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RED HONEY

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Bachelor of Arts in Writing

Shippensburg University

May 2014

submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN CREATIVE WRITING

at the

NORTHEAST OHIO MFA

and

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2019

We hereby approve this thesis

For

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Candidate for the MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN CREATIVE WRITING degree

For the department of

English, the Northeast Ohio MFA Program

and

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RED HONEY

PENELOPE JEANNE BRANNEN

ABSTRACT

Red Honey is a collection of conceptual poetry based around the transfeminine body, the traumatized body, and the queer body. It follows transformations, rebirths, and deaths to their ends. Nothing is inevitable. This is a spell book for those who wish to live again.

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CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

if suddenly you feel the urge to cry come upon you seemingly from nowhere, please, recognize that it is not from nowhere. it is from a somewhere where you forgot to mourn properly. a place only your body can remember. let these tears come. let your body mourn. let your body feel its loss. even if you cannot understand it (who can?) it is important to let your body have this. when the crying is over feed your body something special and be gentle with it.

CHAPTER II

WHITE HONEY

null body

diarrhea

cummy panties

sweat smells like

weed

my body's not talking to me

or if she is i can't understand

if there's any resentment it's mutual

i'm unpredictable

addicted

ugly

she's greedy

sick

ugly

i get jealous

of how she

grows while

i seem to be

evanescing

she's envious

of my control

over control

while she's just

exploding

the only solution i can imagine involves the two of us running at each other with knives
from opposite ends of a hallway and seeing who runs who through
because contrary to popular belief i don't think either of us really need each other at least
need each other to keep running our messy little loops forever

impossible body

my body and i run together wild

and free

the wind at her back

PTSD hart

dense nodular breasts

the sounds coming off her are frightening

her footfalls

thundering

i am not afraid of her

her measurements

bust countless

waist incomprehensible

hips daunting

she rides on my back

we flee dream rapists

i huff air

duster

the back of her head

hollowed out

her cold hands

feeling the absence

here is me taking a break from this poem to briefly endorse abusing benzodiazepines on the

daily

anyway

i only have prophetic dreams now

about asteroids and the bare-breasted snake

goddess

my body likes to

sleep in

dead body

when i die cis people will be there to consume my body

everyone is going to take their turn with her nice big

bites

honey

so

sweet

i don't know how i will die or if it will be their fault but really who can blame me for blaming

my body will miss me

i will miss my body

but not much(!)

cis people pretend at disgust

yet their urge to consume is

naked

i want to top their sense of entitlement to my body

cum all over their righteous

indignation

growing up i only saw other trans women in the media

as corpses or

as killers

is that it then

be killed

or kill

or

i'm still deciding which

i think it would be best to just

dig a hole

and lie there

and await the end

of time

or my free Zoobooks tiger poster

or hearts to curdle

give me your phone number and i'll sext you all our good parts

(the ones for fucking lmfao)

use it as your menu and you can serve her tapas style

i'll watch in third person from the ceiling

i'll watch you skip out on

the bill

infertile body

spilling seed

i balk

at that

milk

cream

nobody loves me

in my best and most personal dream i wash you

running water-based down my

thighs

bless My Own Personal Body

she doesn't play along but she gets to watch

how ugly to be possessed and filthy

vibrating into nausea

skin is no border

i spill out of

her

inner or outer

walking her naked

her feet taste the dirt in the woods

i am always not going home

damn Her Ugly Naked Heart

a thousand drivings and a thousand aways

from who else but violating

gaze

good grief and alas!

