



# *Bitterzoet Magazine*

*Volume 2.2*





Labor  
*Amy Orazio*

The creamy texture  
of your Midwestern calves are  
spotted like Jacob's goats  
Anglican though  
and ready to work  
The ankles have been kissed,  
I can see that  
wreaths of cardamom mouths  
have lauded  
and wetted them

When I pull  
wheat this season  
I'll distend it  
a hand to you  
can weave it  
into your family crest  
whiteish blue  
your skin my skin  
the labor of this  
lacquered as new

## What Happened Backstage

*Kayla Pongrac*

I followed the firebreather into his dressing room after the show. He offered me a drink and then asked me to tell him a story. "Any story," he said. But it was I who wanted to hear a story—his story. "Let's hear yours instead, please," I implored. He lay down on the floor, poured some liquid into his mouth, reached for a pre-lit torch, and swallowed. From his mouth erupted a tiny fire, and he beckoned me closer. He told me everything as I warmed my hands over the flame.

## Scuffy

*Kayla Pongrac*

The castles on your tongue are counting off by two's, deciding which ones go with me and which ones stay with you. No matter what happens to that thick silver ring fitted precisely for your ring finger tentacle, or my scuffy shoes in the secret closet in castle number fifty-seven, here is what I will wish for you: Cold coffee. An empty wallet. Dusty linens. Long fingernails. But most of all, I hope that one day—even if just for one day—your head will be nice to your hair.



The Spirits There  
*Alicia Wright*

In the corner, apart,  
between swings of the restroom door,  
I am privy to the bent covers  
of a pocketed memo pad,  
to dry elbows, winter-cracked,  
on bar top of mahogany  
too good for the wounds  
of the failure of your dry spell.

A world away,  
cocooned in a corner booth,  
spinning a water glass  
between the palms  
of my steady hands,

I take no notes.  
The reflection of my bloodshot  
eyes is burned next to yours in  
the mirror behind the bottles.  
I have scribbled my own despair,  
musing on the implications of  
the familiarity of the bottom of an  
empty bottle on pages as stained  
as yours.

There is nothing new  
to see from your perch, cracked vinyl  
warming beneath you - nothing to see,  
to twist with words, to shine up  
and declare remarkable.

Packing Light  
*Alicia Wright*

I do not know  
this place well enough  
that it is strange when I am gone

never have walls here  
reached and held me nightly

listening to the far off train whistles  
and cries of the solitary night bird  
I can return with no memories  
of its dark corners

and leave again,  
thinking only of creek waters  
biting with cold teeth

I leave footprints where I  
must, where my fingertips can't reach  
the lowest branches, and miles away  
wonder if the grass has risen  
from where I have tread



## I Wear My Gloves to Her Goodbye

*Gizelle Fletcher*

I wear my gloves to her goodbye,  
a wave that stirs the air. I hug  
my scarf unto my neck  
until it becomes my skin.  
Rain fills my mouth with diluted talks  
of the fickle weather, and the Sun's yellow songs  
stage their final show.

Her hair billows like ribbons of the Sun's yellow songs  
that no-one wears to her goodbye. She has never seen me naked.  
I wear the cold as my outer coat until it becomes  
my skin. If there is a natural disaster,  
I must be prepared: I have my gloves to wave goodbye,  
a song to stir the air.

I start a sonnet about the sky  
and its enormous smile - but it reads instead  
like an elegy for the wind, for the skin  
it cannot touch. Rain becomes  
a diluted song with a cold outer coat.  
We talk of the weather often,  
but are always unprepared.

I start a sonnet about the sky  
but I cannot write love poems anymore.  
She has never seen me naked: I wear suede gloves  
to her goodbye. The Sun's yellow songs perform  
before an empty audience: they cannot reach  
to touch our cold coat, our peeling, paling skin.  
I drown a poem in my mouth  
with talks about the weather. She has never seen me naked.  
I need my gloves to finish this elegy, to wave  
and stir the weather.

