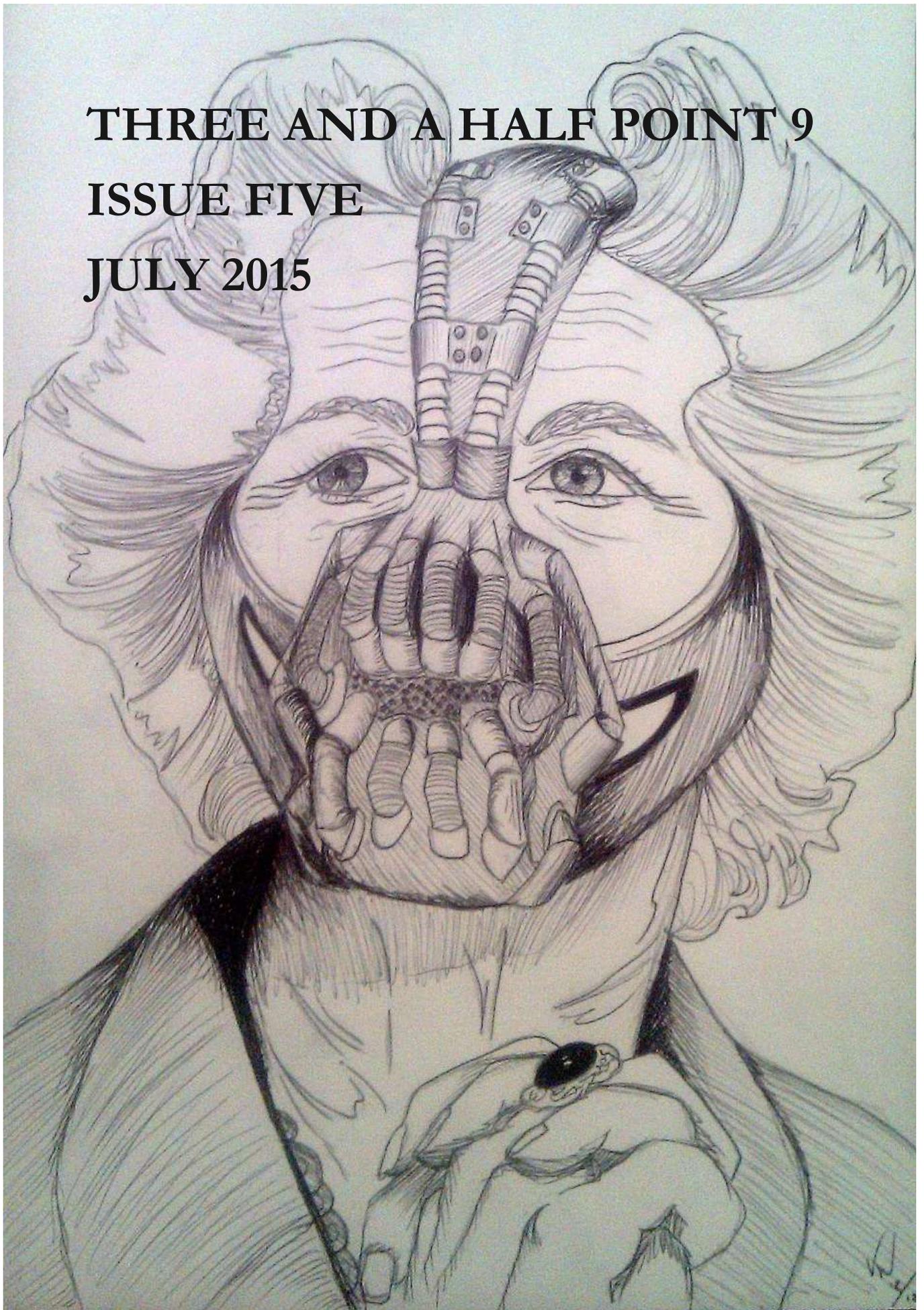


**THREE AND A HALF POINT 9**  
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# Three And A Half Point 9

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Editor

Luke Thurogood

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Eden Shea

(From the collection *In Skin*)

**NEUROSIS**

[ I ]

Spell the night backwards and the unfinished  
thought lends you a footprint; nothing is accidental

at your fingertips. It comes at me swinging, the striated  
ham fist of a new born, its purple bruise a lactate stain.

