Repeat
Defenders
“and I asked what metaphor was and she threw open her mouth and swallowed my spine”
Silence...
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You told me
I couldn’t.
I told you
I could.
You didn’t stop me
so I
walked away
like you told me
I couldn’t
and like I told you
I could.

Gospel from me #4 / Vanane Borian
Anthem after a Married Lover / Rachael Z. Ikins

i'm strokin' it
i'm struttin' it,
i'm shootin' from the hip

wrist-SNAP-pin' it
laughin' it,
shootin' off my lip.

jiggle-tit & waggly-ass
bring-you-to-your-knees,
toe-tappin' it, arm pumpin' it
(all DONE with it)
U R nothin' but a tease.

Shakin' it
bakin' it
getting great big air!
I'm one with it,
Top-Dog no shit--
Watch me, girl, I dare

Pride in me, not hidin' ME
share it with the world,
Show me off & brag on me
Tell it, i'm your girl.

shine me up, your Loving Cup
i'll be your sweetest dream

i will be your hand-in-glove
gonna make u scream.
i'm stumpin' it,
i'm humpin' it
i'll be your boonie rat.

jivin' it,
(muff) divin' it
great pink cowgirl HAT

high-fivin' it,
strivin' it
kiss-U big old smack.

backin' up, shakin' up
comin' up FOR AIR (where?)
real women know reverse,
gonna bring you there!

bendin' it
sendin' it
takin' my sweet TIME.

whatchoo doin'?
fuck-you foolin'
made my poetry RHYME.
queenie u just know ull live 4ever
cuz u know each days ur last
summer nites in the park cuttin ur girls
bitch ain't no paint 2 cover up
all that ugly whod ur mama fuck
9 months b4 u born?
ur tongues an artists brush in a blade
cuz theres beauty in the way u
slice up all that pain tho u
scratch em with the claw of a broken bottle top
when they cut u back then
kiss n makeup cuz thats love n love
is a waltz of cats in july n cats live
9 times isnt that like
4ever? october
comes n the green world is painted
like u the yellows n reds
turn the color of shit n u
see all the shit ur tongue talks
shimmering silver under the streetlights but
decembers so cruel cuz
the bitches all want what u want n
nothing comes free from
the santas on christopher street n
maybe u see april
n maybe u dont but it dont
matter cuz queenie ur living 4ever
with 2day n the next ur last

but not 2nite
2nites a good night 2 die cuz
its hot like the airs on fire n
ur so fuckin done with Lilys shit
Lily who look at u like ur daddy used 2
Lily with her love stick wanna crack
u a cunt on the top of ur skull
n watch her cum ooze gray n red
thats the love Lily do
but not 2nite cuz
2nite Queenie is urs
2nite ur a guerilla chorus line
rubbin ur shit in Lilys popeyes n
talkin ur shit in Lilys red ears cuz
who talks sense when
2nites so fuckin hot n lilys not
ur master cuz its ur last?
turn n kick n
we r the Stonewall Grrls
when u wanna show em ur puckered pussy n say
here we r u macho fucks u wanna
piece of THIS?
arcs/apertures/interstices and the trick of the true name / Julie Jordan Avritt

for my spouse person

between protean and whimsical neither part nor particle there are a thousand
words for breasts but I'll never touch yours bound as you are snug beyond
binary beneath synthetic threads tree trunk legs shoved into raw denim and
redwings under ten tons of asphalt dust and the face you wear to visit your family
which is a gravity a double helix a hydrogen balloon on fire like the burning in the
glances of eighty thousand subway strangers who wonder what you are though only
children are guileless or brave enough to offer the pale-yellow light of center stage
where you can claim reverently or shamefully or however the thread passes through
on the occasion that you are everything and nothing or a bleeding of one thing into
the next which is ash on the tongue whisper in the temple glaze on the eyeglass signpost
to pilgrims beware the trick of identity beware the trickster gods of liminal spaces
The wood that separates us from the wind / Sarah Bigham

In the home I share with a spouse and a trio of felines, tiny notches are unevenly scattered across the upper portion of the solid wood door that came with the house.

We removed the rusting screen door, but kept the sturdy, impenetrable one that always protects us from weather and wanderers.

The notches pre-date our arrival, and I often wonder how they got there and why they remained in a household full of fix-it equipment and sandpaper organized in the carefully built-in basement workshop.

In the house where I grew up (another antique but with several decades on my current abode) there is also a thick, imposing front door with old-fashioned knobs and bolts.

My parents still live in this house, the same place they drove me 1.3 miles from the hospital after I was born.

I have answered and opened and closed this door for well over 40 years and I love the robustness of a door that welcomes new friends (the old ones park out back) and provides access to the mailbox on a wide front porch filled with window boxes overflowing with flower mixtures created by my father in a whirlwind of color.

This door lacks notches, but features one long, scarring crack--the product of an epic adolescent door slamming.

One can easily see the crack, and imagine the power and anger that created it. But I do not worry about the crack, or the door, or the person who created it, or the people who heard the wood split that day. All is well.

It is the notches--made with less power, but perhaps no less feeling--that leave me in doubt.

Was it desperation? Loneliness? Fear?

I pray for the notch-maker, and those who watched her scratch.
mama, i’d like you to meet my girlfriend / Sofía Anastasia

i

everyone forgets how to dance in the rain eventually

ii

i tethered butterflies to my fingertips. you cut them loose.

did they ever thank you?

iii

if butterflies danced in the rain, they would drown with soggy wings i wonder if they do it anyway

iv

would you?
v

"this is the house that jack built"
(jack should have built a home)

vi

every man jack among us knows the price of falling in love

(don’t)

vii

i dreamt, or saw, the moon in your tears
At Beavertail Point / Karina Lutz

I find
all nature erotic,
you said.

Even rocks.

It was the waves
that whispered in our ears
all day long,
the sun
that pressed,
warm,
then hot.
Breezes
tickled the down
at the back
of your neck,
but rocks?

Yes;
pale orange cliffs
sheltered us from wind,
cupped winter sun,
made it easy
to lounge,
to kiss till
the tide came in.

Below us, unseen
because we could not
unlock eyes from each other;
rocks made pools
to hold anemones
and protected them from the waves
for those languid hours—

anemones
who would have sucked our fingers
into themselves
at the slightest touch.

Bobbing seals sent sidelong glances
from deep, wet eyes.

Above the cliffs,
the wind would make
our nipples erect.
But down below, the rocks surrounded
us and poured us their cup of sunlight,
our sustenance.

All good qualities in a lover.

