



*Rhythm of the Bones*

**DARK  
MARROW**

EST. 2018

*edited by*

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*&*

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**ISSUE  
ONE**

*a compilation of dark poetry*

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## Paint the Room in Novocaine

*Jake Bailey*

Suck all the air out of a vacuum bag,  
dust mites crawling in between yellowing teeth,  
lint weaving its way into soft, pink gums;  
this is the breakfast of champions—

Throw the switch, it all comes apart,  
sinew and membrane shooting  
across the walls,  
gin soaked gristle splattering code  
for the breakers to transcribe.  
Try being a dentist in that kind of space,  
“Well, you see, it’s a funny story.”

From up here, it’s you and space,  
you and teeth gaps stretching  
from ear to ear,  
silver scythe prodding  
for capped-top troubles.  
*Oh, we got a live one!*  
It runs in all directions,  
first up, then left, then down  
into sour patch gullet,  
that marvel of backwater bile.  
*Nothing to be done about that.*  
*Take two of these and call me in the morning.*

Leave chair country,  
the body implodes  
on a single moment, throbbing limbs  
compacted down into paper doll positions.  
*Cut and paste to section 42.*  
Animate the movements and smoke the beehives,  
the buzzing rises to a soft roar,  
smokers purring sultrily  
in their metallic chambers,  
little bodies drop like day-old confetti.

Throw a party where no one  
knows your name  
and party hats are lampshades thrown  
on in a drunken stupor,  
naked light illuminating the faults  
of the unknown.  
Let out a screeching *ah-roo*,  
the guests morph  
into great lumbering beasts

lapping up the entrails of the vacuum,  
sucking down the inverse of what's been said.  
*This is quite a sight.*  
And, of course, you're right.  
Let the being of is take a break,  
becoming what's never been makes for far more  
interesting television.

## Self-Portrait as Spring Maidens

*Hannah Calkin*

I cannot linger over how excited I am  
To have found a sunning daylily—  
Because I can already see  
The cycle of winter coming  
In the veins winding around my thumbs.  
Like Persephone, I escape and reappear.  
The dirt is best when it's wet,  
With the buds beneath the surface ready  
To glitter around an abandoned wire fence.  
Like Perdita, I have found a source for a better garden.  
The cross-bred flowers were at war.  
They fought metamorphosis.  
I'd plant seeds and wait for them to open—  
They did, but choked each other  
Before rotting. The wild ones shut quicker  
But when they came back were fuller  
And covered the meadow like haze  
Covering the sky. I used my sundress  
To gather little yellow petals before  
They turned brown. I was not so silent then.  
Ever wonder why we die in winter?  
I do. The answer could be as simple as  
*We're prettiest as newly rattled  
Tulips from the earth.  
In spring we smell like marigold water.*  
Two birds always swirl  
Above my head in opposite directions.  
I was born from a myth  
That was Eden, and back to that myth  
I return to share pomegranate  
Seeds with the worms.

## Flowers

*Lauren Saxon*

I keep your dead flowers on my windowsill

Their colors have faded  
like memories  
like *'just checking in'* texts

Sometimes

I worry people see my silence as strength  
mistake my smile for serenity  
and label my laughter  
life

I keep your dead flowers on my windowsill  
by now its petals  
are too frail to touch

So am I

## **Another Resurrection**

*Erin Emily Ann Vance*

*After St. Christina the Astonishing*

Some women sleep on silk sheets,  
I prefer thickets of thorn bushes caressing my thighs.  
The whirring of water wheels and the thrill of near-drowning.  
I find solace in bread ovens; the smell outside is too much  
like dirty rags, a virgin sipping milk from her pert tit.  
Watch how I quiver in my skin all night,  
fling dirt upon my face to become wretched like you.  
I have fits in front of the tabernacle, leap out of the grave to lick the clouds.  
I bite my skin to show you what fear tastes like.

## Stupid Youth

*Kristine Brown*

lists upon lists  
scrawled across beige  
white, pink, grey  
and on legal pads, jaundiced  
by the yuppie's perpetual crush  
on expired orange juice.

in time, life weans you off—  
saccharine disease.

sins among sins  
hung from a wall  
stripped, kicked, assaulted  
and by blooming angst, smudged  
by charcoal's endorsement  
of another overused suburban barbecue pit.

By nine, words wear you down—  
stunted by mischievous ginseng.

**this ti / me for fod / der**

*Elisabeth Horan*

i'm floating in the brine  
every eye im float  
ing in the formal  
dyhyde - every femin  
ine part of my pride  
my genitals soak  
ing in Cuvier's wine  
my vag  
ina in the curat  
or's divina  
tion of my kind  
clit  
oris in the pred  
ator's mind - salted cur  
ed and on disp  
lay. lay  
ered ed up like  
appe  
tizers on a plat  
tered tray. but min  
e, saturat  
ed, wet, decomp  
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## The Last Outpost

*Madison McSweeney*

A sickly orange snow  
-encrusted evening:  
a double decker bus  
pulls up to the stop;  
redwhiteandblue & framed  
on black velvet / the interior filled with embalming fluid  
and the commuters are sealed in ember.

The streetlamps glow like amber –  
as shackled UFOs / a  
cold grey sun  
looms overhead / Coke slush lines the roads.

He staggers towards the stop, that look  
in his eyes / glinting like the beer bottle  
shards / a broken moth towards the blight.  
What come out of him  
is not red / no,  
not this night. What flows from him  
is copper under mandarin streetlights.

Sometimes a man no longer can  
fail to stumble in the fog;  
Sometimes one must fall, and gaze upon,  
the stars beyond the smog.

This man defies narrative / he used  
to fix computers for a living.  
Now he is street  
detritus / grasping at the bus, babbling  
about death, dreaming of fleeing;  
a gibbering gunshot thing.

