

witch

each night you invent different potions
in a bottlecap ringed with soap,
like a salted tequila glass frosted yellow
 you are six & brew something reckless
mix a glug of eye-stinging shampoo with
luscious bath milk your mum uses on weekends
you squirt in facewash as a final flurry
a way to conjure your private Maleficent
 oh you idolised that woman
craved her staff & horns, the green orb
glowed like your tiny heart, tense & warped
 you always liked the baddies but never
mentioned it, Ursula both feared & needed
you wanted that power all to yourself
 you dressed up on Halloween as a witch
though your parents just saw a wizard,
did not marvel at your cloaked femininity
you willed your nails to become lucid claws
to grasp candy & other boys' necks
 now sat in the potion, you let it buffer
your skin, the bubbles cascade down
your spindled arms & it's a cape
as the water cools the spell fortifies
& you can make anyone fall
in love with you, even yourself

the self is a buried structure

says my horoscope app, as if it's
trying to piss me off on a rocky
monday—so I am stratigraphic,
dense with compressions, bits
of insects & dead birds that
fell from cliff-face nests—I am
sandwiched by pasts unknown
to anyone beyond the sky—I
am an archaeological dig, the
skeleton & terracotta pots packed
into clay deep beneath a river in
the arse-end of nowhere—not
quite a bog-person nor mum-
mified king casketed in gold,
but rather a loose scatter of
mortar undone by shaky
foundations & time—in
the future, some cute young
scientist on a working holiday
will disrobe me with the soft-
est of brushes & prise me
apart in the muck—I am a
scaffold of tibia & fibula
waiting to be discovered

after therapy I go on walks

at the end of my road is a community herb garden which is
not as fancy as it sounds men often fight there over
cans of strongbow muddle the rosemary with ring-pulls
& fag ends tonight after self-scrutiny & warm
rain bats flicker in circles above me the rose
sky embarrassed at its suppleness I mark my year by
the bats' return so much time has passed with such little
growth of course the swallows come earlier & loop
so recklessly they must be showing off there is
something piercing about the pipistrelles they
remind me of my childhood lounge the big windows
& open curtains my dad didn't like to shut them
for reasons unknown to us we watched as the bats
gestured in & out of view around the big oak sail past
our row of houses as if marking territory now I breathe
in wet mint & chives & watch them play above my head
like they're telling me something in another frequency

membranes

he said they need a bullet to the brain
not aware I was being shot

by my own kin. if home is irrevocable
not a place but a condition

where is the gun now? quiet on the mantle
between graduations and sage candles

like the clot that gelled after skull shrapnel
pierced my meninges

dura / arachnoid / pia

matter gathered in sick gangs pressed
my mind into a thrum of daylong headaches

so now it's not quite a metaphor as doctors
weigh the fears of burrowing into bone

and drill open my scalp to suck it out
so they wait for it to dissolve into the blood

recirculating its darkness into rooms
whose walls are stripped back to brick