take her

taking me

down to

white

honey

rotting body

my body has already decided how she will die

i cannot help this

her plan is to hike Michaux and at the highest point

she will pour nectar down her throat without stopping

until her teeth collapse on themselves

and her insides starts to bleed every abusive Skype call

out her tear ducts her tear ducts pouring out the red honey

a hallucination of big breasted and shimmering death

end of the world shaped like everything she tastes is sweet

i told her i don't want to watch

she said i don't have to

as long as i hold her hand

and kiss her forehead

and leave her to be eaten by crows

a non-descript lizard will sleep in her belly

deer will instinctually avoid

a song of fairy ring encircles her

her penis looks fantastic

God bless the honey-eaters

so that i won't have to

plural body

my body erupts with thousands of mice they make a dress and she dances in her
guts

if you follow the steps in the bloody footprints you can do it too

just don't ask her to teach you

she isn't speaking right now

which is ok because she's tired

and so am i which is fine also too

on her best days she's naked

chopped into little pieces

and covered in glittering bees

spreading their anxious heat

it makes me uneasy

they're all stinging and drinking

to make red honey

she's not a masochist

i don't know if her philosophy is about pain or pleasure

the birds pull out her hair for nests

her blood halo is beautiful and a great

accessory

wandering body

i walk into my bathroom and find my body
holding a myself that was raped underwater.
i pull her away and lift my self's self from the tub.
i dry her off and ask if she is going to be okay.
she is cold and weeping and raped.
she tells me this and i tell her me too me too.
my body is watching us from outside my window
and she is crying. my myself tells me to be nice
and i tell her i want to and so i try. she cries again.
i ask her if she wants to sleep in bed with me
and the other myselfs that were raped and she says
only if she can sleep near the wall. we all sleep
near the wall in a stack. the 6 of us. we're not heavy
because we have no mass. my body is absent
and she walks the streets at night eating up the men
who yell at her. this system works but her ideas

of revenge and mercy don't always make sense.

her mouth has too many teeth but we love her all the same.

monstrous body

once upon a time there were two monsters and

they fought

worn body

the normal reaction to the white honey

the crossing the legs

the her uneven walking down hallway

my body and i are two very different people

please let's make that obvious by now

she and i are holding each other hostage

the her scent of burning flowers in nose

the gaping the asshole

the red honey makes reactions abnormal

missing body

she walks barefooted through morning rusted lakebed dry leaf

i pin a note to her sweater to let people know she is alone

it reads: do not pet me i am working and my self is
gone

i stay at home fisting fistfuls of seeds into my many eyes

she's out eating people but i pretend she's at the library her mouth so hungry

she beheads a cop with a stop sign

swings her arms kicks her legs

when i hear the wind chimes i make a tick in chalk

the bottoms of my hearts are budding more hearts

if i ask her on a date she'll (try to) take us to the Outback Steakhouse

or set us on fire

it's hard to fit back inside with all the extra bones

it's hard to climb into her mouth the new mythology

she's not talking right now

if she were she'd be screaming

a giant white wolf

a human

tongue

collapsed body

how i gaze at you in sweet stupidity bless you

my flaccid pink womanhood

your moonlit hide that dear and sudden softness

alive thing alive thing alive thing

eat my trash heart eternally patient niceness

cut me open and slip trusted fingers through my guts

fill me with white honey before you close me up

ghost in my most precious parts

Sbarro on the observation deck of the World Trade Center

wind of fortune unthread my bobbin

leave me in the rain crash me into rocky shores

God starts so many fires and burns so many houses down

goddess body

she gives me the double-faced axe
asks me with her pleading grief
rend her three times pieces to shape
the triple goddess dancing back to back
jet black foot soles bells on her toes
wiggling her fingers to kill men
vomiting all at once every mouth
red honey white honey ***** honey
beaming glory her eyes burn everything
breast breast breast breast breast breast
genitals spray golden lovely wonderful
hair a torch eating up the whole world
but when i swing the axe she whines
red grief out her back her knees
crumple life's relief washing over
eyes killing her very much dead

until i bring her cruelly back to life

so to this day still she hates me

knowing i will kill again

speaking body

the first time my body spoke to me i was small her words small

pleading

give me a skirt tattoo me let me break help me

to girl

but i forced her together and to hide naked whiteness ugly squinting sad youth until she

exploded

the whole time she begged

do you love me show me you loving me you loving me loving

being

i let them bury her in bodies violence crushing shaking hurt under heterosexuality kills

loveliness

my body the last she spoke cried out

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CHAPTER III

RED HONEY

new body

my body goes to the volcano.
she reveals three prophecies
she jumps into the caldera.
blood sown into the earth
is fed by ashes to grow the red
flowers. far away a white tree
roots before dying under the clouds.
dark words to another place
shifting under my feet
a witch's own forest
behind the bad time dreams.
my selves are keeping bees.
my selves are wearing masks.
my selves are collecting honey.
somewhere on a high shelf
a yellowed recipe collects dust.