But all that
anthropomorphizing
dropped away
as will happen
with enough simple being

— the rocks have time,
know stillness—

All nature,
all being, erotic:

an invitation
to connect,
an invitation
to enjoy.
Sacred Bone / Anne Lévesque

She was talking on her mobile
Against the dune
In her nest of towels and bags and coolers
Geez lady, I thought, you’re at the beach
And set my head,
Still reeling from hot and cold
The blueblind thrum of under
Back onto the hot sand

One by one they returned

The boy
There’s a sandbar
Yeah, and did you see the schooner?
Nettie called; they’re still in New Glasgow!
Her laughter, his,
So much affection in her voice
(Nothing he’ll remember later)

The girl
Is there anything to eat?
Yes; pretzels and granny smiths
But have a granny smith first
Daddy, daddy, come in the water!

The man
His mute wet weight on the blue canvas chair

How she walked to the sea with the girl
Her flat buttocks flowing hips the trodden
Sand of her thighs swill of her breasts
Skin of the black swimsuit stretched
Over the resplendent triangle
Of her sacrum:
A big woman,
Big enough to carry it all:
The marriage
The family
The happiness of her children
On their summer vacation
About Hera Shoat / Grace Epstein

Hera Shoat emerges in the wake of human bodies like a motorboat on the water when I call her name. Glistening with sweat, she’s a large woman, whose body tugs fitfully at its clothing. She follows me to the interview room, eyes glazed over as people lurch around us, glaring their disapproval. Embarrassed by their stares, I first imagine the bulge in her shirt as a stash of cold soda, the only feasible relief to the pot we are stewing in. Offering her a seat at an interview carrel, I first eye the .22-caliber barrel protruding between the third and fifth button of her shirt.

This unseasonably hot October day in 1975, our clients squeeze into the basement of a former shoe factory, filling every available crevice, and bleeding out onto the sidewalk. Usually the coolest spot in the building, the basement is a pressure cooker today because a glitch in the distribution of public assistance checks failed to reach their intended targets. Reissued warrants, we learn, will take days, if not weeks, to redistribute. Even without the glitch, the first days of any month bring out a flood of recipients whose subsistence depends on the state. In the Bermuda Triangle of state paperwork, before computers and e-networks, a rejected form takes months to return while clients grow more unpopular with their landlords.

In addition, Keith Cunningham’s clients, which includes Ms. Shoat, is an especially distressed community. So behind in paperwork, Keith has surrendered all hope of catching up along with any pretense of civility. Last week, he yelled into the phone at a client, "Just kill yourself, why don’t you?" before slamming the receiver into its cradle.

Our manager, Molly Mervin, snorted approval, then, threatened to fire Keith if he didn’t behave. Nobody took the threat seriously. The attrition rate in our positions is high, and the agency can’t afford to lose Keith, who, despite incompetence, is better than no one at all. Predictably, on the first of each month, he takes a hiatus, so I must see his clients as well as my own.
Pinned in Hera's sights, I remember Keith’s story about this client who is so stout she is unable to leave her third-story
apartment building, confining her permanently to her substandard unit. Yet here she stands, a Saturday night special at the ready.

While the room becomes as distant as a transatlantic phone call, I watch myself from somewhere above the florescent lighting.
Someone behind me notices the weapon and coughs out, "Gun." The room belches abruptly and empties.

I picture Hera locked in her apartment for however many years, unable to leave, stranded, awaiting a check or visitors who
might drop by.

"You, my caseworker, now?" she whispers.

I attempt to shake my head.

Her left eyelid closes tremulously. The vein along the side of her head pulsing, reminds me of a deer that collided with our
sedan when I was ten.

Hera addresses me, "What am I supposed to do?"

She bends forward, bringing the gun closer to me, as I tilt ever so slightly onto my heels. A tiny bead of moisture rolls from her
left eye, spilling into the furrow of her nose.

Three security guards gather behind her. Their movements and hand signals remind me of the three stooges. One, a dead-ringer
for Mo, lifts his gun from his hip like a Western hero. Now two guns point in my direction and my breathing becomes uneven. One
guard upends a box of staples on his way across the room. Neither Hera nor I move. I imagine the drop and roll maneuver from grade
school fire drills to take me out of the sights of both barrels. I am frozen, frightened about setting off a firing squad.

"Mr. Cunningham's never in," Hera chokes, "and I never get my check."
Why didn’t I faint? I wondered.

"You know what’s the matter with that boy?"

The weight of her question hits me. What is the matter with Cunningham? What’s the matter with me?

Then, suddenly, I hear my mother speaking. A soothing tone she always uses on me, "It’s alright, Ms. Shoat? It will take some time, but it will be fine." Had I been able to move my head, I would have looked for her. Her hand even stretches out in front of me, grazing the hairs on Hera’s arm. Hera, of course, won’t be fine. Can’t be now, especially now, pointing a gun in a government building at a government employee. Still, Mother continues to soothe her.

Hera’s left lid closes again, snug, like a candy wrapper, spilling another drop down her nose. A distant siren screeches and Hera stiffens, producing a cry, deep and plaintive, or, is it me, who is howling? Who can tell? The stooges jump her and scramble for the gun, juggling it into the air, then, volleying it to the wall. It skirts along the floor across the room, resting beside the In-take supervisor’s desk. Falling onto the carrel particleboard behind me, I thud, like the weapon to the floor and slide back.

Our clients run from the reception room out into the street, tripping over one another, while Clumsy retrieves the gun, lifting it like a football in the end zone. Even I believe he might kill us all. The other two guards put their guns to Hera’s head in synchronized movements. They handcuff and push her down the hallway.

From a window, I watch the police stuff Hera into a cruiser, pressing her one way, then another. She barely moves at all. Her moment of potency passed. The police pull away from the curb and disappear down the avenue, sirens blaring.

My body shakes in terror or relief. I can’t tell. Clumsy approaches, grinning as if he’s swallowed the canary, "It wasn’t even loaded," he sniggers, putting the gun in my face, as though this is all there is to say about Hera Shoat.
In a Bunker, After / Jade Ramsey

I.

And then the dark place lost the gasses
and the smell evaporated. We
were left to the sound of our blood
slithering in our arms. God
can you tell your cells to stop
screaming? Cancer sounds like milk
boiling over, hitting methane flames.
The synapses misfiring in our sister’s brain
forces even we to rip our eyelashes out.
No amount of breathing relieves
us of the rhythm sweating skin drums.

II.

We're comparing ourselves
to flowers as banal as that
sounds you say you will die
as stoic as a snotty rose
the girl over there is turning
brown sticky lilies caught
in a gas grate and we all
know who would croak drama's
tulip but we don’t want to
see her reenact Hollywood
debris swooning down the stairs
so we agree we should disappear
like dandelions in concrete
cracks simple silent forgotten

III.

