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Ghost in a Black Girl's Throat

POEMS BY
Khalisa Rae

Ghost in a Black Girl's Throat is an honest incantation and a forthright song to women of color grappling with the ever-present horrors and histories of the South.

What happens when a midwestern girl migrates to a haunted Southern town, whose river is a graveyard, whose streets bear the names of southern slave owners? How can she build a home where Confederate symbols strategically stand in the center of town? Can she sage the chilling truths of her ancestors? What will she do to cope with the traumatizing ghostliness of the present-day South?

Ghost in a Black Girl's Throat is a heart-wrenching reconciliation and confrontation of the living, breathing ghosts that awaken black women each day. This debut poetry collection summons multiple hauntings—ghosts of matriarchs that came before, those that were slain, and those that continue to speak to us, but also those horrors women of color strive to put to rest. *Ghost in a Black Girl's Throat* examines the haunting feeling of facing past demons while grappling with sexism, racism, and bigotry. They are all present: ancestral ghosts, societal ghosts, and spiritual, internal hauntings. This book calls out for women to speak their truth in hopes of settling the ghosts or at least being at peace with them.

ADVANCE PRAISE

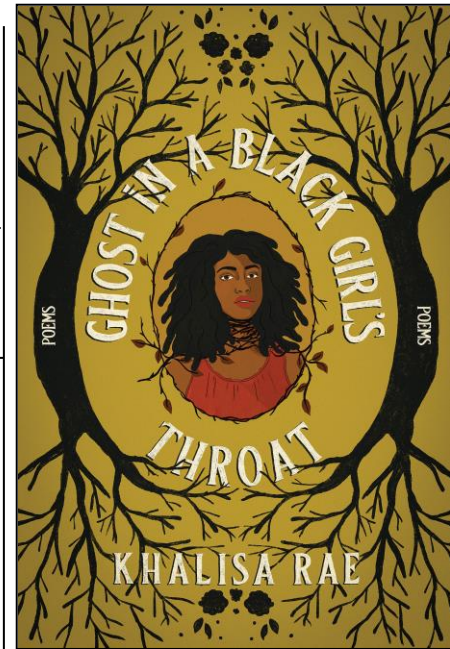
Ghost in a Black Girl's Throat resurrects the ancestral spirits of the not-so-distant past. In the poems of Khalisa Rae, ghosts become guardians—protectors of black healing, black truth, and black power. They live in the boldness of “Counterfeit,” as chants that proclaim, “This black be authentic. This black be original. This melanated music be off the market.” They live in the graces of “Body Apology”, as roots that require nurture—bodies to be “planted”, not “plucked”. They live in the lands of “Our Pastoral Blues”—stolen, appropriated, “broken” but “locked in formation, weaving.”

Our hauntings, our ghosts, our pain—the deepest of hues, heavy and harrowing—live as we do in the here and now, awaiting rest. *Ghost in a Black Girl's Throat* honors the dead as the living, speaking new life into all that weighs on black women—by freeing the voices of those who have been silenced, bringing peace to the restless who are powerless no more.

—Denise Nichole Andrews, Editor in Chief, The Hellebore Press, Founder, HUES Foundation

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Khalisa Rae is a poet, queer rights activist, journalist, and educator in Durham, North Carolina, and a graduate of the Queens University MFA program. Her chapbook, *Real Girls Have Real Problems*, was published in 2012, and her recent work has been seen in *PANK*, *Sundog Lit*, *Crab Fat*, Damaged Goods Press, Red Room Poetry's *New Shoots* poetry anthology, *Glass Poetry*, *TERSE.*, *Luna Luna*, *The Hellebore*, *Homology Lit*, *Dancing Bear Books: WOMXN Anthology*, *Tishman Review*, and *Obsidian*, among others. She was a Furious Flower Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize finalist and a winner of the Fem Lit Magazine Contest, Voicemail Poetry Contest, White Stag Publishing Contest, and Bright Wings Poetry Contest. She is Managing Equity and Inclusion Editor of *Carve Magazine* and Consulting Poetry Editor for *Kissing Dynamite*. *Unlearning Eden* is forthcoming from White Stag Publishing in Summer 2021. She is currently the Writing Center Director at Shaw University and the newest writer for *NBC-BLK* and *Black Girl Nerds*.



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MORE PRAISE FOR *GHOST IN A BLACK GIRL'S THROAT*

“If storytelling in the griot’s hands is a form of resistance, then *Ghost in a Black Girl’s Throat* is a form of control. Khalisa Rae’s poetics are unbreakable glass knives that own uncharted and unmarked underground burrows, providing refuge for righteous indignation.

Unapologetic, slippery, but cautious language weaves inside, over, and under the remnants of sacrifice and atonement. We recoil to remember that our ancestral mothers once had a voice and now our voices are our bodies . . . “And that’s what they will come / for first—the throat.”

Ghost in a Black Girl’s Throat pursues agency, selfhood, and disturbing meditations on inhumanity. These poems deliver truth and rage with the precision of a visionary heart and the rancid tears of a poisoned ghost.

This powerful collection bears witness to the fraught overlap between women’s bodies and minds. *Ghost in a Black Girl’s Throat* reframes the black body politic as sacrament, benediction, delicacy, and tenderness.

These verses are timeless refrains sizzling on parched tongues. All praises for the testament of these poems that bring a full communion of blessed assurances to wise women daring oceans to erase our footprints and to wild girls chasing winds that steal the scent of herstory.”

—**Jaki Shelton Green**, North Carolina Poet Laureate

FROM *GHOST IN A BLACK GIRL'S THROAT*

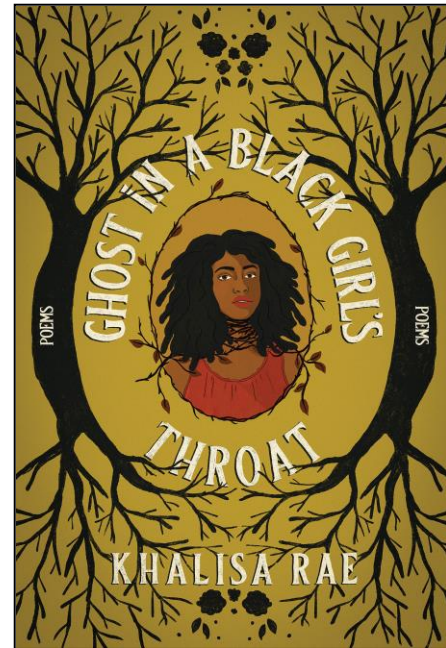
Making Counterfeit Again

This *great* America be street vendor,
peddling our identity like flea market,
haggling our genius to passersby, selling
hand-me-down inventions and gently used

designer genetics. Why you keep stealing
our blues and calling it a pop song?
Convincing the masses you made our pain
fashion statements. Our twerk be copywritten,

you get no royalties from our 2-step.
Our lingo isn’t for sale, so stop plagiarizing
our hood-speech, main streaming our “broken”
English. This America be mass producer

of appropriation, factory full of our features, ripping
our packages open searching for damaged goods.
This black be authentic. This black be original.
This melanated music be off market.
This slang be sold out and never returning to shelves.
This dialect be discontinued, this black too high.
Out of reach.



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