my body knows what is to be done.

i take a jar from the basement

to revive her once more.

hidden body

my self is embraced by a shaft of light

service topping the dawn

my body runs

can't catch up

until days end

power bottoms

this conversation is making me

uncomfortable

i eat paper

pee a little

flap hands

i'm gentle

the image of a powerful woman

one thousand arms

lots of swords

my mouth red

my body hiding

deep breaths

why are you weeping,

happiness?

heavenly body

i bless her chemicals

lower them into

cool

waters

thrones

individually soft hands

sweeten her

good

parts

cherubic

her chemicals are so powerful she is made of so many good sweet chemicals sister darling

loved

put back together

she hangs dainty

hearts

seraphic

resting

my sweet one

do not wander

loved

elevated

dearest

flowering body

i want to give you my gardenias

mouthful to mouth-full

unjealous ache

horny plant

spirits

what else can i give when there is nothing left but the gardenias

i don't mind if you don't speak this language

i'm not fluent either

between the two of us i think you know

i think you know what i know

that

no spring onion or wild clover can do

no quick fuck in the dandelions and

nettles

until i replace the topsoil to kill away lead

till all the bullshit between us

plant only sweet white gardenias

i want you

to feel the petals

or else my face

under your feet

fungal body

a mattress gave birth to my body and every night for three years she was born out of the tear in that mattress. black mold grew into the shape of her spirit on the fabric. she once crawled into the mattress and died forever. one day she threw the mattress out and never slept on one again. if she slept at all it was on the floor. she can only sleep outside now. if i saw her sleeping she would watch me the whole time. i don't blame either of us. the mattress sat out in the garage for a year and flora and fauna lingered. she pressed her face into the mattress when she dragged it to the curb. somewhere in her lungs are bits of mattress. the garbage men wouldn't pick it up but it was gone the next day anyhow. my body sleeps nose to anus
like a coyote on the floor. i sleep on a futon.

lupine body

my body and i do not mostly get along

but

when men bother me it upsets her

she does not care about her safety

which means she must care for me

tonight at a gas station two men called me "Bruce" and another asked if i "fuck[ed] around"

i could not stop her when she left me

hot blood pulling off the sticky soul

i stood behind my giant wolf

while i bought myself a can Grizzly she chased them down and chewed their guts out

am i supposed to feel bad for them

when my body finds no pleasure

in killing

men

no pleasure in her

only life

i catch one of her exterior hearts loving me

burning body

driving home i catch my body being fucked by a house fire

i'm not jealous i

swear

later when i get the ashes in the mail i mix them with the ***** honey

she hates this part

i hate this part

she's messed with my shower so that the cold water is fucked up and it's boiling hot