We judge one another now on voice
alone the glottal stops versus the perfect
t's the high pitched ones of us are shaken
to learn so and we who were never
able to keep our faces from exposing
emotion can now lie so we practice
our lies and velvet our throats
and lick the thick darkness how we fall
silent when all the insults are emptied
from our lungs there is no awake no sleep
either all same all heavy the weight
of this dark muffles our sobs
Gaze / Katrina Greco
(inspired by Ex Machina)

She holds art, abstraction
displays inspiration
He isn’t seen
He isn’t seen, is
asking questions
She is unsure

The idea of creation is antithetical. All of our matter
recycling the same
---: souls :--- atoms
She, radically new, must be
hourglass figure, doll face
He is
He is more
smug than charming
He’s charmed

The idea of ambiance is antithetical. All of our reactions
recycling the same
---: tropes :--- figures
She is soft hair, gamine
florals, a fantasy of a fantasy
He is watching her
He is watching her shed
humanity, her nakedness
His metaphor
“Where would you go, if you could go outside?”
---: tense :--- ambiance
“Traffic intersection.”
---: watching : --- creation
Why I Don’t Write Love Poems / Colleen Donnelly

A cliché delivered by an idiot:
"I love you.”

Seductive blood-red bud,
Feigned apology,
Maudlin scripted greeting card,
Clandestine note word-weary,
Semiotic aerobics.

_Full of sound and fury._

Tracing wordlessly upon my thigh,
Spilling your body unspoken into mine,
Quill immersed,
Sheets wet,
Spent,
_Signifying nothing._

Love Note to Vuorwro / Ron Riekki

My mother would wander into my room
at night with ghost stories. She was filled
with haunting. I'd be thirsty for her horror.

With just moonlight, she'd tell me Sámi
tales, saying our tradition was oral, meaning
you just needed ears and tongues, that words
are bodily, and in her tales girls and boys
would be ripped apart in the end. She'd turn
off a light that was already off and creak up
the punished stairs. Her favorite: Vuorwro,
a spirit who would wander the night, entering
rooms where there was no water. She'd eat
everyone in the room, turning throats to straws
where she would suck down stomachs and
leave just specks of gnawed bones behind.

My mother told me that Vuorwro was a hero,
that the worst thing to do was to stay in one
place forever, that we were born nomads

and we had to search for the blood that would
keep us alive. I asked her if she meant that
I should kill people too. And she said, _Vuoi!

Of course not._ She said that it was metaphor
and I asked what metaphor was and she threw
open her mouth and swallowed my spine.
your mother / Elisabeth Blair

teaches you to swim

to pull your hands toward you in arcs as though you’re scraping the sides of a giant bowl of batter

she teaches you to be engaged received

what to do when caught between the male teeth

and the dial won’t move (you did try) from malls— mimicry— ravens:

put your hand in the black feathery down hold the belly to your cheek look mom it’s me half delayed half breached
archaeology of abortion / Elisabeth Blair

I am not bewildered

you shook out my
teeth

into a bag
scrapss still
if you don’t have

they’re something

I am
stasis:
A pistol incubating

drag me out in front of everyone
make me a celebrity

but I am not bewildered

dog’s paws on me on the ground my
palms padded
with curved talons

Bastard
your bent hanger choreography
I get it I see it personal
suffering personal anything

because why is there a paw, a talon, a nipple, no I mean a thorn
why do I have to be

I am not bewildered but sane

you roll up dust wire bone
to clean the room childish
of you do you want a balloon? I can shape it
here’s a torso it’s a girl

this is where it happened long ago

the bricks are kept
with a brush kept walls

the bag has open country between its threads
the bag tried to hold my teeth

but look planted
(you gave me the old one-two)

I was never confused
just couldn’t exactly chew

The night before
the crowning
sweating side to side
my body twisted
and my blood
began to drain.
No advil stopped
the king-size stab that
stole my breath so fast
I doubled over
seized my kitchen sink...
Yes, as his motorcade arrived
my insides ripped
apart two countries
gash so wide
that none could hear
across the break,
broken as my rights will be
my organs, flesh
appraised and sold:
a messy, bloody day.
I’m glad he’ll stain
his body when he tries
to manage mine:
anointed
but my blood
is thicker
than the balm.
I said ‘I am a champion’ to the mirror. Crouched inside the frame, i smiled back. ‘alert, kind and brilliant, I said of myself. The ego elongated with the complexities of the day. By evening, it’s original size. Tomorrow, another date with the mirror.

Carved / Merlin Flower
I always had this one memory of my father. Known professionally for his tantrums, Daddy made each outburst a performance in itself. Shouts, roars, a lot of pacing and thumping of the chest. Mother counted all of them as the cost of marrying a famous actor. Sometimes, Mother returned fire, and they'd go at it full tilt. First, Daddy shouting while she waited to launch her own steely retort. Meanwhile, my sister and I sat nervously on the stairs.

Then, in mid-sentence, Mother would stop and stride out of the room. An exit to die for which eclipsed Daddy, the master of great exits entirely, with an impeccable sense of timing. For a while, they wouldn't speak, until, resorting to flowers or jewelry, he got her to acquiesce.

After one of those fights — I was about seven — the flowers didn't work. Mother got them, and promptly set them, unopened, in the trash bin. My sister, knowing the script by then, rescued the flowers and placed them in a vase on the table, but when Daddy came home, Mother still wasn't speaking to him. Being so young, I never asked what it was that provoked the quarrel.

At that time, we were living in England where my father was playing the Royal Theatre. Mother missed the States, and often repeated how her mother's chocolate chip cookies never failed to cheer anyone up. In England, at that time, we didn't know about any commercial cookie shops. Of course, Daddy heard the story too and set about getting the American cookies air-expressed from New York to London. It must have cost a fortune, because he didn't just get a dozen or even a couple dozen. He ordered a truckload of cookies. Boxes upon boxes of cookies: chocolate chip-pecan, oatmeal and peanut butter chip. The shipment covered the kitchen counters, the oven, and even the top of the fridge. My mother watched the carrier coming with box after box, and she was speechless.
My sister and I tore into the boxes of cookies, stuffing in whole chunks of them into our mouths. When my father returned home that day, Mother had to forgive him. It was my father’s finest hour, his greatest performance ever.

Years later, I alluded to that day with my sister, who didn’t remember it though she was three years older. I pressed her, describing the flowers, tossed aside, and Daddy becoming more creative, but she only stared at me. When I related how the kitchen filled up with boxes, the deliveryman passing in and out, his truck parked at the curb, the delicious chocolatey goo of the cookies, she finally nodded.