Look in the mirror and raise two fists, one for each  
black eye. Dare to blink. Tie yourself to the chair

with the rope from the tyre swing that broke your  
brother's neck. Connect the axe by the back door to the

salt spilled on the bathroom carpet, the piss stains you  
never could rinse out. As a child you tore green paper

and the surprise was that the bad guys come in pretty  
packaging; that old men sweat tears into the grout.

[ II ]

An acanthotic child frowns at the timestamp,  
his late wounds the pigment ink of adolescence.

His grandfather judders south, flesh-hooks  
in his axillary nerves. His orders climb a sinister  
octave. Wickedness sweats. Hutu soul. Hair grey  
with ash falling poleward. The plane with colander  
windows.

Roadblocks cartwheel along the border,  
parted rib cages manned by hammerkops. A soldier  
rapes a Tutsi. Her children duck beneath coaxial  
mounts. Swim out from gun smoke eddies. Catch  
buckshot on their chins. A bird plucks purple feathers  
from its lover's back.

The grandfather checks percentages, teeters  
with finger and thumb bridged across his forehead  
on the blood-marbled edge of a military map. He calls  
for an increase in casualties. Lends wet lips  
to his goodnight kiss.

The child traces the stitching of the Kagera river.  
The current choked still by Tutsi limbs, brittle-boned  
in the cold slick, exsanguinate on ice scarps. His  
fingertips, saliva tacked, frostbitten to the mouth.

## MEMORY

[ I ]

The father says she deserved it. She bites down. The blood is safer than his breakage.

The mother asks if she wants to be a boy. She hides the wound.

The sister presents a pregnancy test. She says nothing. The test is positive. She says nothing. The baby never arrives. She says nothing.

The grandmother cries because she won't see her in heaven. She shows her wings.

The boy grits lies between his teeth. Spits them into his hands. She does not reach for him. The hypocrisy will sting.

The father threatens murder. She waits too long for the epiphany.

The neighbours ask about the rainbow face paint. She tells them. The neighbours stop talking to her. She tells them nothing else.

The boys jeer. She hasn't met a real man yet. Puts her safety before her sarcasm.

The girls turn their backs in the changing room. She imagines.

The straight girl lines her windowsill with empty bottles. She carries her to bed.  
Does not join her.

The straight girl insists that lesbians have it easy. She pins her rage beneath her  
tongue. Enlightens.

The best friend slips his hand into her underwear. She does not find her voice.

The suicide hotline doesn't pick up. She throws the razor out.

The girlfriend loses her horse. She never visits. The girlfriend accuses her of  
lying. She keeps at it. The ache has a longer shelf life than the guilt.

She skips dinner for the seventh time. Tells no one. She bleeds through the  
second bandage. Tells no one. The boy she never loved learns the train schedule.

She tells no one.

The mother finds out. She shrugs it off.

She fails the Chemistry exam. Throws the other razor out.

The mother cries. She remembers she is not a bad person for the ways she tried to kill her sadness.

The father says she deserved it. She cherishes the second of surprise.

[ III ]

you are the related advertisement

the factory reset that won't stick

the cockroach washing off my prints  
under the fridge

the bum note  
the tape jammed in the deck

the song that always skips  
*m-m-m-my Sharona*

the sour dregs of milk in the bottle  
on the countertop

the mould ground into the polyfilla

the blood-tag AB positive

a book stored belly-up  
the one word that cuts

from the inside

the blonde before the bleach  
the scissors and the bathroom mirror

the sex that tipped the scale

the aftermath

of the boy who lied

a rainstorm spinning oil on the tarmac

the glass passenger

hot water on Sunday mornings

the sting under the bandage

the skin space for pencil sketch tattoos

thumbed into my hip

the photograph in the back of the drawer

the open wound in the corkboard

a postcard to an empty address

a collector of words

the guitar with the broken neck

the manic butterfly in the ear canal

undiagnosed

## **PROGRESS**

[ II ]

Wait for a train.

A man stands behind a girl. Fixes  
fingers on her, dick in hand. Still  
he catches the wink of another  
on his mouth, black twist, splenic.

Our eyes find refuge between book spines,  
pixels, verse, chorus.

The girl says nothing.

man follows me into an alley  
his hands stick  
in my cunt  
it is a compliment  
there is  
blood

*fuck you then bitch*

The man builds a philae probe  
on the back of tax dollars  
spinning atoms  
dead dream frustration

until outstretched fingers  
find titanium metal  
hot as solder steam  
creep close and curl into

black rock  
fast rock  
spinning through space  
a spinning top rock

Seven naked pinups bent like  
on all fours

farmdogs dripped  
semen

*see men?*

Triggers —  
There's no such thing as

*Kim Kardashian breaks the internet  
with nude magazine cover*

# Crow Blues

Ali Znaidi

The crow lands on a bare bough  
of the tree of your obsolete childhood.  
The leaves rush to cover up this nakedness.

