

***Research***  
**By Hannah Barrie**

today I hold your story in my hands

the ball lodged in your throat before you cry

they pay me twice a month to hold it here

trace grids and patterns on it, stretch it out

show it to the light, match it with others

as they match my pension contributions

reimburse my health and dental care

to keep my hands here cradling your pain

I parse the sentences, I code and scan

I note your demographic information

experience

of harmful systems

settles on my chest

I spread my arms, brace shoulders down my back

abuse and violence, homelessness, arrest, incarceration, child protection, harm

is a broad unfeeling term

you ticked these boxes and they pay

me to put them in the spreadsheet

pain

noted duly

and I feel each square

acutely

I think of you                      your stories

not plotted on the map across the land but

held careful                      in my body

not forgotten

how do we pay for that?