She remembered placing the flowers in a blue vase and setting them on the table as the script of my parents’ arguments dictated. Then, shaking her head, she continued that the only time boxes were stacked in the kitchen with a man ferrying them between the house and truck was the week Daddy went up to Edinburgh to audition for the Scottish play. Mother ordered the cookies, not Daddy, to placate us for fact we were leaving our home and our father forever, with not so much as a goodbye kiss. The short note she tacked to the door read simply, “Had enough. Gone back to America! Enjoy the cookies.” As always, she managed to make the greater exit.
The New “In” / Elaine Woo

I renewed myself as a redhead but my black and white roots kept growing out. After a few touch-ups I decided to make gray the new “in.”

My husband’s aunt says there aren’t any more gray-haired people amongst the middle-aged or even amongst seniors. Everybody’s hair stays “natural” thanks to the bottle. Of hair coloring!

Aging is sexy and cool for both women and men in a different way!
Sexy and cool in terms of self-discovery,
having security and peace in knowing oneself and assuredness of being along the right path.

I'm a whole person without being
A wife, mother, daughter
Or sister although I am all those things.

There is a welcome liberation in the simplicity of absence.
You Blamed the Hen / Clara A.B. Joseph

for pecking at your
eight-year-old song-writing:

the sun and
the beautifullest Fall along
with the pure snow,
pendragon sister, darling
mother, to my father

on Father’s Day,
Just tell the truth,
God the One (not yet done, you say) – like grain
all over the vacationing
verandah

and now, vacations later,
sixteen whole years of wisdom knows
the place to find pages
of feeling precious is tucked inside

a grown-up chick.

To All the Beautyfull Weeds that Won’t Grow Straight / Anastasia Walker

For the queer youth at the PEC youth nights

Did they sow you on the carport concrete
Or in the crawlspace under the back porch
Water you with kerosene
Light you with a blow torch
Prune you with a cleaver
And say Grow – and then mourn
To watch your stalk
Fold in a fetal
Curve, glimpse
The tic-tac-toe
Slashed on your leaves, and find
Their anxious stares returned with
Angry vacancy? How could they
Know you, fugitive bloom,
Lost in the labyrinth of your hungry roots
Seeking another soil?
Dandelion root tea / Karina Lutz

On a triangular traffic island,
a patch of dandelion orbs glows,
neo-moons to a streetlight and a gas-station’s neon.
Inside each sphere, along the inner fringe of the outer shell
hues shift with each yellow, red, and green traffic signal.
Then, poof! The seedheads disintegrate,
taking flight on a truck-made wind.

His friend gave him a cup of tea, brought it to where he was sitting,
where he had been waiting, where he had long since given up the hope of healing
this disease of the liver, that led to more sitting,
that led to giving up more hope, that led to more sitting, putrefying.

He didn’t really hate dandelions.
He hated them for his neighbors hating them.
Sometimes still, hidden from adult view,
he loved them like a seven-year-old,
secretly blew at least one a year—
on a spring morning dedicated
to digging them out of his lawn by the roots
and hating them—
no one looking.
He hated his neighbors for hating them, hated them, digging.

A limp pile would grow in the sun.
Some would turn to seed even while their roots dried in the air,
while he spread poison across his children’s play yard,
where they would roll with puppies.

He had seen many doctors, taken many poison medicines himself.
Then his friend made this strangely soothing bitter drink,
called it ‘neo-atomic neo-moon tea’;
He drank it warm.

He began to heal.

His true medicine had planted itself in his own front yard,
resisted all efforts at eradication.
In fact, he had planted it himself.
The Passing Lane / Rachael Z. Ikins

August night swells.
Moths humble our hair, torn away.
We race, trailing a thousand spirals.

Slashing headlights
shock the night, pink
possibility behind my eyelids.

Laughter heimlichs our bellies.
Rolled-down window
grooves a cicatrix
into my ankles, toes
comb wind.

Your shirt soaks my fisted grip,
my hair-clip flown,
strands pasting

my neck. I sniff;
vinyl, that peppery oil
you dab at your throat.
My eyes slide sideways,
hook yours. Your hand a shadow
on the stick, moonlight's fugitive,
your silver thumb ring.
I'd know that grip anywhere.

Your teeth chap lips.
your boot taps
the clutch; you
shift.

Smirk / Merlin Flower

Presenting the perplexities of pallid uniformity
Hear.
Listen.
Set your sun.
Smile, the possible impressions?

let them rise.
Finicky filling down – Oh ho, discard with abandon.

Cheering, widening along-alone.
Squared / Maj Ikle
for Ellyott

Things have changed since
Van Limburgstirrumplein last saw us
Cycling around her
I sit to sip overpriced coffee
Hoping I can still see
Your cheeks puff
Up front on a giant homemade bike
Me with my
Over stuffed rucksack
Dangling from the back
Two foreign girls
Escaping our governments
Looking for life lasting love
And finding it
In each other's
Secret world faces
Ellyott, my lover is
Several inches shorter than even me
But three times as strong
Astute jockey always pushing through
What else can a dyke woman do?
Over tram tracks
Careful never to get stuck
The number ten
To Javaplein
Which too has been
Reclaimed from the squatters
Renovated and rebranded
Reblended into Amsterdam green
These days' dykes are not so strange
Everybody is somewhere
On the queer spectrum range

Integration is the new normal
As everyone assimilates our fists
And to be fair our old enemy capitalism
Never needed homophobia as an excuse
To kick anyone where it hurts most
We, like the Moroccans have been priced out
Way beyond the railway tracks
Unless we have money
When we are welcome
To spend in the sunset lit square
Nice bikes sitting upright tidy in their racks
Adorn the advertising pumping station
As if it has always been
Like this there
Not filled with junkies their gums burned bare
The Kemperstraat stands far too quiet
Without her graffiti minded sluts
Near the Avondwinkel in
Need of more than
A lick of paint
The number of bridges getting smaller
As the city council carts
All homeless looking damaged bikes away
The cries of freedom from restraint
Have all grown faint
But the pigeons circle
The square indifferently
Just the same
things i said to my girlfriend as we walked down the street holding hands / Sofía Anastasia

i looked at my hands today:
my thumb nails are different sizes. my right thumb nail is larger than my left. i wish she was smaller. i wish i was smaller. that man was staring

i am growing out my nails.

how is your tiny mom? she is so small. how is your small mother?
will you tell her i said hi?
will you tell her i said thank you for sending the Snickers™ bars i ate while i was crying?

i’m sorry i was crying.

i’m sorry i ate all your Snickers™ bars.

do you still think i’m pretty?
do you still love me even though my thumb nails are different sizes? even though i cry too much? even though

i want to hear you say it.

i am growing out my nails. to file into points. to stab that man. staring at us

if anyone tries to hurt you i will scratch them with my thumb nails, which are different sizes and also very sharp.

i love you.
That Night / Anne Leigh Parrish

It began with a smile I’d hungered for

A gift

Among so many cold faces in that elegant room

Yours alone had warmth

Beauty, too

I know a handsome man when I see one

Confidence draws to shyness, vulnerability, an anguished need

For love

You had needs, too, which I met

After I came to, hands bound, cloth pressed between my

Lips

You wanted me awake, yet helpless

Still wondering how you doctored my drink

How you were able to thrust so hard as to make

Me bleed

How you could have left me on that soft patch

Of grass for the roaming dog to find

Why you needed to steal what I’d have given

Freely
A pile of wet towels was on the floor. Anna Sophia’s arms and face were red from scrubbing. Water had splashed everywhere in the small bathroom.