He catches black ice and collapses,  
and the bus goes on its way as he bleeds out.

## **Keep It**

*Tiffany Meuret*

The field of bones still writhes  
Full of sparking marrow  
Slick surface, exposed  
Cracking underfoot  
Boots to a slurping noise, that carries onward in search of more  
A drop  
Falling down without a splash  
Something small and inarticulate  
Creating upturned chins that remain so only a moment  
But forever wonder about it  
And the sound of it, the smell  
Gilded rivers, tattooed  
A moment to blink, frozen on the skin  
The smallest time to smile  
As the bog absorbs the rest

## **crown of thorns**

*Tom Snarsky*

I.

black cats and palm fronds  
a broad almost total silence

II.

carving up both our names &  
feeding pieces to the wolves

III.

naming each black hole from  
just beyond its event horizon

IV.

people grab their little things  
& hold on to them unknowing

V.

think back can you remember  
crackling fire on a cold night

VI.

the figure it cuts is brutal light  
against memory of warm dark

VII.

o time is going to murder me  
o time is going to murder you

## Scarred Daisies

*Marilee Goad*

You carved daisies into my back, blood spurting its memory of pain, permanent beauty: transient fortitude uplifting my squeezed-shut eyes, half-grimace into something like a smile, or a thank you, whispered from cringing lips, wobbling their silent scream away into a sentence that sounded like love but rang with a displaced resentment: roses would have been nice, but daisies will do, petals dripping their aching story into my mangled flesh until I think this is the necessity of love, without ever knowing sometimes you don't have to break flesh to bleed truth, or beauty, and some people even ask first, some people care to make you smile instead of cry, silent tears wiped clean with the gentle brush of a wet tissue weeping over scabbed scars until ink spews only words you've asked them to write, memories you want to remember.

## **When You Were Young**

*Jason D. Ramsey*

When you were young, spirits rose  
from hollow arms, petals aligned  
in rows, sundresses draped from  
hips like windblown sails, lips  
crested waves. When you were  
young, mountains shifted along  
fault lines, hellebores bloomed in  
Lenten shade, lakes reflected  
pines on glass — shadow-cast for  
larks to mirror flight. When you  
were young, innocence carved sin  
as craftsmen shape oak — precise  
blade against grain, pride-split,  
salient — molded imperfection  
from wild blue eyes. When  
you were young, paths cleared like  
memories, stillborn to love that  
swelled in your veins, a snapshot  
of shutters swung shut,  
eyes forlorn to frame a stare.

## The Brindled Dead

*Jason D. Ramsey*

You stand before me like unbroken bedrock,  
a red oak ripe from Indian summer: staunch,  
unrelenting, crown rich in autumnal hues,

golden swells of fire that pierce like longleaf  
pines, life to my death as heartwood is to  
timber. You extend a hand — milk-white,

dalliant, fingers as taproots, ribbons that  
bifurcate my thoughts through clay. Spring-  
tails dance around your sapling trunk, blind

to the fury within mine: scribbled ventricles  
walled with sap, welled from decay, wilted  
from drought. Plowmen come for us. They

sidle by your dew-dropped leaves, aglow in  
glory, bastions of tempests inlaid by flame,  
pale reflections of regents until they reach

mine, which crick like herringbone jags,  
sallow wisps bored hollow from regret. You  
watch from afar as they pick me apart,

branch by branch, thought by thought, cut  
by axe until I swallow soil, until blackness  
depresses, until fog settles in like kin - a

comfortable smile that warms like whiskey -  
while winds rip roots from sediment and  
scatter them amongst the brindled dead.

## Figurehead

*Brittany J. Barron*

In another  
life,  
I was the wooden  
Mermaid. Attached  
to some boundless  
pirate's ship  
who used  
my cedar  
mane to steer  
his rudder. I  
though,  
was forever bound  
to break  
waves across  
my breast.

## Whiskey and Scotch

*Beth Couch*

*I am always the villain in this story.*

*Boundaries of more than clothes  
and skin and muscle and bone  
separate me from him.*

*An insurmountable distance  
measured out*

*not*

*in coffee spoons*

*but*

*in wives,*

*in husbands,*

*in children.*

*It would not be worth it after all  
to hear him say,*

*That is not what I meant at all;*

*that is not it at all.*

*He turns, closing the door as he leaves.*

*Beneath the text messages,*

*the emails,*

*the meetings,*

*and the coffee,*

*I drown.*

\*\*\*

I told you

I am always the villain in this story,  
so call me a prophet, a whore, a slut,

a homewrecker—

Elijah and Jezebel both.

I went willingly to you.

That is the Narrative,

is it not?

The Narrative to fill

the black emptiness.

A hysterical woman

preying on a good,

upstanding

husband and father;

not the other way around—

surely.

I am your downfall  
and your nakedness  
and your shame.  
I am the girl who makes boys sin,  
the one you called your dearest friend  
as you whispered  
“sweet dreams”  
night  
after night  
after night  
after night  
after night  
after night.

And I am here,  
lost in the blackness of a memory  
lost to the glasses long empty  
of the whiskey and the scotch  
that you poured.

I am always the villain in this story.  
I am the girl who makes boys sin.

I dared disturb the universe,  
I squeezed it into a ball,  
but  
I should have worn my trousers rolled  
and let my hair thin.  
*That is not what I meant at all.*

I should have drowned in my own silence.

If I could take back those nights, would I?  
If I could take back those words, would I?  
And was it worth it after all?

I don't know.

I don't think it was.

I don't think it was.

I don't think it was.

## **Rice Paper**

*Monica Kagan*

We face the flickering screen  
You ask for wine  
I turn to pour  
The red liquid spills onto the ground  
Transforming your tongue into a scalpel  
My world shrinks as your words  
Coil around my heart inflicting  
Incision after incision

"I'm sorry," you say sour-breathed the next day.