my self is very dirty now so i change into a new one

my body is growing into soft skin

crazy

no i'm not

no

yes i am

i don't want to go with you

i don't want to be in love with you

patron body

i am going to the rape museum

i am so excited to be raped

i am a rape lover

i pick out a golden belt

my body crawls into winged eyeliner

we drink and drive to the rape museum

i pour the rape down my body's throat

i am tasting their asshole

i am drowning in their breasts

i am smothering under the rape

i said no but they knew what

i meant was i'm your princess

i only dream about being raped

i don't think i'm anything but rape

i am crawling with rape

i am blessing my rapist

i am damning my raped girdick

i visit the rape museum every night

i leave the smallest donation i can

i buy a geode at the gift shop

i peel off the rock and eat the crystals

eating body

i'm riding down the street

on my own personal screaming

Godhead

my body

i explode everyone who calls out

FAGGOT

or TRANNY

every man who tries to fuck me

suddenly inverts at the

bellybutton

and perishes in a pain

dimension

i have

a thousand arms

and they all hold

stuffed animals

that i press against me

and take turns

crying into

splitting

down my center

hamburger-style

i eat up every rapist i see before me

every wailing television goblin

condemns me

i didn't want things to be this way

you indicted

yourselves

chemical body

i throw 16 pills into my body

her Big

Favorites

3 Effexor 75 mg

4 Trileptal 300 mg

3 Spironolactone 100 mg

4 Estradiol 2 mg

1 Truvada 200 mg

1 CVS Women's Multivitamin

my doctors don't know what they're doing

if i don't feed her after she gets sick

but i hate

eating

i don't like the meat

but i think i understand

she has 28 teeth

i have thousands

i'm writing to ask God

why i have so many

i don't know what or who

i am supposed to be

eating

my body wants for red honey

i cream quietly the white

God punishes with ***** honey

too gorged to scream

we take a nap and dream

about cum and self-sucking (rofl)

action body

i am my very own

fireball chasing me down a hallway

jumping out of the way just in

time

i'm the stoic one

i'm the loose cannon

actually

they're both very funny

one is just cranky and tired

eternal retirement

they each hold a radio they refuse to let the other touch

in the end they both start getting along

a three-legged race toward

God

i'm too old for this shit

a sequel is always

unnecessary

God body

at the club and God starts crawling out of my thrussy right there (embarrassing)

i must transcribe the book of the giants onto bar napkins to cram into my junk

all that screaming what a big baby

coca cola is effervescent poison water (yes) and i pour the can over my head (obviously)

the only thing that separates people from me is that i've been Xerox'd 30 times

my body refuses to sit still through its explosions so the genitals and face are blurred out

i have innumerable arms my navel is a giant eye the Guf runneth over

my erection isn't massive or anything but it looks good in a pair of cute underwear

or that's what your mom says (got'em)

if i dare myself a few times i'll say something (and the whole bar clapped)

i turn into a crying wolf and have sex with a shrieking freight train

the truth is though that i don't want to look at the moon and tell the future

no more poems or rough hearts (please)

i'm melting in the wind take me home

to the bathtub!

to the bathtub!

visible body

electric paper crane air crumples around me wildness tumbling

all eyes in the grocery store rest on my tenderness

i check the prices on the cheap bulk waffles as a woman comes up and lifts my skirt

my limp hormonally shrunk penis disgusts her she calls more people
over

i can only speak in puffs of frozen air pizza rolls are on sale they pull up my
crop top

the cis patrons pinch my breasts pour ramen powder on them shrimp
flavor

i pee my panties the urine is collected tasted analyzed free-trade
organic

they take turns putting carrots frozen corndogs tampons into my asshole

still not visible they cut me open pulling things out tasting sweet meats

my skull is cracked open with a frozen ham hock brain poked with a plastic fork eyes
twitch

a man wears a dog toy as a strap on to fuck a fresh hole children maypole my guts

this is no different than any other day

sharp body

i am counting with my finger the phantom of each tooth in the mouth of my true life

and pulling with pliers the ones that God made too small and rough

a ring of a thousand fangs between my jaws running down my throat and my breasts

my body is nothing but reaching sharp eternity blood-spillers

queen of eating

the air around me

throwing off light

golden-tipped

guts balled into

a quaking fist

my eyes are also teeth which feels important to mention

if i could i would lie the screaming worry on my secret tongue's embrace of pain

flat-eyed grazers long to taste carnivore in each blade of grass

pursuing my own reflection the teeth on my thighs ribbon my testicles to burger

CHAPTER IV

***** **HONEY**

American body

there is no greater thrill than dragging
your own body, embracing terror,
my gender mutant in the Corpse America.
building them a screaming tower
in every tongue. making it so
clipping coupons for your own soul
is an incredibly fun crutch, dear sister
of the Church of the Take a Nap at Noon.
in Genesis, hermaphroditic Adam tells God,
I will not fuck these strange creatures
of the land or the air or of the sea. i am
sure girls like us are monsters
out of Revelation. our eyes flashing
golden glories and the cry of the Lord,
we sing the song of the final messenger
as the sisters of the Corpse America.