“Hi Hon,” Danny gently said. She moved over to the toilet and sat on its cover. “How was school?”

“Good. Ms. Brown is really a nice teacher. We made stuff out of clay,” Anna Sophia replied. She then resumed scrubbing her face with soap. Within seconds lather covered it.

“Ohm, what are you doing?”

“Suzie says Mexicans are dirty. That’s why their skin is brown. I’m trying to wash the dirt out of mine. Are we dirty?”

A lump formed in Danny’s throat. It was large enough to be painful when she swallowed. “Honey, of course not. That’s just not true.”

Anna Sophia stopped washing and looked over to Danny with her big almond eyes. If the subject matter weren’t so serious Danny would have laughed. The little girl looked like she was preparing to shave. “Then why am I brown and you’re white?”

Danny was surprised by the next words she heard coming from her mouth. At best she was an agnostic when it came to matters of faith. “Because God loves diversity.”

“Divestity?” Ana Sophia asked, her eyes scrunching down. “What’s divestity?”

The inability of Anna Sophia to pronounce the word softened Danny’s face. “It means difference.”

“I don’t get it.”
“Well...you know how a rainbow has all those pretty colors in it?”

“Yup.”

“God made them that way so rainbows would be pretty. Just think how boring they would be if they were all the same color. Same with people. God likes differences. He made black people. And white people. And yellow people. And...”

“Brown people!” Anna Sophia squealed.

“Exactly. He wants his people to be pretty too. Not boring.”

Anna Sophia’s face was drawn into a frown. Danny thought she had blown it with the explanation. After all, how do you explain the petty racism and sickness of adults to a little girl?

“Is that why God made some families without daddies? Carlos has two mommies but no daddy.”

“That’s a little different. Families are made of love. In some that means a mommy and a daddy. In others, family means two daddies. Others, two mommies. Even sometimes just one mommy or one daddy.”

“I have three mommies!”

“Yes. Anna Sophia. You have three mommies who love you very much.”

“Then why did my, why did one of my mommies leave me? Did she not like me anymore?”

“No honey,” Danny said scooping the little girl into her arms. “She loves you very, very much. It’s just there’s bad men in the world. And she had to leave to protect you from them.”
“La Migra.” The words were spoken with fear. Danny could feel the tremble that ran through Anna Sophia when she pulled herself closer into her arms. Anna Sophia’s crying brought Barbara rushing into the bathroom. Bending down she completed the circle of caring arms around one so tender but no longer so innocent.

Hatred has a long reach.

Orphans / Jenean McBrearty

Father Bradley barely had time to hang his vestments after mass when Monsignor Sheridan texted him to come to the rectory ASAP.

"It is Father Morton?" he asked Mrs. Collier, their Sunday cook, as he rushed through the kitchen.

"Keep your cassock on, Father, Morton has had his communion and his breakfast and is watching the news." She offered him a blueberry muffin and a cup of coffee. “Monsignor’s in his office.” She stuffed napkins in his pocket.

"Good morning, Monsignor," he said as he crossed the threshold. "What’s goin’ on?" He sat in an aged leather chair and started in on the muffin.

"I got a call from the State Department. Mr. Ogden." Sheridan inched his way to his behemoth old school desk he’d brought with him from Loyola to St. Leo’s, one hand clutching the crucifix he wore under his scapular.

Bradley washed his throat with coffee. "It’s Janette,” he said somberly, and Sheridan nodded a slow yes. His appetite disappeared. The question wasn’t whether his sister was dead, but how she died. “And the other sisters?”

“Two out the five survived. They’ve been flown to Vienna.”
Bradley said a quick prayer for the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and made the sign of the cross. "What happened? The U.N. promised they'd be protected."

"They knew working in a refugee camp would be risky. They weren't ordered to go."

"So, it was an attack inside the camp. Were they...violated?"

"You mean sexually violated. Yes, and then executed. The children's mothers ran for help, and got two of the nuns out before they were shot. You know this has political ramifications. The European governments have been looking for an excuse to evacuate all female nurses and religious from the border camps, but who...

"What men would be stupid enough to volunteer to give medical assistance to Muslim women? Only other women are allowed to touch Muslim wives and daughters. Women are the only ones who can do the job."

"You see it's a complicated..."

"I want to meet with the survivors."

Sheridan shifted uneasily in his chair. "That can't happen. They've been placed in protective custody until they can be debriefed."

"Brainwashed, you mean. Incommunicado like the Benghazi survivors, right?"

"They have each other, and God of course. So, they're not alone. We've been asked to keep the situation confidential until there's concrete information. There's danger of a backlash from the Austrian Catholics and the Holy Father doesn't want a bloodbath...I've assured Ogden we'll cooperate."
“Janette told me they were required to dress as civilian nurses and use their first names. How did ISIS find out they were nuns?”

"Ogden will fill you in on the details, I’m sure.” He tossed Bradley a prepaid plane ticket. “Compliments of Uncle Sam.”

The meeting was scheduled for ten o’clock Monday morning on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Why not three floors under some gray bureaucratic monolith? Or at the Pentagon? Janette hadn’t professed her vows on the steps of the Bishop’s Chancellory.

"Father Bradley? I’m Lance Ogden. Sorry for your loss. Let’s take a walk.”

"Where to?”

"George’s dick.” He nodded towards the obelisk at the end of the mall. “Now there was a guy who understood the sacrifice of one for the good of the whole.”

They headed down the stairs. "Did you call me here for a history pep talk?”

"Okay. I’ll be blunt. We’re putting the lid on this and you gotta shut up. I can’t make it any more clearer than that.”