On your way home  
it's mandatory to smile back  
to the Janus-faced people.

The crow is taking over the  
center and the edges of the bare bough.

Who knows what secrets  
they conceal in their smiles.

The crow spreads  
its wings against the tree, cawing at last.

I think  
your ears yearn for jazz.

And now,  
your dejection returns, a certain urge  
for panacea telling you:  
stop talking on your mobile phone

& listen to the caws!

## poetic journeys

*(after "journeys/ after remedios varo" by Marcia Arrieta)*

*for Marcia Arrieta*

the somberness of winter. surreal.  
black moths. veils. curtains & myths  
passage of time. uncertainty.  
the outside world. clouds. zombies.  
simulacra. juxtaposition of nothingness.  
enlightenment/darkness.—discovery of

the right position. the words are hidden  
in the keyboard. hieroglyphic ghosts.  
behind closed doors. claustrophobia.

waiting for the rain. hydraulic poetics.

\*\*\*

miracles of the hieroglyph. mysteries  
& SECRETS. haunted gardens. flies  
hunting typos (leaving excrement

on the screen). files are not yet archived.  
a naked city without outskirts. coffee dregs.  
the sound of high heels. inside this world;  
memories. layers of memories.  
red lipstick on an old paper calendar. aesthetics.

## A Fresh Version

The broken glass becomes an unoccupied territory  
or a destroyed oubliette full of devils.

Devils blossom in secret territories, in shattered  
entities & in incantations of such.

Of this destruction there is a strange sense  
of urgency to become angels.

—If you peer into the broken glass,  
perhaps you are looking for a fresh version  
of angelic revelations:

Now, a new sunbeam is in the process of shimmering.

# Arthur Street

Brendan Quinn

Arthur street

somewhere between 2007 and 2009

the exact date I can't remember

We with slap-dash vigor

Climbed through that window at the numberless house

on Arthur Street –

A void towards reconnaissance

or reckon

we just wanted to be disorderly

An empty eerie life had lived and still did where we

stood

Kitchen appliances – wallpaper

upstairs - a girls bedroom - pink fairies - varied comfort

stolen.

I intruded with my bladder, flushed, and used the

mirror

We laughed

at the time                      didn't think to

ask the floor

the ceiling

what had it seen

Golf clubs

That shit in the yard was about to get

fucked up.

Didn't think

about real theft

just wanted to see

who could make the most damage

Hell I'd only played *real* golf once.

We hit toys -              mirrors

Knocked brick to bins

SCORE!

Then to footy training

wearing our smiles as evidence

dirt-stained

They prepared Arthur Street gradually -

boarded up more houses

steel windows

wooden doors.

The surrounding streets the same

Sutherland Street

Marsh Street

Then they were gone before I had chance to mark

my name on the pavement

Wonder will Tom pass with his daughter...

don't see Rhys anymore...

I pass occasionally...

What's there now

they never built whatever it was they planned to

build –

not enough time?

not enough money?

not enough pride?

Blue cardboard walls a stagnant rubble

Graffiti face paint

nothing but nothingness

# I SIMPLY...

Alisa Velaj

(All poems from "A GOSPEL OF LIGHT" Published by AQUILLRELLE)

Translated by Ukë ZENEL BUÇPAPAJ

I simply loved you  
As much as breezes love lime trees  
I loved you as much as waves love shores  
I simply loved you  
Without knowing the 'Whys'

You loved me too  
You loved me deeply, thoroughly  
Then you asked yourself  
Why breezes acquire meaning from lime trees  
Why waves would be no more waves  
If there were no shores

Failing to answer those questions lead you astray  
And you remained a stupid winter wind flying through sad skies  
I never abandoned shores or lime trees  
And I sought to find out the reasons behind the 'Whys'  
Only when the owl screamed...

# ENDLESSNESS

My endlessness  
Much more sacred than purity itself  
Come back to the dawn of sailing ships  
For the boat  
Of the fisherman will come  
And the winds will disappear from the shores...

