

CATH NICHOLS

The Violence Of

the poet enjoys sensation. She jabs out the title
'Outside the Operating Room of the Sex Change Doctor,'
makes a row of penises the aftermath of something, hints

that what is there might have mushroomed out of torture, war,
or concentration camps. It gives voice to the penises,
stokes up a ghoulish horror. But male-to-female surgery is not

a severance; post operation, a penis wouldn't lie
intact upon a silver tray. The surgery is realignment,
tissue scraped to hollow out the male member, penile

skin then tucked inside to shape a new vagina.
Vaginoplasty is creation, not removal.
It's not a loss, a cause for grief, but gain. Instead

of Dr Frankenstein that poet's surgeon might have been
a gardener in Eden restoring the should-be-ness
of the body-in-waiting.

Cath Nichols teaches Creative Writing at the University of Leeds, UK. Her pamphlets are *Tales of Boy Nancy* (Driftwood, 2005) and *Distance* (erbacce, 2013). Her collections: *My Glamorous Assistant* (Headland, 2007) and *This is Not a Stunt* (Valley Press, 2017). These contain queer, trans, and disability-related poetry. Plus occasional dogs.