I shiver down 10<sup>th</sup> in the winter,  
my scarf as my skin,  
to remember how to write love poems -  
of natural disasters; of the skin  
the storm longs to touch;  
of the Sun's yellow, forgotten songs.  
that have still not seen  
me naked. I am unprepared for this disaster,  
natural and beautiful as the sky's enormous smile,  
so I wear my gloves to her goodbye.



Fern; Traditional Photography, 18x24" print  
*Kristi Beisecker*

Birth  
*Alicia Wright*

you are old enough now  
for car rides, so we set out  
to chase lightning purpling  
the sky above treetops.

you are taller than last  
I saw you, when you  
waved a cap gun at trucks  
passing on the highway.

you tolerate me telling you so.  
you tolerate the garden hose's  
cold water cleaning the summer  
mud from your bare feet.

in the booth across the syrup-  
sticky table, your hair has  
gone wild with dog spit  
or bubble-gum.

Not Love Organ  
*Nicholas Anderson*

I walked into a men's bathroom with the lights off.  
I admit,  
I had a little pregnant in me  
and also the untamable fear that some people actually enjoy watching themselves urinate.

If you could take the trajectory  
of every line to every poem ever written,  
then you might be able to construct a somewhat accurate ceramic bust of her head,

or,

at least have leftover splinters of love, lust, hate, hope, death and a heaping pile of

*Mathias's Creation Myths.*

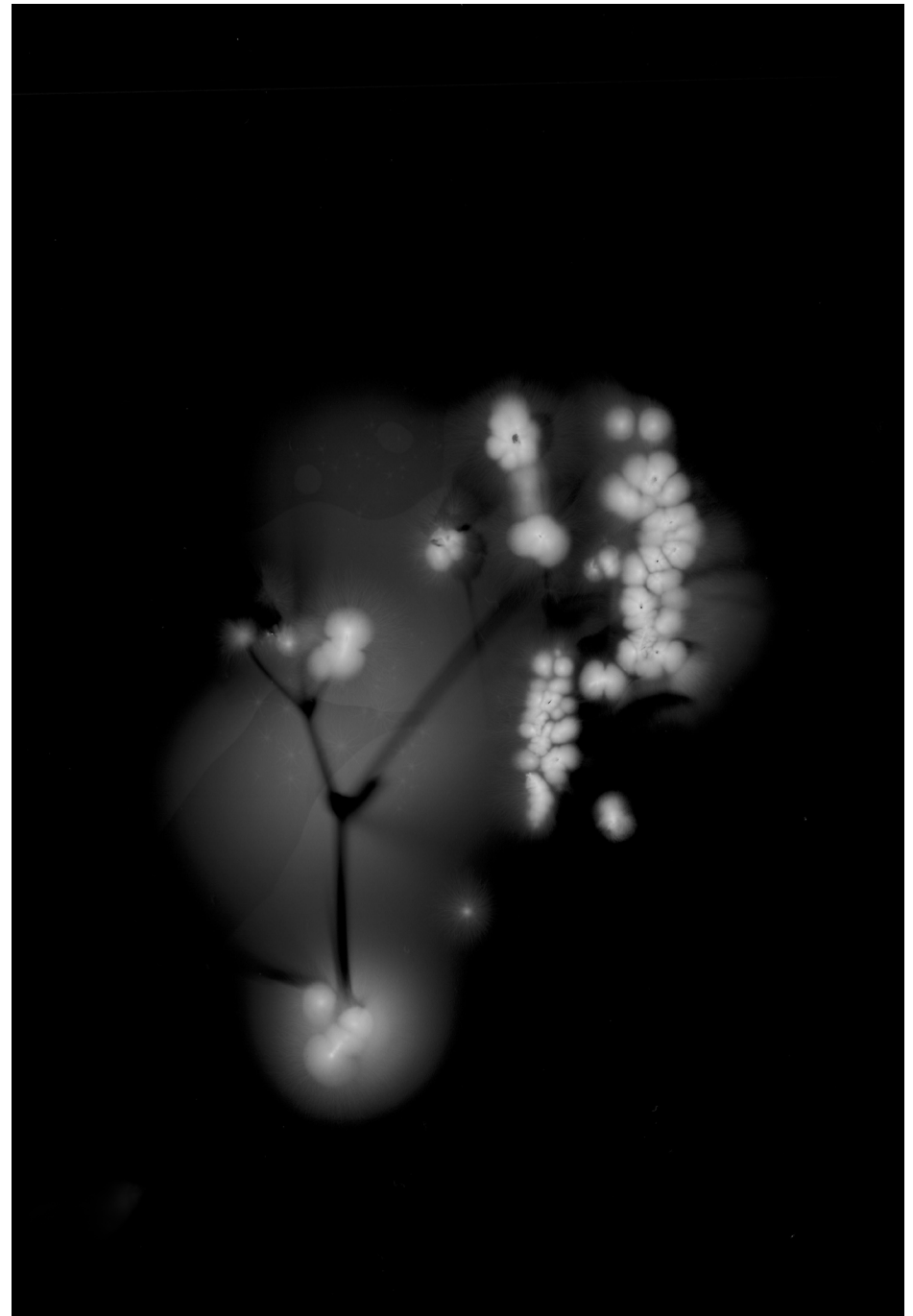
5 Notes on not love organ  
*Nicholas Anderson*