I struggle to sense  
the next rupture of  
your rice paper skin.

I say the "wrong" thing  
Spawning your infinite snarling slurs  
"Kneel," you whiskey-whisper lying half-asleep on your bed  
The air is siphoned from my lungs  
As your fist  
Connects with my stomach

"I'm sorry," you say sour-breathed the next day.

I struggle to sense  
the next rupture of  
your rice paper skin.

Years later  
in the ward's antiseptic-miasma  
I watch your jaundiced fingers.  
Your blue-tinged lips  
lay bare a revelation of  
a thrown chair ripping your flesh  
a belt battering your body  
an ocean of pain  
drowning you

I cup your rice paper hands  
in mine

## Craquelure

*Madeleine Corley*

i. *fugitive*

The carmine flits away,  
tosses at warm crimson cheeks  
its impermanence. A fugitive  
now. I never thought myself  
a bastion until I was wandered from.  
There's a leak in my smile,  
the teeth yellow with dirt as a side-  
eye scans its fugitives. It's natural  
to yearn for breath when inundated  
with brushed-on restriction.

ii. *sfumato*

I layer thin lines on my face  
and they grow thick. People begin  
to believe my skin is born  
in haze. The smoke fills their eyes  
and I sigh relief that collapsing  
is for me and not you.

iii. *crazing*

I laugh, your face crazed, the cracks  
twin to those in concrete. Mine split deep  
as canyons, crumbled in the sun. More  
permanent and overt. I gave into  
the gravity in the slope of my wrist  
when your colors bled putrid  
my mouth was done tasting lead.

iv. *lightfastness*

I do paint you as the sun  
when the air is tight and my mind  
frames trees as skeletons and  
leaves dead arms. I believed  
you'd enlighten  
the shadow of my cramped dark  
space. What has become  
my shadow is my body  
leached of pigment, the affection  
translucent as ghost.

v. *dammar*

Did I craft this part of  
you? Crush you in fossilled  
relics mined from my  
hollow ground. A mortar I build

viscid and gluttonous it  
covers working eyes. The pestle  
breaks and my hands are cramped  
inside a version of you  
you do not choose, despite  
my damned will.

*vi. turpentine*

I've been pushed  
in the pool  
and stripped  
of your fattening phrase.  
Van Gogh was fourteen shades  
away from today's  
blackest black, near perfect  
and bold. Time can't equate  
progress. Even hindsight  
emits faulty fumes. Removal is  
compromise and I  
quite like  
the smell.

## **Grass Fire**

*Kimberly Wolken*

I struggle to see what  
others so clearly see. Why am I  
different, but not in the way which would make me great?  
I want to be something strong, formidable, like  
the ocean in a storm. Invincible, uncontrollable,  
having the final say.  
Instead I am the tender grass, easily bent  
or broken underfoot.  
Not big enough or strong enough to take  
what is said about me and turn it  
into something beautiful.  
Instead I just let myself burn, like the  
tender grass during a draught.  
A draught where self-confidence is not  
evident and anger roils in every empty void.  
I will burn up, waiting for the ocean to come.

## **Pink**

*Jessica Bergquist*

I want to rearrange my skin into paper thin  
Parallel strips, on that white modernist coffee table  
Just to stain it forever. I want to burn my laughter  
And writhe in the ashes, anew and revitalized  
As the lonely witch I once was. My blood  
Can boil over, as always, overflowing  
From my hair follicles now, staining that white bathtub  
You love. The churning in my stomach  
Can become roaring tsunamis to an island,  
And a small wave to a distance shore.  
Still, for once,  
I ripple.

## Dark Leaves

*Kristin Garth*

Her love's embrace is gnarled & deep, shadow  
tentacled, cloaks girl grief beneath. A weep  
to sleep against his mottled trunk, she knows  
this path red wine stumble drunk. Grey sheep  
black hooves, dire bleats with fangs, blue tongues  
fly stung infected brains. A flock inside  
subconscious rot, her nightmarescape dreamed young,  
forgot. He was her cradle, sometimes slide,  
skinned knees, chemise, scaled bark to hide an hour,  
an afternoon — her shut eye secrets bud  
a bloom blood moon as Pinot devoured  
the decades post deflowering. A flood  
of memories drowned in wine, found, dark leaves,  
with lullabies familiarly diseased.

## **Beneath These Hands**

*Evie Reichel*

Beneath these hands a thousand lives have passed  
and thousands more will come.

Behind this wall minds rupture into a perpetuating whirlwind  
fueled for some by fear and others pure determination and soul.

Beneath these hands a thousand hearts have raced,  
a thousand hearts have stopped,  
and thousands more will tremble.

Behind this wall, we lay silent and still,  
no place for modesty, anger or ego,  
merely a place to let go.

Beneath these hands a thousand lives comply,  
a thousand lives survive,  
and thousands more come full circle.

*92 point 7, 86 point 3  
Radiation Treatment, Texas Oncology - 2014*

## **The Warning White Foam**

*Haley Jenkins*

I'm looking for the herb in the hoopoe's nest that'll erase me, I'm looking for the private worlds that will eat me. It is a wave, all ebb, flow and storms.

Slow erosion.

It fills, it empties. Drowns crevices, infects my lemon ribs with mad sea rocking. Chizzelled sites of colour, where the blue is always bedrock.

Green, then blue, then black.

It is drowning, it is a wave. The warning white foam.