"Since I don’t know what ‘this’ is, I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

"The Catholics in Austria are about ready to blow. It’s alright to rape an occasional girl on the street, but a bunch of nuns who vaccinate children and repair vaginas? No.”

Bradley winced. Janette’s last letter described the twelve-year-old who didn’t make it after a botched clitoridectomy. **Why does God permit such evil?**, she had demanded. **You’re a priest, explain it to me before I throw Jesus’ wedding ring into the gutter.** What
had he answered? Platitudes about the blessings of free will and a question; did you baptize the girl before she died? God didn’t want just anybody in heaven. “What happened?” he said to Ogden again.

“Twenty men raided the nurses’ quarters— a WWII quanset hut— and demanded the infidels from Rome step forward.”

“They knew there were nuns among the nurses. How?”

“The ISIS leader insisted the U.N. identify the workers and somebody working with the U.N. ratted them out.”

Bradley stopped and sank to his knees. Ogden followed him down, kneeling beside him. “Are you alright?”

“What happened?”

“I told you.”

“Now tell me the details.” Bradley was crying now.

“They could’ve denied it, Father. They could’ve pretended they didn’t know what the men were talking about, but the men threatened to kill all medical personnel unless the nuns came forward. To protect the civilians, the sisters admitted who they were. If they’d just kept quiet, the attackers swore they wouldn’t have harmed any of them, but they were put on the spot. You might say once the nuns got brave. They didn’t want to look like cowards.”

“Did they take them outside?”

“What do you mean?”

Bradley summoned his strength to suppress his sobs. “Did they rape and shoot the nuns in front of the other women?”

Ogden sat down on the grass. “Of course. That’s the way terrorism works,” he whispered.
Finally. Something resembling truth from the lips of a government hack. "Now tell me why we're meeting if you want to keep this quiet."

"We intercepted a letter from one of the escaped nurses." He reached into his pocket and brought out an envelope. "It's from Selma Augera," he said as he handed it to Bradley. "We tried to persuade her this was a sensitive incident, but she's determined to tell the whole world—Janette told her you were her only family. She's from Capetown. An Atheist. Can you beat that? I guess all women are just natural blabbermouths."

Bradley wasn't listening. He was reading Selma's words to the Holy Father:

"They died betrayed, beaten, and bleeding. They died for your Jesus and for us. Calling His name. Isn't their blood precious, too?"

"Women are nuts," Ogden said. "They've started a green and white striped ribbon crusade to have the nuns declared saints. Non-Catholic women lobbying on behalf of women they had nothing in common with. Can you believe that? It's the 21st century and they're talking about saints?"

Bradley clutched the letter to his heart. Janette may have been angry with her heavenly spouse about all the suffering she was witnessing, but in the clinches, she had come through. If the Holy Father denied their martyrdom, he'd be denying the teachings of his own Church—to be martyred for your faith is to have an instant claim of heaven. He'd be leaving the other nuns to suffer despair along with physical and psychic pain alone. As alone in the world as he was now.

"Make these women understand. They'll listen to you Father. Tell them to forgive and move on with their lives."

"And if I decide to go to Rome?"
"The State Department is ready to pull your passport and detain you, if necessary. The paperwork has already been filed and the issue is before the FISA Court." As though to show he was pulling out the big guns, Ogden took the step above Bradley. "The Curia has said they will not grant you audience. There’s a process to canonization, right? The dead have to work miracles."

"The letter has ten signatures."

"Yeah, there were fifteen women in the hut."

"None of the signatures are from Catholic women."

"Yes, I told you..."

"Ten non-Catholic women defying ISIS, the U.N., the U.S. government, and challenging the faith and integrity of the Holy Father. I’d say that’s ten miracles right there, Mr. Ogden."

Still cradling Selma’s letter, Bradley stood up and walked past the Vietnam memorial with its fifty-eight thousand plus names inscribed on reflective marble. He’d pass through the WWII Memorial— that magnificent monument designed to honor veterans of both theaters of the war that slaughtered a hundred million people. He’d walk past Washington’s obelisk, the highest point in D.C. And he’d keep on walking until he reached the street where he’d hail a cab to the airport. Selma and her sisters were waiting in Paris, waiting for him to plead their case for Sister Janette and Sister Penny and Sister Maureen to receive the crown of martyrdom. "We are begging Sister Janette’s brother to come to Rome with us," Selma had told the Holy Father, and he would answer their call to come forward and defend these witnesses to the martyrdom whatever the cost. He could not do otherwise. He believed, didn’t he?
Ride / Merlin Flower
on the absurd.
Startle a few more.
Overwhelm self.
ride.

Grandmother Fox and her Fat Chickweeds / Sarah-Jean Krahn
from Weed Apologue

a star exposing
in the black clay: e/
strang(D)ed transplant

a hole eroding
in her berth: de/
ranged

woman faulted
down the centre.
Debris on the knoll.
An estranged plant.

the emptiness of a man who drops small stones into women’s vaginas
the comfortable feeling of having arrived at his grandmother’s place. Herewith her navel. He was guided
to that fabled collation:

— a pity he was
forswollen
— a womb he could not
forgorgen

He intended to correct a number of undesirable characteristics of people, not derange. Grandmother Fox was showing:

a) him as an intruder the door that was not his, or

b) herself as a minor character who in fact, unintentionally, invited him in, or

c) his esurience that he must understand as a matter of beclouding:

He finished devouring that famine upon request of his Old Cronies. He tokened her to: a curator of bones.

Grandmother Fox: Em/urgent as Crone, just in time.

Her Ken of Madness: Undesired Characteristic, free.

In seminal territory.

An estranged muse: Her Foxiness. Feeding her fat chickweeds to anachronistic gullets, blaming them for the schism, smite of her birth. No, she wasn’t the Othering sort. But she still blooms under the great thunder.
Ecdysis / Katrina Greco

An unpromising compromise. He can feel it – shuddering in her wrist, shorting the cycle of shedding. He will wait, set aside for planned forgiveness. He desires her. She desires sleep, turn cells over, slough off dead. He can feel it – lashes flash, skin settles. Here, an elastic lack of consent. The constant waxes. Everything old is new again. Everything new is reformed, the same stuff. She is at fault, callow, round, hallowed. He follows, gathers remains, and she, empty into his waiting hands.
To the UN Committee on Alternative Fuel Sources / Meg Sefton

It has been well known for quite some time that on the outskirts of Munir, a city that could well be considered a test city for its heretofore untapped source of fuel, the bodies of the useless women currently are housed. We use the term "bodies" to denote that for all intents and purposes, such women as these are barely alive by today's standard of living and for all intents and purposes will soon be dead, either through despair or other natural causes induced by such. And we say "useless women" to mean that such unfortunates have no use in our mainstream consumer society and must therefore be removed in order to fulfill their highest potentialities: The usage of their bodies as an alternative fuel source, their heroic sacrificial contribution to our community.

