass fabulous noise
on the dance floor,
us all in socks

god knows I
tell you glass
breaks on the road

ear to ear stranger
slide slide slide
stranger hands guiding

barely
micro pulse sweat
sweat slides it
guides

Lie Lie Lie
lie

so perfectly

still

desire in
snake

eyes

lies light

as
air

feathers
flowers drifting down
rivers

of paper

violet ashes

burning
on
wet lips

Ode To

You bring the little quiet.

You allow space in the crowd.

Silence on a train, hurtling

IV

Live Nude Girls

“You are not permitted to kill a woman who has wronged you, but nothing forbids you to reflect that she is growing older every minute. You are avenged 1440 times a day.”

- Ambrose Bierce

Live Nude Girls

crows on the wire and ghost signs and bricks and Bud and linoleum knives and
girls girls girls
the signs say

live
nude
girls

all signs point to

live

nude

girls

the signs also say Jesus say life begins at conception say porn destroys lives and
girls

girls girls girls

Christmas in Saint Louis

red white and green grey snow
bright freakshow boys become
quickly fond of you

girls let them tie thumbs
strippers clap their plastic heels
like monks clap hands and bow

those fingers purple up
but don't we just have fun
yes
don't we all just

The Lost Generating

rotting orchards,
deathly commune

weak suns
sharking & sharing
warm beer

Amarillo Texas,
dive bar America
bloody eye USA

pasties and a G-string, beer and a shot
Portland through a shot glass and a Buffalo squeeze

Live Nude Girls !!

so muted so quiet no talking no touching two drinks two twenties only twenties only girls
only girls only girls barely legal barely present bare and shaven baldly stated so barely
here barely twenty barely time before no touching no seeing no wanting no twenties no
more no before,
live nude girls become old naked women

“Around 4:30 A.M., the girls reconvened on the main floor for the end-of-shift payout. They curled up like litters of puppies on the couches (greyhound puppies, all limbs), piles of worn-out girls in pajamas, yoga pants, tracksuits and hospital scrubs.”

Live Nude Girls !!!

live, nude girls

love nude, girls

live life love life nude, girls

girls love life nude

live life love laugh at

nude girls

live eat pray love nude girls

pray nude, girls, prey

eat live girls

eat love, nude girls

Dune

mourning ocean lupines
desert planet California

every date palm
murders ten of us

kill your flowers
with too much water
or too little

let all your flowers

die and remember

Agony Garden

hands virgin pales
white as
blue veined statue

our lady of
snows bathes in
virgin pride

her miracle tears
drop cold as
violet blue ashes

The January 12th Blues

hands, how gently

 they did it hands

 across backs, shoulders

joints moving loosely

 bones crushing in and out

 rolling veins hard to pin

 disobedient corpse

control yourself

11/21/13

in saint louis rain' drops
 fall
 like chocolate crumbs to sheets
 to stain
 the bed' and
 little drops of blood to stain
 as well

in saint louis rain' drops
 fall
 and so do breasts
 and eyes
 and asses
 slowly they stretch
 detach
 from bones

in saint louis rain' drops
 fall
 so do old women
 who loved you
 unconditionally

in saint louis rain' drops
 fall
 and so the names of highschoools do
 trippingly from the
 tongue

in saint louis rain' drops
 fall
 like bullets on cass ave but
 don't you worry the kids
 live in the county

in saint louis rain' drops
 fall
 like carb counts
 raw sewage
 fluorescent tubes
 drip shatter dust
 half grouted tile
 office floor

V

Shkspr's Girls

One more, one more.

Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee
And love thee after. One more, and that's the last.

So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly,
It strikes where it doth love

- William Shakespeare, *Othello*

Green Willows

is it easy to become a darling
do you wish you had never become his darling
it is too late to wish you had never become that man's darling

does it take a year or two show you a man
do you wish you had never again to know that man
it is too late to wish you had never been so wrong about a man

is it easy to be seen all wrong
do you wish your darling did not know you were wrong
it is too late to wish a man would not know his darling was wrong

do you wish you had never been born
so that you might never die
it is too late to wish you had never been born
so that you might never die