My sekos, my sekos, a half-sleep while walking, I section myself to the ward I call Home  
My Tartarus, my Tartarus, where all the inner women weep and transform  
the planet tea rings sweated into my work desk are the blue circles of their bruises

the blue angel wants to drown and cure in Armagnac

My Adytum, my adytum, both playhouse and blueprint of air-borne castles

where I'm looking for the language that has fused  
with bones, bones left from the hangover of an extinct reality

echofield of thoughts, the gasterfield filled with weight  
study words, speak the code, raise your hand

My bodywild, my bodywild, in the arms of every woman of my living dead world  
where the laughter rocks back, the shocks of fist and attack  
where the love breaks and cracks, I hold onto those faces with sweet hell

the white warning foam is in my mouth

muscles thickening in a grief language that summons blue

we will break from the strangest of shapes

I as many others will go to others and talk about

who and how and why

that thing happened that no one gives a damn about.

## **Violent Yellow Vision**

*Haley Jenkins*

In side glances, I see the world and quick  
I must select the china throwing soundful scraps  
to take, and repeat over and over again.

*Chatter. Clink of knife. Whispers between chew and grind.*

I am jealous of the blues you wear and your violent yellow vision  
of our life, our body, your wingbeat in my blood.

*Waiter asks drinks, waiter asks for happy, waiter asks for us.*

In your colours, there are lights  
slogans and screams  
so joyous so satisfied  
we could lift away from the blue you threw to the tiles,  
which you will roll us in when we are too yellow  
so happy so precious

*Pork tempura. Duck in plum. Ice sliding.*

Sipping tea and grazing on oily bread, he asks if I am okay  
and there is a moment – you are in my lips  
your teeth inside my gums  
“No and no” you desire “I am blue angel  
I am desiring yellow, I am twinned”  
to a body that came eight weeks early  
two pounds wired inside a blue plastic box.

## The Basement

*Stephen Furlong*

Immersing myself  
as a spilled can  
of paint

I cover the cold concrete  
floor, reaching corners.  
The shadows begin having their way—

Twelve steps down, entering  
labyrinth of memory

a place that exists      both in reality      in my nightmares,

now, a door slam      I have become hinged      Locked into place

Carefully closed blinds  
as to not reveal—  
they were eyelids.  
The key, jagged like a predator's tooth—

it grips onto pain, leaving  
teeth marks on my shoulder, still  
fresh, rubbing my hand over

my shoulder now, I begin to breathe  
heavier now, more careful,  
as to avoid being stuck.

## The After Years, or Learning to Love My Own Voice

*Stephen Furlong*

Faceless,            it's all the same,            it's all a shame.  
I cover my ears. Drowning in silence    I have lost ability  
to speak            I wonder who would listen            and so I hide.  
I speak gently            because I am ashamed            .            Of my voice,

it cracks            *Am I the only one?*            I think, I ask  
yet it— echoes            *lonely one.*  
The threats            revealed themselves            like he did,  
slowly, at first.            Then, all at once.            He gripped

my wrist.            Presently scarred,            from my life or death  
debates .            Like waves            crashing into—  
I hold onto words,            I let them come over me,            like cold air,  
hurting my chest.            I live in a place where            it hurts to breathe.

Searching for breath    of new life.            I cover my ears.

Echo.            *My fears.*            Presenting them as a  
punching bag            from a ceiling, existing as            chained reality.  
Shorelines, and I am the sea    the strength inside  
unmeasurable. These words will            escape from me,  
They have            to move on.            Trust me  
I am            trying.            This pain  
exists. A reminder            where I came  
from.            A place of shadow.

## Burial

*Lewis Johnson*

Talking to your mortician  
he prescribes a reduction  
of identity, advocates  
the itemisation of minutia.  
'Date of birth?  
Of the Catholic inclination?  
Two surviving children'.  
With statements steeped in fluid,  
embalment smothers the room  
and discourse is choked;  
silence in the Siren's call of caskets.  
Next, the coffin-top's procured.  
It blinds the world from sight  
as your hands,  
which once held warmth,  
distend into fists  
- wrought in *rigor mortis*,  
cooled marrow cracks  
like cement left to set.  
Now, entombed in the dark  
- to the beat of bones –  
you crack knuckle against knuckle,  
like a newborn, kneading the breast.

Two poems by

*Lotte Jean Elliott*

**hollow**

my mind is an empty case  
much like  
if you removed all of the organs  
beneath my ribs  
my thoughts would be as hollow  
as the space now free  
where my heart used to lay  
— broken

**solar system**

we are a collection of lights  
beams in the galaxy  
all centred around  
the same earth  
and yet  
we hurt each other  
more than love  
even though  
we all feel pain

## death a gripping

*Maia Elgin*

spirit disentangled by choice  
*there are things I do not miss* the old house rots  
decay floats in the room that was yellow

death a panic  
*do you think you can't speak to me now*

the walls she cleaned *this is the room*  
covered in soot  
*where he held me down* the floorboards  
succumb the dishes pile  
*this is the painting I stared at*

her body *my body burned away*  
she kept it hungry

useless *dead arms bent up*  
*I was praying* to this house now  
it crumbles *my jaw unhinged* around him  
*i was singing*

Two poems by

*Joseph S. Pete*

### **The Trees**

Another renewal opportunity emerged.  
I could plant trees by the campus  
get my hands dirty laying roots.

I could feel alive,  
feel like I forged a future  
among blocks of boarded-up vacants.

Nothing seduces like a past that never was.

### **The Murals**

We can rebuilt this rotted city,  
no matter how many vacants,  
no matter how many arson-torched homes.

The Rust Belt is an abject moral failure,  
a concession, a weakness,  
an economic sellout of neighbors as obsolete.

We can build something up, we can do better.