- I. Now that I am looking at you I will take an apology letter to the pool house towel boy. I will tell him I regret striking his jaw when he compared your very essence to that of an octopus. This is because I've slowly realized you have a knack for wrapping your arms around me and blinding me with jet-black ink when you are nervous.
- II. I would ask you to bear with me once again this morning, but I am now confident in the idea that there is more time than the evil wants me to believe there is. I guess you stop clock hands.
- III. Your words mean just as much when the sun is up as they do at night. Trust me, that is a compliment.
- IV. Although I have recently attempted, I cannot fathom the tireless green you wear in your skull. My chest has never grasped so much deafening epinephrine in all of its days.
- V. You look stunning in any blanket.



Not Love Organ  
*Nicholas Anderson*

One would think the timepiece crashing through your emerald window was a dead giveaway. However I fear, like a bear hand shower, the potential of you being more oblivious than I am! Will you lay with me? On this gray scale carpet that does not bite, tell me more about the rolling of your ships. You know, I hope to someday grasp the genius in your chest. White knuckles just mean I have found a home. Now, if you will, sink back into my quicksand convenience store.



Baby's Breath; Traditional Photography, 18x24" print  
*Kristi Beisecker*

## Visitation for an Aunt in Holland

*Alyda Faber*

All the time in the world,  
she said.  
Enough with hurrying out the door  
for doctor's appointments, parties, trains.  
No more departures.  
But you, the internal fire drill  
says find the exits.  
She would give you some of her silence  
if you could carry it.

Washed and dressed by her husband  
and sons, lipstick lightly applied.  
For now, she's chilled  
and taken out for family viewing.

Simple fabric trimmed with cord  
lines the box where she lies  
unlike the sheen pillows in North American coffins  
lending a wedding party lustre to death's transactions.  
One eyelid peeks an eye,  
teeth piano keys at rest.  
Your clamouring ebbs in her presence.

You know you belong to sound  
above the silence buried here  
between hedgerows bordering neighbourly graves.  
A few bees still visit sagging floral  
arrangements. The horizon rips  
as a stealth fighter takes off on a training run  
and north of the cemetery  
kennelled dogs bark in a hollow room.

And you give yourself up to departure again.

One moment  
the train waits in the station,  
then its ticking wheels pass the city edging the tracks  
and then fields, cattle and sheep, rush by,  
and you give yourself up to the speed of departure  
again and again.

Warble  
*Alyda Faber*

In March, my two older brothers harvested  
the backs of young bulls and heifers.  
They took turns placing the mouth  
of a Coke bottle over small mounds  
near the rise of the hip bone.  
Repeated hits on the bottom of the glass  
with the heel of the hand sucked  
a grub into the throat of the bottle.  
Dismal exposure  
of what would otherwise be hidden.  
Segmented whiteness, pale brown tip,  
dropped on the concrete  
and crushed under a boot.