We have found marginalized groups have the highest wattage output per kilogram and though findings remain uncertain, we surmise this must have something to do with the epic operations of the soul that is crushed and aggrieved. Having observed the transfer of energies of suffering beings into ghost forms upon death, we are determined to tap into this energy surplus and use it to the good use of the operation of our fair city.

Our future alternative fuel source are the bodies of women who die naturally in our community center designed to house them, women who have lived well past their prime, those women who, in life, have been neglected by husbands, who, by sheer neglect or harsher means, express their displeasure as well as women considered burdens by their offspring where once they were considered vital sources of nurture. These women have cadavers that will burn most efficiently and we will see to their disposal as we honor them for such, giving flags and medals and ceremonies for families, large mass punch and cake gatherings with balloons.

Unless such women have managed to overcome the barriers against them and build a world for themselves based on talents apart from chasing male providers' affections and the nurturance of children, midlife women often find themselves at a place we provide: A death house we call Sunny Meadows to signify heaven though we do not by any means indulge in the practice of euthanasia. In addition, we attempt to meet the essential needs of our residents of Sunny Meadows while practicing restraint in the spiritual fulfillment mandates for housing a human being, realizing the energy potentials would be compromised should happiness be complete.

We are not beyond taking women or any beings for that matter who, lost to despair, are searching for a place to exist, beings who have lost functionality in our free market including but not limited to politicians and activists labeled "nasty," beauty queens labeled "pigs," actresses labeled "overrated," pre-menopausal women who bleed, violated women labeled "liars." We anticipate the bodies of all such marginalized women and others whose psyches are crushed by the current oligarchy will make excellent sources of fuel in our alternative energy program and we anticipate in fact an uptick in fuel reserves to get us through times of famine, that is, more benevolent future regimes, should that eventuality become realized.

When evil flourishes, either privately on the personal level in homes— between family members, a husband and wife, children and parents— or when it flourishes in our public sociopolitical machine, we are operating in the black and so we say, unofficially, of course, may evil reign, yet it always does. It is simply a matter of degree and so this method of securing this previously untapped fuel source is flawless.
When the man with the blue beard spoke, we were rallied, invigorated. He was so open about the whole #wivesmurderchambernonsense. He tweeted how those pussies wanted it, to be sliced, knived, #dildoedtodeath.

Those whores, we whispered, it was their own fault, the wealthy gentleman merely gave them what they wanted. #ungratefulbitches. When he began blasting what seemed to be our inner thoughts online, we marveled at how he knew us: who doesn't want a castle, fortified, maybe even a drawbridge we could refuse to lower?

But it was as though his dead brides were running against him, embodied in that one suited blonde. He'd lord over her on platforms, shadowing her across the stage, leering at her smooth coolness, as though he were jealous of his wives’ cold flesh. Just flesh, he'd say, #butcherlockertalk.

And we ate it up.

Compared to the suited blonde whose eyes cut us so sharply, his blunt humphing resounded the cancerous hurrahs of every Grampa watching Thanksgiving football. #makingthanksgivinggreatagain #slicingturkeythighs #putheraway

We’re all staring now through media keyholes, wishing we could hack the locked doors of his White House. We’re all hoping he’ll leave those bloody keys lying around somewhere for us to come across. We’re all curious what it’s like to be run through with such a large knife. #hewouldntstabme
Vermillion Finally Speaks / Katarina Boudreaux

“It’s over,”
she said, and
between the roots
of her dyed red hair
and the way
her lip did not tremble
when she kissed me,
I could tell
that she meant it.
Artists’ Statements

**Sofía Anastasia** is a Philadelphia-based poet, playwright, director, and performance artist. Their art explores heritage, queerness, and how communities of women and woman-aligned people support and uplift each other in the face of trauma. Their poetry has been published in *GLITTERVOM*, *the Reader*, and *Stuck* Magazine. Sofía can often be found tweeting “the moon is a lesbian” to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

**Julie Jordan Avritt** (long “A”) is a proudly queer writer and editor from the Deep South. She is closely related to many who promote religious intolerance; racial, ethnic and immigrant divisiveness; systemic and individual misogyny; and trans- and homophobia in America—past and present. Her life and work is informed by her upbringing, and inspired by a desire to bring unity. Recently, she’s been exploring the subject of collective, transgenerational trauma and its healing. Proficient Googlers can find examples of her creative and professional works easily enough.

**Sarah Bigham** writes in the United States where she lives with her kind chemist wife, three independent cats, an unwieldy herb garden, and several chronic pain conditions. A feminist, she has near-constant outrage at the general state of the world tempered with love for those doing their best to make a difference. Her work appears in a variety of great places for readers, writers, and listeners. Find her at [www.sgbigham.com](http://www.sgbigham.com).

**Elisabeth Blair** is a poet, multidisciplinary artist and podcaster. *We He She It*, a chapbook of angry, surreal, feminist poems, is available through Dancing Girl Press. She is currently writing a poetry memoir about being forcibly and wrongfully institutionalized as a teenager. In the last 175 years the writing of defiant women post-institution has played an important part in battling the horrific practice of “putting away” women who do not conform to patriarchal expectations, and Elisabeth is humbled to stand alongside the likes of Elizabeth Packard, Lydia Smith, and Phebe B. Davis. Excerpts from this manuscript are forthcoming in *Feminist Studies*.

**Vanane Borian** was born in Armenia, Yerevan on October 30, 1984, and immigrated to Israel with her parents in 1998. The theme of her dissertation at Lomonosov Moscow State University is post-USSR feminist art in post-soviet countries in the field of social critical arts. Her works discuss gender, political problems, ethnic traditions, patriarchal stereotypes, religion as a dictator of morality, and the role of woman in our social and political life. In different countries, men's privilege varies in degrees, but patriarchal canons still do not allow complete gender equality. Therefore, art is important to influence people's thoughts and feelings about chauvinism, misogyny, racism, homophobia, and other minority infringements.

**Katarina Boudreaux** is a New Orleans writer, musician, composer, tango dancer, and teacher. She writes about the normal and the epic from the vantage point of a female player in the stage of life. The overlooked or under-examined emotional and physical conditions of the feminine are where her writing lives. Her play *Awake at 4:30* was a finalist in the 2016 Tennessee Williams Festival, and her novel *Still Tides* was a semifinalist in the 2016 Faulkner-Wisdom competition. Her first novel *Platform: Dwellers* with Owl Hollow Press is forthcoming. [www.katarinaboudreaux.com](http://www.katarinaboudreaux.com).