## INSTEAD OF A FAREWELL

You have lost the rainbow colors forever  
And now I see you looking for a woman's icon  
In waters  
At nights  
As you turn your back to the strange light  
Sadness often conquers you –  
The lighthouse shines to help other voyagers...

An interview with Eden Shea by Luke Thurogood

1. What was the spark for this collection of poems, when did the idea crystalize in your mind?

The idea started after I read Juliana Spahr's collection *Response*, which—although split into five parts—is essentially a singular, continuous poem unified by theme. As poetry goes, it's some of the most skilfully crafted I've ever read; every line develops the idea of response and how it relates to the human experience. I adored the cohesion, the hyperfocus of the collection. So I did what we artists are best at, and stole it. I'm nowhere near Spahr's level though, and that's how the collection (*In Skin*) ended up split into three parts, since I couldn't sustain just the one. The poems pretty much separated themselves—I didn't have to force the themes to make them fit together. My subconscious was feeling pretty single-minded at the time, clearly.

2. You use violence within your poems to breath-taking effect, it's one of the reasons I enjoy reading it so much. Do you think the use of violence and violent language is important within poetry?

Thank you—and yes and no. Yes in that for me poetry is about honesty, taking what you know and what you've lived and turning it into something else, sure, but also something familiar, something truthful. And the world is pretty violent. It doesn't even have to be literal—there's more to violence than blood and guts or whatever. A lot of it's internal. Emotion is a violent thing, turbulent. Tear it open, let it bleed, there's always something there to write about. And if you're doing it honestly, it's probably going to be violent. But obviously there's a lighter side to life, and it's just as important to embrace that as well. I tend to prefer the grittier material is all.

3. How do you begin to write, is there a line or an idea or is it all different?

Often I'll respond to something I've read about or seen on the news, scrawl a few words down and work from there. Other times I'll find some existing piece of writing and smash it against something else until the two fit together, and then I'll prod at the result until it feels right. If I'm lucky, the words dictate themselves and all I have to do is listen. But there's always something personal in there. Even if it's just the transcription of some half-remembered snapshot to round out an image. Otherwise the

poem feels kind of empty to me, and I won't be satisfied with it. It's kind of like a signature—'Hey, I wrote this. Please like it.'

4. Your narrators/implied authors of your poems witness violence and situations that the majority of an audience, particularly Western audiences in present day, do not see or do not wish to see. Do you think it is important to take the reader to these different places?

I wouldn't say that Western audiences would necessarily be unfamiliar with this kind of content—as much as I try to be aware of the world outside my window, I've never ventured much further than Western Europe, and there's a lot of myself in these poems, so. I agree that maybe we're sheltered from it out of a combination of wilful ignorance and patriarchal constructs, though, and in that sense I absolutely think that anyone with a voice should use it to inform, enlighten, terrify. The whole point of the Progress poems is to show how far we still have to go. There's this utterly false assumption that the days of inequality are over, which is a dangerous message to perpetuate. So yeah, I think it's important to show people what's happening in the world, still, and force them to think about their part in it.

5. There are LGBT themes without your work that transport me back to my teenage years like a deer in the headlights, Memory [I] is a particularly haunting section. Do you think such fiction and poetry is important for people to understand the struggle many LGBT persons experience?

Ah yes, the closet years. Memory was an especially tricky section to write. The words came more easily than for the rest of the collection combined, but a lot of it felt too raw when I read it back. But mostly I left it alone. I don't see it as an exposé on the struggles of the queer experience. It's much more about processing things that happened to me. Some of it's political, a sort of 'this is how we hurt, still' to those pesky inequality sceptics. For example, Progress [III] reimagines an account I read of a hellish attack on a transgender woman, and that was all about raising awareness. But for the most part, I don't intend to be thematic or educational. This is just my life and how I remember living it.

6. Slightly connecting to that previous question, I feel a strong gothic voice in some of these poems and some of the language reminds me of the Witches from Macbeth. Are there authors, poets, books that you look towards that help your writing?

I constantly abuse pre-existing work when writing poetry, but Shakespeare isn't one of them—the gothic-ness must be transference from the days of English Lit GCSE. If I'm stuck on something or think a poem sucks my go-to fix is always flicking through someone else's pages. I'll steal a line or a word or even just the structural arrangement of a poem, anything to kill the paraesthesia, get the blood flowing again. Anthologies work best since they're so diverse but I'm also partial to Daniele Pantano and Jeanann Verlee in particular. Both poets have such an excellent command of language, I always find something in their work to respond to.

