





# Ghost Heart

Winner of the Sixth Annual  
EX OPHIDIA PRESS PRIZE FOR POETRY  
2021



Ex Ophidia Press

## Praise for Mary Pinard's *Portal*

In *Portal*, Mary Pinard explores grief and its transformations — both agonizing and transcendent — with a range and skill that are breathtaking. Here, the portal in its many manifestations (window, aperture, lens, doorway, insight) becomes both obstruction and passage, that which at once separates us from what we most desire and gives us access. Along the way, Pinard's powerful, lovely, and sometimes horrific imaginings and figurings evoke and invoke our own deepest fears and loves. This is an enormously brave, tough book, compelling and beautiful, a tour-de-force.

— Katharine Coles

Grief has the power to shatter or transform us. Mary Pinard is a visionary who dares to dive into the wreck, exploring the deepest realms of human consciousness and surfacing with gorgeously wrought revelations of what it means to survive, to love, to continue. She speaks to the lost in voices no longer personal: wind and water, sweetgrass and diesel engine, salmonid and sand eel. With transcendent tenderness, *Portal* opens a window on a world of radiant wonder.

— Melanie Rae Thon

Mary Pinard's book *Portal* consists of a number of poems recounting the circumstances of her brother's death, drowned in the kitchen galley of a capsized tugboat; the poems are heartbreakingly and unsentimentally a catalogue of the circumstances, what kind of person her dead brother was, and what have been the consequences, meditative cataloguing, too, of her own feelings of bereavement. The poems, for the most part in free-verse, are highly controlled, in a wide variety of dignified and deeply expressive forms rhythmically proceeding in their telling of the story. Separate poems, each beautiful in itself, but, taken together, it is one poem, in my opinion a great poem, a great elegiac poem.

— David Ferry

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Poems

Mary Pinard

Ex Ophidia Press  
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Always, Miles

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# Ghost Heart



*form from form from form from form*

— Ronald Johnson, *ARK*

*I was making language  
a stem to aspire to :*

*durable   flexible   able  
to register shift quickly—*

*when shaken  
to keep shape.*

— Brian Teare, *Companion Grasses*



## What Will Happen

to this  
carved out place, once  
rough and undisturbed, now  
fallen, sparse, already  
a remnant from lives  
lost to the inexorable? Who  
will care that such care was  
taken to choose for this path  
limestone, of the type layered  
with traces of an ancient winding  
river, rather than one pocked with fossil  
remains in bands of buff clay? Or that  
this fence-line transected a prairie  
parcel here, or that this mix of mineral  
supplements for beef cattle was blended  
to satisfy this percentage instead of that? Who  
will burn the invasive hedge, cedar, smooth  
brome, the buckthorn? Who will remember  
which of these hills hold burial mounds for the Kansa,  
Wichita, Pawnee? Who will keep the skeleton  
key for the district common school,  
a replica, open it for tours? Who will  
make the time to deadhead the fading  
wild irises, keep the open range  
road graded, the bison skull hanging  
on the barn from slipping  
off its nail?



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