

Inventory of embarrassing objects

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The following has been agreed upon: the objects belonging to the plundered will hereafter be classified, washed, dressed and presented in the finest of manners. In other words, to their advantage, in the closest collaboration, in a dialogue that shall certainly be fraternal, perhaps even amicable, with the administration of the plunderers, in their language, in accordance with their tradition and, it goes without saying, employing the form of respect that is their due. Take care that the objects, like the children, if I may be so bold to say, of a large family do not wander too far, that they remain, in one way or another, in the environs, within the grounds of the house, the great house as we like to call it. Waxed wood, gold, fine cloth... everything here is made to soothe the eye. The soft light and old perfume communicate to all that they are at home in the mystery of the national cavern, where the child is placed on the skin of a beast and its eyes shine like precious jewels as its head rolls on the floor just as a bulldog bites into its neck. A delicate hand, and its copper bracelet, neatly cut off at the wrist, the other hand still firmly clutching a dagger, voluptuous and tattooed mouth, still life with sad eyes licked by the tongue of a cat. The creature sighs at the foot of the master who has finally fallen asleep. Spare a thought for the burden that fills all his days! The library is crumbling under manuscripts. Who will be able to read them?

Please also note the following in annex: we have no use for these teeth that clack in the heart of the night. The plundered will forthwith take back all these horrors; we are tired of them. They may also have the skulls and all sorts of bones that reached us by we know not what lively dance of skeletons, escaped from wars that we have forgotten. The great house is welcoming, it is a refuge and leaves no one outside. See this hip and this beautiful arm, note this rib and this delicate tibia sculpted so that one may blow antique songs through it. Everything has a place in the world. Consider the empty silhouettes you leave behind in the dust of the display cases.

Here is what has been agreed to: our breath must be heard. It is the music of appeasement. Please write it down, notate it and have it be played each time it is necessary. Our heart beats below this hodgepodge of things. No groan covers it. It also beats in your proud chest. It beats for us and your blood for us and your skin for us and also your carcass, with which you beg so inelegantly. Please add the following: we entered into homes and blue sexes. They became our cold storage chambers. Take, but do not go far, for no forest, no desert, no savanna, no miserable fortress could protect you better than us. Anything you do will be done in the tongue of thieves. We stuffed it into your mouth with fistfuls of diamonds. And so you will always be on your knees in our eyes, deformed and grotesque in your imitations.

Here is yet more of what has been agreed to: you may take back, pillagers, selfish children, that which you believe belongs to you, but take nothing you cannot carry. Leave behind then the burdens and resentments, abandon the sad conflicts and regrettable (his)stories that no one wants to hear. Do not bring the hysterical, crying women with rolled-back eyes to the Ministry, the deformed females or the half-savages. Take care to disarm them when they enter the palace. And ensure they speak softly, as they should, for today, the master is dead, a royal fly-swatter clutched in his grip. The afternoon light enters the parlor feebly, falling on boxes of ivory, piercing through voile curtains that float in the breeze. The window is open and all life exits. This is the end. See how everything is suddenly funereal. Where has joy gone? You took it with you for egotistical reasons. Take it and do it quickly, we have no need of this sad performance. Everything here was in order, for beauty and splendor. We chased away the shadows, dug our swords into the heart of the night. There is a place for each thing in the world and you are ignorant of this, for your lives are pure accidents. You who know only flames and hurled shouts devoid of grammar.

Please add this last annex: we entered villages and no thigh could resist us, in wombs we built our most beautiful palaces. You snigger in the corner as we wash the master. A splendid skeleton, don't you think, lying in state in the middle of the cold bed? Is this not the first in a collection of ghosts? We no longer live in the world, we are the errant knights, those whose gaze the world submits to, in the greatest embarrassment and even, you will agree, with a secret disgust.

Please note, before leaving, this final request: care must be taken with our future tombs, to ensure no one pillage what will remain of us. This is the ultimate mission I address to you here, in the most naked fraternity and the most sincere friendship.