we bleed all over each other.

we live in holes in the dirt.

we take communion loads

from each other's hips.

white honey.

when God takes the humans

twisting up into the air,

the transsexuals will inherit the earth.

exploding body

poetry is the hardest math

i'm burying a soft self beneath a wooden cross

my own body for dinner

the oven leaks gas into the space

i'm telling a joke

and now you're

going to laugh

i cut my footblisters on the seashells dashed across the floor

washing even the broken dishes

shining all the boots

i rotate the item [BOUQUET] in my mind

precious

light the birthday candles

make a wish for

kaboom!

kaboom!

kaboom!

swimming body

all the Atlantic Ocean does is take take take. enough!

i jerk off to a closed-circuit recording of my own death.

every time i watch the tape it's something different.

i am shot in the heart and in the penis.

a stranger follows me out of the bathroom and punctures my skull with a high heel.

all my rapists throw a surprise party where they stone me to death.

a meteor the size of a chihuahua's head strikes my heart.

my mouth is stuffed with cherries until i suffocate and die in sweetness.

it's all very arousing or so i'm told.

i go through to motions without speaking the question at my teeth:

how do i change the name and sex on my death certificate?

transsexual body

when i was born i was a 12 ft tall wolf.

i ate up lightning and nipped at the sun.

all of me is still standing on end.

i don't know where i start and stop.

100 years ago i was married.

100 years ago i was not married.

i put everything in the world into my mouth.

the bottles of perfume i drink litter the floor.

my face is a mirror and i use first person pronouns.

all that's left for me are the implications.

the small bone of my inner ear.

a video of myself watching a video.

a snake eating a small puppy.

my body bleeds ichor and rose petals.

when i die i will be the next thing to be.

i fire a gun into the sky one hundred times.

where the bullets land will be shape of my body.

toxic body

my body's parasitic load

jumping out

Rosa Yemen's blushing kiss

laying not our own eggs

torn in half

swallowing

a Camel 99

two cloves of garlic

my mother once asked me

in front of my body

don't you think some men want to be pregnant

my body does not know what men want

i do not care

overcome body

“Sweet mother, I cannot weave—

slender Aphrodite has overcome me

with longing for a girl.”

— Sappho, from *Sappho: A New Translation of the Complete Works* translated by

Diane Raynor

i am crying in my bed daydreaming of swallowing her cum

i am scared to be so lucky i want to stay a naked body and touch myself

in my dearest fantasies we sob all day tied together in my ass

we call out of work we notify our loved ones i tell her not to pull out

my best dreams find us sucking each other off weeping and 69ing

bioluminescent

i want to tell her something beautiful is moving through me my mouth is full

we two sterile animals woolgathering she asks me to give her puppies
what else to do but cache it all away be idle wolf it down another day

fast body

i am so fucking delusional

on some days i want to run away

with a stranger i want to run away with a stranger

marry her in the snow and never see each other again

i am so fucking

delusional

to think i want dirty sex things

when really i want to be courted

i am a stupid princess and i will fuck for

cold pizza

an old Arby's sandwich in the

back seat

“gay” “sex” “for

money”