**Colleen Donnelly** is an English professor at University of Colorado at Denver specializing in medieval women and the voices and representations of women and those marginalized by normative society. She recently published the *The Marys of Medieval Drama: The Middle English Digby and N-Town in Translation* and “Witches and Dwarves: Disability, Deformity, and Re-visioning Negative Archetypes in Wicked, Maleficent, and Game of Thrones” in *Disabilities Studies Quarterly*. She is an avid Sheltie lover and has two—Jewelz and Dante.
Grace Epstein believes that in order to write or produce any art, one has to have something to say. The brutality of a woman experiencing dismissal because of her gender or unwanted attacks because of another person’s gender goes to the heart of what she has to say. Whether in institutions of business and medicine or intimated in everyday speech acts, Grace strives, in clear and frequently rebellious prose, to reveal those moments in order that women, gay or straight, are able to more fully assert their humanity and the rights to their own bodies.

Merlin Flower is an independent artist and writer. She has found it to be mildly depressing, not to mention absurd and pitiful, to watch movies (or read books) where the woman’s main role is assisting the hero in saving the world. And, well, entirely depressed to see entrenched patriarchy passed around by both men and woman. Well, art can change the status-quo. The art she creates, does.

M.E. Gallucci writes from the Northeastern United States, where she finds her greatest inspiration through the powerful examples of her bold and brilliant community of female friends. Her work has also appeared in Monkeybicycle, Hanging Loose, Rogue Agent, and Rufous City Review, among others.

Katrina Greco is a teacher and poet in Oakland, CA. In her writing, she tries to examine the influence of the male gaze on the female self, and attempts to pull at the threads of masculine influence on feminine identity. Her work can be found in White Stag, Foliate Oak, Hot Metal Bridge, and Quarterly West.

Rachael Z. Ikins lives by the feminist credo that if we help each other we all end up farther ahead. Kindness counts. More than ever feminism matters to us all as we confront the ugly truths in daily news. Ikins strives as a survivor herself who now thrives to convey acceptance, the importance of caring for each other and our planet in her work. She is a 2015 & 2017 Pushcart nominee, and her poetry collection Just Two Girls (Clare Songbirds Publishing) is a 2018 Independent Book Award nominee. She lives with animal family, and she gardens.

Clara A.B. Joseph is Associate Professor of English at the University of Calgary. Her poems have appeared in journals such as the Toronto Review, Mother Earth International, and Canadian Woman Studies. Her first book of poetry, The Face of the Other (2016) was published by ip Publishing, Brisbane, Australia. Both in her academic work and in her poetry, Joseph investigates experiences of the marginalized. Thus, her monograph, The Agent in the Margin, examines the feminist narratives of Nayantara Sahgal against the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Joseph’s poetry similarly traces the voices of women.

Sarah-Jean Krahn holds an MA in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory from McMaster University. Her writing appears in various anthologies and journals, including the Berkeley Poetry Review and Feminist Studies, and a portion of Weed Apologue was recently nominated for a Pushcart. Canadian publications include Arc, Cummulus Press, dead (g)end(er), ditch, Eleventh Transmission, Herizons, and NóD. When not writing or tutoring at a local college, Sarah-Jean can be found reading on the bus, sharing research on vegan nutrition, or eating weeds in the woods with her dog. Visit her at sarahjeancreates.com.

Anne Lévesque’s poem "Sacred Bone" deals with an issue that some are calling feminism’s next frontier, the emotional labour of women. The mother of four sons, Levesque lives with her husband on the west coast of Cape Breton Island. Her novel Lucy Cloud will be published by Pottersfield Press in 2018.
Anne Leigh Parrish’s new novel, *Women Within*, was recently published by Black Rose Writing. Her next, *The Amendment*, will be available in June 2018 from Unsolicited Press. Feminism is central to her work. Much of her writing relies on magical realism, depicting women in absurd situations that challenge assigned roles and status. The poem appearing in *Stick*, "That Night," represents a new genre, one she is very excited to pursue further.

Jenean McBrearty is a graduate of San Diego University, and taught sociology and political science. Her fiction, non-fiction, poetry and photographs have been published in over 200 online and in-print venues, and tends to reflect how, as a woman, she views sensitive issues and “power” issues. It seems that, no matter, how faithful and strong women are, they continue to be unrecognized for their ability to make credible moral choices in the face of incredible opposition. *Orphans* is one such story. Jenean’s work is available at [Lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) and [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

Jade Ramsey holds an MFA from Bowling Green State University and is the author of *Yawns Between Strangers* (Finishing Line 2014) and *Ghost Matter* (Dancing Girl 2016). Her fiction and poetry can be found in The MacGuffin, Best New Poets 2013, Juked, Whiskey Island, and forthcoming in Prime Number Magazine, among others. Her work is influenced by the collective voices of women; it seems so many of us tend to leap towards the individual but neglect how we, as women, sound together; Ramsey’s work hopes to create a rhythm, a perfect pitch, a melody from the dissonance of individual yearnings.


Heather Lee Rogers is a writer and actor in NYC. Fueled by political rage, she spent the summer developing a new feminist adaptation of *The Bacchae* in which she played Pentheus, King of Thebes with Dysfunctional Theatre Co. She is proud to have appeared on the *Stick* blog and in its journal 3.2 and has also had poems published in the last year in the *Rat’s Ass Review, Leopardskin and Limes, Jersey Devil Press, Waterways* and in the similarly feminine-focused *Adanna Lit Journal*. For possibly too many poems about her sex life, visit [heatherleerogerspoetry.weebly.com](http://www.heatherleerogerspoetry.weebly.com).

A Maine native but an academic gypsy for most of her adult life, Anastasia Walker is a blogger, poet, essayist, and scholar currently living and working in Pittsburgh. She blogs on trans and LGBTQ issues for Huffington Post, and has placed trans-themed poems in several journals. As co-facilitator of the Pgh Equality Center’s weekly youth nights, she helps foster the welcoming environment that didn’t exist for her as a teen. She is committed in both her work and life to furthering a broader and deeper understanding of what it means to be trans.

Elaine Woo’s art focuses primarily on the “other” and survival in the world of the “other.” Through feminism, she latched onto a way to deal with sexual harassment and assault, navigate through this patriarchal world, and think, feel, and live through ageism. Her first book, *Cycling with the Dragon* (poems) is a manual for handling beasts. Her work is published or forthcoming in *Prism International, The Elephants, The Maynard, Grain Magazine*, and *Experiment-O*. 
This issue of *Stick* edited by
Managing Editor Sarah-Jean Krahn