## Lightning Bolts and Bullseyes

*Steve Denehan*

My paper planes were decorated  
at the front with lightning bolts  
with bullseyes on the wings  
and windows on the sides filled  
with giddy passengers  
dreamers taking flight  
in the hands  
of schizophrenic winds

in the middle, hidden, always  
my name and a message  
for the boy who might find it where it lands  
in Mozambique  
for the girl who rescues it from a tree  
in Japan, in Peru  
in Timbuktu

I stood on a pillar  
and perfectly  
timed my throw  
into the biggest bellow  
the first  
of ten thousand crash landings

dusk brought my mother's call  
and, one last throw  
with aching legs, I climbed up on the pillar and

with casual indifference  
with a creaking arm  
I laid my battered paper plane onto the laughing wind

I know you won't believe me but  
the plane got tangled  
in the gusts  
was sucked  
into the sky  
above the waking streetlights

I teetered on my toes  
and, with tired and squinting eyes  
I watched it disappear

Two poems by

*Siham Karami*

### **Metamorphosis**

(How I succumbed to his cocoon of dark,  
buried live and trembling in its ark.)

Appendages grew stiff, my eyes complex,  
each tiny eye-cell focused on a fragment  
of shadow, sudden movement, whites and blacks,  
my awkward turning helplessly unbent.  
One dismembered palp hung from his mandible;  
a pincer's grasp ripped chitin, oozing fluid  
and uprooting legs — his frenzy palpable,  
a vortex with the strange head of a druid.  
I stretched myself on sacrificial grass  
to cover my thorax's gaping side.  
My bed's betrayal turned its coiling mass  
into the altar of his locust-bride,  
smoldering in dawn's slow-burning rise,  
a resin pulling dead wings from my eyes.

### **Frost My Heart**

Frost my heart with candy pain  
And suck the sugar from my brain.  
Don't let the children walk the wire,  
Don't let them burn the pacifier,  
But numb the world in lidocaine.

I've had enough of speaking plain  
When every word's a chocolate stain  
That leaves its dark identifier.  
So frost my heart

And let me shine like freezing rain.  
My crinkling sky of cellophane  
A see-through pink of faux desire  
Whose toxins might retard your fire  
Before I'm razed like hollow cane—  
Then frost my heart.

## **The Patron Saint of Landlocked Mermaids**

*Justin Karcher*

I tell everyone I know  
that there should be headstones for the living

not stony crystal balls predicting our deaths  
but testaments to the heroics we carry on our backs

because when people stare at headstones  
their hearts melt into mush

headstones are Medusas in reverse  
cemeteries fill us with electricity, turn our muscles into flashlights

we swap shine with the dead and reflect on what they did  
then we tell ourselves we need to make a move

we don't do that with the living, not as much as we should  
sometimes I don't think I feel as much as I could

sometimes I want to hemorrhage headstones out of my hips  
bleed my rhythm into the rhythms of brave rebellious voices

teens trapped in caves, in Florida swamps, who snatch hurricanes out of thin air  
turn them into tiaras or teeth, who swallow the neons of their youth

spits out sunsets that swallow  
all those predators hiding in the tall grass

## Vortograph

*Athena Melliar*

*After the Martian moons*

I am eclipsing moons in the night sky,  
disci that hide the depth of my light merge  
into a self-image—existence through death—

kaleidoscopic, pareidolic, vortographic;

subelves—the fragments—are dyed black and white.  
We are encrypting parts; you are more than  
you reveal, I conceal myself behind

lines and lights, those wrest control of myself;  
Why am I still existing in your mind?  
A piece of mine retreats into her shell.

Antithetic, anomic

parts have shaped myself. I am and I am  
not. I work like a man while inflicted  
by gender wage gaps. The strong sense of self

is the success story of subelves merged  
with marginalized subelves. Yes, my core  
self like the eye of the vortex is calm,

feministic.

Lens split my image in segments, mirrors  
abstract me from my face (I seize my scent).  
I am  
the art of still life—existence through death.

eclipsing moons in the night sky,

## Incident Report

*Meeah Williams*

My father turns from the closet  
with a rifle in his hands.  
On the bed my mothers sits  
a school book on her lap.  
She waits for me to finish spelling  
the word  
half-hanging from my open mouth.

I have told this story  
many times.  
It is all that is left of me.  
So I am trying to get it right.

The window behind my father  
is always half-lifted to the night.  
It is summer. My mother says,  
“Do something.”  
My father, stepping forward, says  
“What is *he* going to do, Anna?”

Little details are always coming back  
like fish picking pieces of colored gravel  
from the bottom of the quiet aquarium  
and spitting them out again  
having mistaken stone for food.

The gun, by chance, is momentarily level  
with my heart.  
This is how we die, then, I realize,  
just as randomly, as suddenly,  
as irrationally as this,  
without preamble or meaning;  
I discovered surrealism  
that evening.

I feel myself leave my body  
and float passed my father toward the window  
the way you do in a dream  
to keep yourself from seeing yourself dead.  
I did the impossible.  
My father sees the vacancy  
in my pale face  
and decides right then to file for divorce.  
He knows he’s been misunderstood;  
he’ll never again sleep easy in this house.  
Now, I terrify him,

a faceless voodoo doll  
all stuck with pins  
with his name sewn inside  
in place of a heart.

The bullet wasn't meant for me.  
But it took me decades  
to understand this  
too late.

My mother will forget the entire incident.  
Or claim to.  
My brother doesn't factor in.  
As for me,  
I never returned.  
But I look in at the window  
from time to time.

What was the word  
I never finished spelling?  
Who is that woman  
now sitting in my place?

## **BONE SWING**

*Clare O'Brien*

We skinned the thing that killed you,  
Boiled its flesh for soup. The bones we lugged  
High on the hillside, set up in the shape  
Of the great beast's skeleton. Inside  
The wide ribcage we laid your corpse,  
Still mostly fresh, and packed the brazier  
With fragrant leaves and branches.

When night came we lit the pyre. The flames  
Blazed brighter than the moon, fanned by winds  
And crackling loud as gunfire. The stink  
Of sacrifice fogged the air, a beach barbecue for  
Gods at play. The hot winds rocked the cradle  
Till it broke. Blackened bones cracked and cooled.  
The ash fell into the sea like snow.

