

To Miss New Orleans

My ancestors calling me by many different names,
some old, some sticky, some falling past my knees.
Their faces shift minutely in the frames

I cannot hope to identify. By my wits I lie
beneath rug and searching shrewd of finger,
ears molding to the dim and muffled cry:

My ancestors calling me by many different names
I cannot hope to identify. By my wits I lie
humming. How the voices seem to linger
in the dark. They are an echo in the trees.

Here Dolly, here Fess, here pretty southern singer
of the redtown Storyville smokey dry
humming. How the voices seem to linger

on my tongue, dripping honeybees,
turning tricks, licking out as flames
in the dark. They are an echo in the trees.

The Revenant

kneeling daughter I am

- girl of mother
- we know secrets
- she and I we stir up all kinds
- see me separate myself from my body

enter old man

- he lock me outside to be with mother
- I practice my flying
- long-tailed

see me break from my body

- young girl
- old man grandfather takes her as his bride
- and that was the first time he raped her

now—high-collared

- I stiff as a bisque doll
- husband is tall
- he forbids me my flying
- thank god he is dying
- mother inside same old house

I am dying too

- hunchbacked and tired
- ancient animal under shell
- tell me was I ever young
- my forearms turn to tusks
- mother she hang me from my tusk arms

her father is gone my husband

- mother she hang me up tight
- am big monster
- mother she and I were beautiful
- brown-armed and soft we stirred up all kinds

I tell you somehow I was healed

- am maiden again
- house creaking swallowing
- it's a midnight blue
- my shell it took its leave one day
- we sing for it
- we sing for its return to dust

**no I've not forgotten that numbness can be sharp and stillness
a spinning spiraling twister**

Storyville Child Tells All

the dolls are never eating anymore
and underneath the bed is all I know
a ring of dust is drawn upon the floor
my limbs are ticking every place I go

the truth is that I once was made of wool
my keeper traded me for iron lace
the dolls won't let me get too near the fool
I think I can't remember where my face

our window is a curtain on the wall
behind it is a woman I forgot
I try to keep my balance on the ball
if not the dolls will tie me in a knot

I miss my keeper; she, at least, was raw
and no one else believed me what I saw

Skinny

skinny is what I tell her—a legend already
she pees standing up and skinny

is what I tell her my kneecaps
are her legs splaying

so we are playing grown up under
water moving against tide

I chase with my tongue drawn
crosses on the palm indicating

a penchant for the uncanny
is her resemblance to the boy I am

bursting for the smell of a body against
my body becoming a surface for resting

under the house: the most legendary
the day we voluntarily buried ourselves

stretching toes to meet each other
nearly asleep and sweating

Two Voices In Bath

rosemary burns and ashes spread
the hands to open wide a bed
of soil in the frozen ground
upon which dancing feet abound
and whiten over red.

how to sharpen and to thread
the leg, to amble out ahead,
to shiver over word profound.
rosemary burns and ashes spread

in bath of brine our thirst is fed
upon the face of how we've read
our graces, pleating to astound
to deftly wax their way around
and sip from our enchanted head.
rosemary burns and ashes spread.