Stuprum

north of Dover
 north of Hector
 north of Jerusalem
 north of Paris
 north of Ozark
 such a place there is that we did hunt
 plateaus called mountains
 upland hardwood: oak-hickory, pines
 undergrowth: dogwood, maple, redbud,
 serviceberry, witch-hazel
 from the pit rises

a swallow's song
 ruthless vast and gloomy

if in the dark dissected plateau
 a snake leaves its severed tail like a tongue
 if its the honey you desire, never let the wasp outlive
 the raven does not hatch a lark
 the eagle suffers little birds to sing
 the hawk devours the tongue, well then

die, die you, and your shame die with thee

but should you suffer little birds
 in the Allegheny, the Cumberland
 the Ozark, the Catskill, the Blue
 Mountains perhaps
 our ruin's shared by all the world

swallow shed your shame
 nightingale cry what you have done
 walk among the crowds: or, if you're held
 fill the woods, move the rocks by magnitude

'This is no time for tears,
 But for the sword',
 the brutal sword

Fool

here's truth like a whipped dog,
 young cold untender
 she will learn to lie only to you, you will teach her this

hideous rashness, you've made her unwell
 who loves only according to bond, the letter of the law
 are you done?
 she will learn to lie only to you, you will teach her the necessity of this

flesh, blood, the disease of your flesh
 princess or fool
 sharper than a serpent's tooth

it can't be as simple as all that
 when you name a thing, you bring it into being
 a creature created from whole cloth
 teach it ghastly humor
 teach it Tuscan wines in Trevi square
 teach it foreign films, Frontenac theater
 teach it old songs, old stories, oh
 everything it owns it owns it owes to you

but should your kingdom die with you, king of slums,
 king of south saint louis
 cocaine king of east dallas
 generous to strangers
 what was the nature of your wound?
 what is the wound that follows us down
 illiterate white trash, a carpenters beauty shop queen,
 highest heels scorching Texan pavement
 was it a baby girl's death each generation
 that fractured our pathways and made
 you, always more sinned against than sinning

so go on and howl howl howl howl
 because that desire is as dead as earth
 your poor fool is hanged, less life than a rat
 with no breath at all

Ægyptus

strange invisible perfume
 the showers bring it on, be cheerful.
 celerity in dying
 her tongue will not obey her heart
 cunning past man's thought
 the swan's down-feather
 passions made of nothing but the finest part of pure love
 stands upon the swell at full of tide
 greater storms and tempests than almanacks can report
 neither way inclines
 age cannot wither her nor custom stale her infinite variety
 she is low-voiced dull of tongue, and dwarfish!
 dread queen
 a body rather than a life, a statue
 Arabian bird
 a widow,--
 give me a kiss; even this repays me.
 even to faultiness
 give me my robe, put on my crown I have immortal longings in me
 for the most part, too, they are foolish that are so
 in the east my pleasure lies
 as low as she would wish it
 the beds in the east are soft
 a more unhappy lady,
 I am fire and air
 praying for both parts:
 eastern star
 make me most weak, most weak,
 rise, rise Egypt
 most wretched
 my greatness in the posture of a whore
 the sober eye
 his biting is immortal
 my knee shall bow my prayers...
 as sweet as balm as soft as air as gentle

speak softly
 wake them not

174 & Glove

tell me in sadness.
in sadness, a woman.

breathe such vows use to swear;
as much means much less
Cry, pronounce 'dove;'

under heavy burden I sink.
sink in it, should you burden ;
a tender thing? it is too rough,
be rough with you, be rough

sweet bait from fearful hooks:
Blind best befits the dark.
be blind

pronounce it faithfully:
true passion:
I hear some noise within;
be honourable,

this drivelling is like a great natural,
a gentleman, to hear himself talk,
like an honest gentleman, and
like an honest gentleman,
fetch a ladder,

close curtain, -performing night,
their amorous rites
their own beauties; or, if blind
black mantle; till strange, grown bold,

believe it was the nightingale.
trust me, in my eye so do you:
some grief shows

answer 'T'll not wed; I cannot,
he's a gentleman!

shadows are so rich in joy!

call this lightning
here's to my one
a cup, closed in my hand

Side of the Road III

drainage ditches and
cornfields lone service
roads hold

your naked torso caked
thick, the run off
fertilizer, herbicide

violets withered all

hair in ringlets like fogged
incense twines

weeds and
puddles

a beetle traverses your mons

no one left you here, you just are
no one murdered you, just

come to rest, snagged
corrugated steel drainage
tunnels, tumbled

you drifted long with flowers
down through time on a papery river

and now you are here
you just are