## Presumed Dead, Oz Expatriate Claims Squatter's Rights in Kansas

*Tzynya L. Pinchback*

*after Anne Britting Oleson*

I am want and rain. / Wall cloud a pulse / against my seat bone / stirring / *the river of feral rams*  
/ limb, sap, and heifer's claw / a putrid debris on my hat's brim- / three heel clicks from your  
door. / Poppy— red like tongue swelled hot / with curse and pray— / a bouquet / under my  
finger's nail. / I am sunflower / plucked bare / storm cellar spun up / gold brick dust and atone /  
both glint and eye- / Tin Woodsman's ax / up sleeve of yellow slicker / loose sequin / ruby  
slippers.

**//Autumn Grief//**

*Courtenay S. Gray*

Guts overflowing bluebell bright.  
Hollow screams into the dead of night,  
Crying out for help with the hope of second sight.  
The sweet perfume of love turns sour when the divorce papers charge through the letterbox.  
Parchment paper covered in bloody discharge.  
The fruits of thy womb grow cold and dry in this poppy catacomb.  
A fist-  
A shove-  
A fuck you to the goddess of love.  
Why do you take the love away?  
It comes in threes they say.  
Death,  
Death,  
Death.  
Ravaged by grief,  
As sick as an Autumn leaf.

**I am dreaming . . .**

*Effy Winter*

I am dreaming of

crushed rose petals  
to melt between my thighs for erotic fervor,

the smothering of my breath as you reap  
solemn prayers from the back of my throat,

purging mouthfuls of sacrificial blood,

a dreadful stain upon red silk.

*\*appearing in Effy's collection Flowers of the Flesh  
(Rhythm & Bones Press, January 2019)*

## About the Contributors

**Jake Bailey** is a schizotypal confessionalist in Antioch University Los Angeles' MFA program. He has forthcoming work in *The Laurel Review* and *Flypaper Magazine* and has been published in *The Esthetic Apostle* and *Prairie Light Review*. He is also an associate editor for *Lunch Ticket* and lives in Chicago with his girlfriend and three dogs.  
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**Hannah Calkin** was born and raised in South Portland, Maine. She recently graduated from the University of Maine at Farmington with a B.F.A. in Creative Writing and was awarded the 2018 Creative Writing Award for excellence by the faculty. Her work can be found in the *Sandy River Review*, *The River*, *Barren Magazine*, and *Persephone's Daughters*. Her first book of poetry, *Pomegranate Odyssey*, will be available from Unsolicited Press in August 2019.

**Lauren Saxon** is a 21 year-old student at Vanderbilt University. She was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio and writes mostly about her experiences with race and identity. Her work has been published in *Flypaper Magazine*, and she is currently on staff as a poetry reader for *Gigantic Sequins* magazine.

**Erin Emily Ann Vance's** work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Contemporary Verse 2* and *Filling Station*. Erin was a 2017 recipient of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Young Artist Prize and a 2018 Finalist for the Alberta Magazine Awards in Fiction. She will complete her MA in Creative Writing in August 2018 and begin a MA in Irish Folklore and Ethnology at University College Dublin in 2019. Erin's debut novel, *Advice for Amateur Beekeepers and Taxidermists* will be published by Stonehouse Publishing in 2019.

On the weekends, **Kristine Brown** frequently wanders through historic neighborhoods, saying "Hello" to most any cat she encounters. Some of these cats are found on her blog, *Crumpled Paper Cranes* (<https://crumpledpapercranes.com>). Her creative work can be found in *Hobart*, *Occulum*, *Sea Foam Mag*, *Philosophical Idiot*, among others, and a collection of flash prose and poetry, *Scraped Knees*, was released in 2017 by *Ugly Sapling*.

**Elisabeth Horan** is an imperfect creature from Vermont advocating for animals, children and those suffering alone and in pain - especially those ostracized by disability and mental illness. She has work up at *Moonchild Magazine*, *TERSE. Journal*, *Blanket Sea*, *Former Cactus*, *Burning House* and *Milk & Beans*. Her chapbook "Pensacola Girls", written in collaboration with Kristin Garth, is forthcoming at Bone & Ink Press. Follow her @ehoranpoet & [tumblr.com/blog/ehoranpoet](https://tumblr.com/blog/ehoranpoet)

**Madison McSweeney** has published poetry in *The Fulcrum*, *Bywords*, *Cockroach Conservatory*, and *Lonesome October Lit*. Her short horror and fantasy stories have appeared in *Rhythm & Bones Lit*, *Deadman's Tome*, *Unnerving Magazine*, *Women in Horror Annual Vol. 2*, and *Dark Horizons: An Anthology of Dark Science Fiction*.

She blogs about music, genre fiction and the Canadian arts scene at [madisonmcsweeney.com](http://madisonmcsweeney.com) and tweets from @MMcSw13. She lives in Ottawa, Canada, with her family and her cat.

**Tiffany Meuret** is a writer and desert-dweller from Phoenix, Arizona. Her work has been featured in Four Chambers Literary Magazine, MoonPark Review, Collective Unrest, and others. Find her online at [www.TiffanyMeuret.com](http://www.TiffanyMeuret.com), or Twitter @TMeuretBooks. Talking points are good coffee and small dogs.

**Tom Snarsky** teaches mathematics at Malden High School. He lives in Chelsea, Massachusetts among stacks of books and ungraded papers with his fiancée Kristi and their two cat children, Niles and Daphne.

**Marilee Goad** is a queer writer and former medical student now residing in South Korea. She has work published or forthcoming in *Ghost City Review*, *ELJ*, *Barrelhouse*, *Peculiar Magazine*, *OUT/CAST*, *Yes Poetry*, and *Vessel Press*, amongst others. You can follow her on twitter @\_gracilis and find her website at [marileethepoet.tumblr.com](http://marileethepoet.tumblr.com).