I had to look  
even though I hated the internal migration  
it had made: eggs laid on calves' upper legs  
or under bellies, hatching, burrowing  
through connective tissue to the spinal canal,  
forming warbles just under the skin,  
dropping off in spring to pupate.  
Flies that drive the cattle wild  
and live just long enough to lay eggs.

Like a kind of parenting that creates  
migrants in the flesh  
and breathing holes in the skin,  
that makes us wretched and telepathic.

How can we habituate ourselves to grotesquerie  
planted in us, that grows into our own ugly exposures,  
and continue grazing in the world  
as if there is more to life—  
and there is—than this.

Goldfish  
*Alyda Faber*

The shamelessness of goldfish  
skimming the pond, their fleshy Os

skirmish for flakes  
dropped from a teaspoon.

Among the reflected trees  
flames flit in drowned wheels.

Was I once so round in expectation?  
Mouth open for the nipple

breaking the surface of my own dark  
without a glimmer of thinking.

My Open, swim! Open  
the world for food and fire.



# Author Biographies

**Nicholas Anderson** is currently a writing student at the University of Denver. Originally from Chicago, he writes poetry to get some of the crazy out of his head. His work can be seen in *Burningword Literary Journal*.

**Alyda Faber** has published poetry in Canadian and Dutch literary magazines: *The Antigonish Review*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Ensafh. (Etc.)*, *The Malahat Review*, *The Nashwaak Review*, *The Puritan Review*, and in an anthology edited by Elizabeth Harvor.

**Gizelle Fletcher** was born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica. She is currently a poet in the University of Florida's MFA program. She, sadly, does not own a cat.

**Amy Orazio** received her MFA from Otis College of Art and Design. She's working on a manuscript about exile in a city of exiles--Los Angeles, CA.

**Kayla Pongrac** is an avid writer, reader, tea drinker, and record spinner. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Vinyl Poetry*, *Split Lip Magazine*, *Oblong*, *HOOT*, *KYSO Flash*, and *Nat. Brut*, among others. To read more of Kayla's work, visit [www.kaylapongrac.com](http://www.kaylapongrac.com) or follow her on Twitter @KP\_the\_Promisee.

**Alicia Wright** was raised in West Virginia and is currently an MFA candidate in poetry at Bowling Green State University. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Kenning*, *Sugared Water*, *Rufous City Review*, and *Kestrel*.

## **Kristi Beisecker**

Titles; *Baby's Breath*, *Fern*

Year: 2012

Medium: Traditional Photography

Size: 18x24" print (22"x28" frame)

Concept: William Reich, in 1940, discovered a subtle energy in organic materials that is extremely attracted to water. It is said that this subtle energy is the life force energy of organic materials. It has long been thought that this subtle energy can be captured and conveyed through a contact photographic process called Kirlian Photography with the organic materials being exposed to electricity onto traditional photographic paper.

Artist Statement: In the Spring of 2012 I took a class in Alternative Photography as part of my degree in Graphic and Interactive Design. I am also into spirituality and as part of this interest I discovered Kirlian Photography or as I like to term it - Electrography. Kirlian Photography is made using high voltage electricity to expose objects on photo sensitive paper. In the realm of spirituality this photo process is said to capture the life force energy of organic materials, thus using it as a scientific process. Those who use the process look at it in a scientific mind frame and just photograph one object. Seeing its' potential as an art form, I took the process and reinvigorated it to be compatible with traditional darkroom processing. As this process was originally developed to use Polaroid film - which is expensive now - my college only had darkroom processing so I used the materials that were available to me. In the creation process, I applied my design skills of composition, relationships to elements on the page and how to arrange objects on a page where the energy flowed through the design. To me these photographs aren't just photograms but a cultivation of my entire knowledge as an artist.