mixing Xanax with red wine and ptsd is how to fast travel irl

adopting a baby horse from the ocean is the only fulfilling thing

the hole i'm making in top of my head is to dig out the halo

canine body

i absolutely refuse to be detected

by radar

government sexbot assassins

any of my

dommes

i can't cum until the moment of de-

capitation

i'm an impossible person

it's very sexual for me

the monsters in movies kill and eat the police and military

i enjoy

these parts

my body claws in refusal to life itself

full of eggs

ready to lay puppies

i'm kicked

what is actually

happening is all

this is all just

another movie

playing for me

in our head

i write about all the sex i'm not having

all the cops i won't kill

if i stand on my hind legs i just may appear human

human-

passing

my body and i are too traumatized for a lap of piss

i don't know any better than Too Much

Fun

or else

another fantasy

a body of water

lost body

my body dreams of a return to the earth

fucks the goddess of war and desire

becomes countless dead wolves

bury her under clay-cold ground

where a unicorn lies and rests her head

beneath no cross's shadow

she is instinctually terrified

i am open to the possibility of love

a leap into the eye of a caldera

to predict the future in dreams

kaleidoscope of a thousand wings

eyes appear and disappear

flames and smoke and singing

naked loneliness impaled to form

joy is a renewable resource

on all fours i suck it out

i chew 18 ft of bubble tape

spit up on my breasts

i tell my body a big secret

we pack a bag and make sandwiches

we run away

away

away

riding body

if i let her stare into the sun long enough my body sees

the future

she does good tricks for me

fucking

pissing

praying

my body makes it hard for me to crawl in through my brain

bad

chemicals

i can't tell what she wants from me

she's my

best friend

it's a sexual relationship

it's not a sexual relationship

it's a waste of both

our time i'm white but my body isn't

she isn't trans either

she's my body

in the dreams we share i feel her flying

heal the dead

cast fire

the word PISS drawn on her arm as a joke

she doesn't get it

her sense of humor is more physical

i'm not good at

puns either

she spits out the honey i feed her

she comes back to life

forever

a body like mine isn't easy

it's not for

everyone

(but she is

wink)

if you want one so bad steal a big one for yourself

VROOM

VROOMMMM

suspended body

my body the queen recluse walking across the ceiling

tapeworm pregnancy pregnant in her own
mother

my body five years old and smelling like tobacco

having sex in a basement inside of a
memory

my body picking out the eggs attempting suicide

managing the consequences
the devil

love is a murderer
murdering

honey-sweet and gay
joyful

give me a name
blessed

my body hung upside by one foot praying to God

blood rushes to my head i never
hear a reply

my body a leg bent out facing toward true north

knowing where things are never

where to go

invisible body

the dire inequality of standing visible

i lie down with everyone

reading poetry into cacophony

hidden behind a big voice

my body will turn to lowercase

a posture of submission

genitals exposed to the light

jaws agape to fit your face

every eye is a finger inside

my body squirming against no real pleasure

a man once jacked off onto me on the bus

i'm learning how to be alone in a room

my body

my strategy for the whole of my life has been to mark my abusers with my blood

force them to carry a wound drag a dead soul a child a too large

woman

too many

too many

too many

the cicada shells hang ragged from my harmful ones yet my souls return to me

some nights the fluting of the wind and the drumming of gunshots make them dance

pulling at my hand thousand-armed a god of sex and death the shape of too

many selves

i do not want to turn and see the spirits that tarry

my body does not like to be stretched apart sick with form

the dead souls inside me trying to get out are they drawn by the miasma

the bees' season has ended and the winter come abdomen taut with the red honey

ultraviolet dreams purring golden sleep

i cannot kill my selves

i cannot kill my body

i plan to live forever

at the end of the movie i walk back into the ocean

NOTES

trauma body — “TERRIFIC” is borrowed from *Charlotte’s Web* by E.B. White and “[War] is not healthy for children and other living things” is borrowed from Lorraine Schneider of Another Mother for Peace

infertile body — “balk at that milk cream” is borrowed from Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. “nobody loves me” and “good grief and alas” are borrowed from *Daisy-Head Maizye* by Dr. Seuss

hidden body — “Why are you weeping, happiness?” is borrowed from the song of the same name from *Ghidrah the Three Headed Monster*

burning body — “Crazy? No, I’m not. No. Yes, I am. I don’t want to go with you. I don’t want to be in love with you” is borrowed from *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* episode 3 “A Modest Rebellion”

action body — “I’m too old for this shit” is borrowed from *Lethal Weapon*

exploding body — after *Saute ma ville*

riding body — “If you want one so bad, steal a big one for yourself” is borrowed from *Akira*

my body — “The dead souls inside me trying to get out, are they drawn by the miasma?” is borrowed from *Inuyasha* episode 32 “Kikyo and Inuyasha, Into the Miasma”