**Jason D. Ramsey** is the Creator/Editor-in-Chief of *Barren Magazine* and ALTARWORK. His poetry and essays can be found at *The Mighty*, *Patheos*, *The Mudroom*, *The Bees Are Dead*, and elsewhere.

**Brittany J. Barron** is a poet and writer from Michigan. She is currently an MFA candidate at the University of Tampa. Brittany is an activist, survivor, and ally.

**Beth Couch** grew up in the Deep South and has lived in Arkansas, Massachusetts, and Illinois, and she currently resides in Washington, DC. where she writes for the marketing and philanthropy departments of a financial firm. Previously she taught writing and literature courses for over 10 years and received both her MA and PhD from Boston College. She began her writing career publishing academic essays on Victorian literature, most recently “Illegible Minds: Charlotte Brontë’s Early Writings and the Psychology of Moral Management in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*.” She is a single mother who resides with her brilliant teenaged daughter.

**Monica Kagan** lives by the sea in beautiful Cape Town, South Africa with her wonderful cat. She enjoys bewitching words and is a reader at FICTION on the WEB. She is also a contributing writer at *Rhythm & Bones Literary Magazine's* blog called Necropolis. Her work appears in *Fourth & Sycamore* (USA), *Bonnie's Crew* (UK), and at *FICTION on the WEB* (UK), among others. Her flash fiction piece "The Staircase" is forthcoming at *Rhythm & Bones Literary Magazine* (USA) in October 2018. Twitter: @MonicaOFAH

**Madeleine Corley** is a 23 year-old poet by internal monologue and strives to let people know their value. She is a firm believer in survivors of violences and writes for a better circumstance and system. Her work has appeared in *Barren Magazine*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, and *Zathom*. Her favorite food group is potatoes, making her impending move to Ireland a good fit. To share your personal Irish hot spots, find her on Twitter @madelinksi and on Instagram @maddiewrotethis.

**Kimberly Wolkens** enjoys writing dark short stories and poems. She spends her spare time reading horror stories, writing about ghosts and other dark things, or camping. Her idea of the perfect day involves writing while eating cake and listening to 90's grunge music. Tweets @up\_north\_h1ke.

**Jessica Bergquist** is a writer from Fredericksburg, VA where she currently studies at University of Mary Washington. Her short prose and flash works can also be found in Vessel Press, Wax Seal Literary Magazine, and Ethos Literary Journal. For more information on her and her writing, follow her on Twitter @jrbergq and visit her website at [jessicabergquist.wordpress.com](http://jessicabergquist.wordpress.com).

**Kristin Garth** is a Pushcart & Best of the Net nominated sonnet stalker. Her poetry has stalked magazines like Glass, Yes, Five:2: One, Anti-Heroic Chic, Former Cactus, Occulum, Luna Luna, & many more. She has a chapbook Pink Plastic House (Maverick Duck Press), three forthcoming: Pensacola Girls (Bone & Ink Press, Sept 2018) and Shakespeare for Sociopaths (The Hedgehog Poetry Press Jan 2019), Puritan U (Rhythm & Bones Lit March 2019) Her full length, Candy Cigarette, is forthcoming April 2019 (The Hedgehog Poetry Press). Follow her on Twitter: (@lolaandjolie), her weekly poetry column (<https://www.rhythmbone.com/sonnetarium>) and her website ([kristingarth.wordpress.com](http://kristingarth.wordpress.com)).

**Evie Reichel** resides in Texas. A publicist by trade, her passion is creative writing. Her work is influenced by every encounter, as she believes that she is a part of every place she has ever been and every person she has ever met. Her poem was inspired by radiation treatment in 2014. The treatment room was behind a wall of colorful hands, created by patients who opted to leave their imprints at the end of treatment.

**Haley Jenkins** holds a Creative Writing Master's Degree from The University of Surrey and a Creative Writing Bachelor's Degree from The University of Roehampton. In 2016, Haley was awarded First Prize in the Elmbridge Literary Competition for her short story 'Talisman' and in 2014 won 3rd Prize in the Hopkins Poetry Prize. She has been published in two anthologies by Fincham Press - The Trouble with Parallel Universes (2014) and Screams & Silences (2015), as well as publications such as, Guttural Magazine, Tears in the Fence, painted spoken and The Journal of British & Irish Innovative Poetry. Her work has also appeared in online zines such as dataleedzine, epizootics and ez.Pzine (Pyre Publishing). Haley's first poetry chapbook was published by Veer Books (August 2017). She also runs Selcouth Station Press.

**Stephen Furlong** received his M.A. in Professional Writing from Southeast Missouri State University. He is the author of the chapbook What Loss Taught Me, which is forthcoming from Nostrovial Press. His poems, interviews, and book reviews have appeared in Yes Poetry, Glass: A Journal of Poetry, and Pine Hills Review, among others. He currently serves as a Staff Reviewer for LitStyle, a subset of the literary journal Five:2:One. He can be found on Twitter @StephenJFurlong.

**Lewis Johnson** is a PhD student at the University of Liverpool, researching working class identity in contemporary British poetry. Lewis' own writing interrogates childhood, and explores a posthumous maternal connection - examining the reverberations of adolescent grief through magical realism.

**Lotte Jean Elliott** is a writer from North Eastern England. She began writing at a young age and has always had a love for anything creative. Whether it be art, music or building up an imaginative world, creativity is her favourite outlet. She is a soon to be published author and can't wait to share her works with the world.

**Maia Elgin** lives in the Mississippi Delta with her loves: two cats, a dog, and a person. She received her MFA from LSU, and her publication history includes a chapbook, *The Jennifer*, with Birds of Lace Press as well as poems in *Tarpaulin Sky*, *Ghost Town*, and *Indigest*. She teaches at Delta State University.