7. In Progress [IV] you use taken sources to create your piece, how useful have experiments and other exercises been in aiding your creative process? Do you feel negatively about some styles?

Freewriting is really the only exercise I engage with regularly. There's something collaborative in writing to music, or whatever's on the telly; sometimes I'll nick scraps of conversations around me and run with that. Taking directly from sources isn't normally my method, because even though it takes a lot of graft to make it work, it somehow still feels lazy to me. Progress [IV] happened the way it did because the quotes I came across were so sexist I didn't want to tamper with them for fear of diluting their vitriol; they proved my point just fine without any outside editorial help. I'm not much for flarf poetry, but then neither are the people who write it, and there's something charming about such dedication to the satirical. Bottom line: write whatever and however you want. It's your story.

8. Finally, what are your favourite authors, books, poets, films (max 5) and what are you reading at the moment?

I hope you know this is an evil, impossible question. First things first—I'm currently reading *Any Other Mouth* by Anneliese Mackintosh. Its edges are sharp as fuck and strike in all kinds of painful places. I'm a total cliché when it comes to my favourite anything. I love *The Virgin Suicides*, and *Rant*, and *Vernon God Little*. I believe that Jeanann Verlee (an electric New York based poet) is a visionary. I can quote *Cruel Intentions* from start to finish, soundtrack included. It's a neat trick, I swear.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Eden Shea** is a queer writer, musician, and artist. Their work has previously existed in obscurity. They are passionate about feminism, equal rights, and falafel. They proudly possess a degree in Creative Writing and enjoy playing Taylor Swift songs to their consistently unimpressed dogs.

**Ali Znaidi** (b.1977) lives in Redeyef, Tunisia. He is the author of several chapbooks, including *Experimental Ruminations* (Fowlpox Press, 2012), *Moon's Cloth Embroidered with Poems* (Origami Poems Project, 2012), *Bye, Donna Summer!* (Fowlpox Press, 2014), and *Taste of the Edge* (Kind of a Hurricane Press, 2014). For more details you can visit his blog at [aliznaidi.blogspot.com](http://aliznaidi.blogspot.com) and follow him on Twitter [@AliZnaidi](https://twitter.com/AliZnaidi).

**Brendan Quinn** is a twenty-year-old writer and student of creative writing at Edge Hill University. He is also known as "Orig'n" (An Emcee/Recording artist) from Barrow-In-Furness. He is currently an editor in poetry for an independent student run magazine entitled 'The Black Market Re-view.' Brendan is currently working on several writing projects, including his first poetry collection and an EP in collaboration with other artists. Earlier this year Brendan ran scriptwriting workshops working with children between the ages of four and ten from the Helen O'grady Drama Academy in Maghull. Brendan's writing practice is expansive, although recently he has turned most of his attention to poetry. As well as poetry Brendan writes original songs, fiction, scriptwriting and philosophy. Brendan has a keen interest in Hip Hop and in particular rap music, this extends to subdivisions in spoken word and battle rap. He considers sound in poetics as equally important as form and content, which is often reflected in his work.

**Alisa Velaj** (born 1982, Vlorë, Albania) is an Albanian poet whose work has appeared in a number of print and online international magazines, including Blue Lyra Review, One title reviews, The Cannon's Mouth (UK), The missing slate (UK), The Midnight Diner (USA), Poetica(USA), Time of Singing (USA), Canto (USA), Enhance (USA), Ann Arbor Review (USA) The French Literary Review (UK), SpeedPoets (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia), LUMMOX Poetry Anthology 3 (USA), Erbacce (UK), FourW twenty-five Anthology (Booranga Writers' Centre, Australia), Poetry Super Highway (USA), Knot Magazine (USA), The Otter (USA), The Journal (UK), Phenomenal Literature (New Delhi, India), The Brighter Light Poetry Anthology (CANADA), The Atherton Review (USA), "Immagine & Poesia", Vol. 2 - Project (e-book) (CANADA), Section 8 Magazine (USA) and in the Anthology by Mago Books. She has also works in forthcoming issues of Poetica and The Dallas Review (USA). Velaj's full length

book of poetry “A Gospel of Light” is published by Aquilrelle in June 2015. Alisa Velaj has been shortlisted for the annual international erbacce-press poetry award in June 2014. She was also shortlisted for the Aquilrelle Publishing Contest 3 in January 2015 and later was the first runner up in this contest. Translated by Ukë ZENEL BUÇPAPAJ