**Joseph S. Pete** is an award-winning journalist, an Iraq War veteran, an Indiana University graduate, a book reviewer, a photographer, and a frequent guest on Lakeshore Public Radio. He is a 2017 Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee who has read his work for the Fictitious series on the iO Theater stage in Chicago, who staged a play at the Detroit Heritage Theater Festival, who showcased his photography at the Oddtropolis Art Show in San Francisco, and who was named the poet laureate of Chicago BaconFest, a feat that Geoffrey Chaucer chump never accomplished. His literary or photographic work has appeared or is forthcoming in more than 100 journals, including *The Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Chicago Literati*, *The Vignette Review*, *Voicemail Poems*, *Dogzplot*, *Proximity Magazine*, *Stoneboat*, *The High Window*, *Synesthesia Literary Journal*, *Steep Street Journal*, *Beautiful Losers*, *New Pop Lit*, *The Grief Diaries*, *Gravel*, *The Offbeat*, *Oddball Magazine*, *The Perch Magazine*, *The First Line*, *Bull Men's Fiction*, *Rising Phoenix Review*, *Thoughtful Dog*, *shufPoetry*, *The Roaring Muse*, *Prairie Winds*, *Blue Collar Review*, *The Rat's Ass Review*, *Euphemism*, *Jenny Magazine*, *Vending Machine Press* and elsewhere. He knows this bio would be more memorable if it ended with a hilarious joke but he just doesn't have it in him at the moment.

**Steve Denehan** lives in Kildare, Ireland with his wife Eimear and daughter Robin. Recent publication credits include *Better Than Starbucks*, *Fowl Feathered Review*, a "microchapbook" as part of the *Origami Poems Project*, *Terror House Magazine*, *Dual Coast*, *The Opiate*, *Sky Island Journal*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Evening Street Review*, *The Folded Word*, *Ink In Thirds* and *Third Wednesday*. One of his poems was recently shortlisted for the Ireland Poetry Day Competition. His chapbook, *"Of Thunder, Pearls and Birdsong"* is available from Fowlpox Press.

**Siham Karami's** first full-length collection is *To Love the River* (Kelsay Books 2018). Her poems, essays, and reviews have been widely published. Nominated multiple times for both the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net, she blogs at [sihamkarami.wordpress.com](http://sihamkarami.wordpress.com).

**Justin Karcher** is a poet and playwright born and raised in Buffalo, New York. He is the author of *Tailgating at the Gates of Hell* (Ghost City Press, 2015), the chapbook *When Severed Ears Sing You Songs* (CWP Collective Press, 2017), the micro-chapbook *Just Because You've Been Hospitalized for Depression Doesn't Mean You're Kanye West* (Ghost City Press, 2017), *Those Who Favor Fire, Those Who Pray to Fire* (EMP, 2018) with Ben Brindise, and *Bernie Sanders Broke My Heart and I Turned into an Iceberg* (Ghost City Press, 2018). He is also the editor of *Ghost City Review* and co-editor of the anthology *My Next Heart: New Buffalo Poetry* (BlazeVOX [books], 2017). He tweets @Justin\_Karcher.

**Athena Melliar** is a feminist poet and essayist. Her work has appeared in Literary Magazines and journals, *LEVELER*; *Memoir Mixtapes*; *So to Speak: a feminist journal of language & arts*; *Moonchild Magazine*; *The Light Ekphrastic*; *The Mystic Blue Review*, and elsewhere.

**Meeah Williams** has recent and forthcoming work in *Otoliths*, *Phantom Drift*, *Uut*, *Gone Lawn*, *The Ginger Collect*, *Former Cactus*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Barren*, *Vulture Bones*, *Soft Cartel*, *Burning House*, *Neon Mariposa*, and *Unbroken Journal*. She lives in Seattle.

**Clare O'Brien** - Originally a Londoner, Clare has lived for the last twenty years with her family in a crofting township on the north-west coast of Scotland. She's recovering from a stint as a social media manager and working on her first novel, *Light Switch*, an unconventional dystopia – think *Cloud Atlas* meets *This Happy Breed*. She frequently interrupts herself with poems and short stories, some of which have recently or will shortly appear in *Mslaxia*, *Hedgehog Poetry Press's "Songs To Learn and Sing"* anthology, *The Cabinet of Heed*, *Riggwelter*, *Three Drops Press*, *Fearless Femme*, *The Cauldron Anthology*, *The London Reader*, *Northwords Now* and *Biggar Science Festival's The Powers Of Nature* anthology. Follow her on Twitter at @clareobrien or visit her website at <http://clareobrien.weebly.com/>.

**Tzynya L. Pinchback** is a mermaid and author of the chapbook, *How to Make Pink Confetti* (Dancing Girl Press, 2012), with recent poems appearing or forthcoming in *The American Poetry Journal*, the *Aurorean*, *Midnight and Indigo*, and *Up the Staircase Quarterly*. She writes about things at [tzynypinchback.com](http://tzynypinchback.com). Twitter: @tzynya

**Courtenay S. Gray** is a twenty one year old poet from the United Kingdom. Her main poetic influence is Sylvia Plath. She has been writing ever since she was apple in the eyes of her parents. Reading is also one of her biggest passions.

**Effy Winter** is a poet, editor and witch from Philadelphia, PA. She is the author of *Flowers of the Flesh* (*Rhythm & Bones Press*, January 2019) and her work appears in *Angelical Ravings*, *Soft Cartel*, *Rust & Moth* and other literary publications. Effy is a contributing writer for *Witch Way Magazine* and *Rose Quartz Journal*. She is the curator of *The Love Witch's Musings*—a column at *PUSSY MAGIC*, where you will find her romantic poetry, spells and rituals. Find out more at <https://effywinter.com>.