

KISSING DYNAMITE: A JOURNAL OF POETRY

ISSUE 1 JANUARY 2019: "WHAT I MAKE MINE"

With the New Year comes resolve: a commitment to take back the self. Our inaugural issue "What I Make Mine" is a celebration of possession, a revelry in the elements that make us whole, a reclamation of the heart and the self. Don't let anyone dim your shine--give the world your sparks!

"Tithe of Salt" by Ray Ball

Did you bring your tithe
of salt, a bundle of bleached bones

fastened with a garland, a black
cord that measures the length

head to toe? Longer than a martyr's
meter. Longer than the segment of first

sleep on a night so long (ago) centuries
lounged. Hidden serpents in a parallelogram of shadow.

You will have to come to be more
patient. To wait for the prayerful words

to arrive, to trickle forth, a saintly intercession.
Blood beading, like a feast of pomegranates.

"Warrior Too" by Jane Murray Bird

You can wrinkle
your weathered nose
at the suburban bungalow
but each time I curled around
a body doubled, unfurled

like a durian in full sweat,
ate nettle leaves, heaved myself
to tree height on my waxed pine
floor and bore down on nine
and a half pounds of animal
then made milk from meat until
they were walking –
I was wild.

“I Thank God You Are Not My Daughter” by Wanda Deglane, January’s Featured Poet

say the women walking briskly past me on
the street, the chaperones at my high school
dances, the mothers at my graduation. girl in
the low-cut tops, sin dripping from my skin like
sweat. God only knows girls need correcting,
the women think to themselves, and one like me
would soak up their beatings like air until their
hands became sore. *I thank God you are not my
daughter*, the women sing praises bowing servile
at the foot of their beds, because there must be
something wrong with girls like me, some feral
gene spreading mutant in all my cells that makes
boys look at me and think *prey*, that turns sweet
sons into rapists. The women kiss the heads of
their own daughters, mute and turtlenecked and
heads ducked, and thank God their girls were not
born temptresses. they know what it means to be
the *yes girl*, the ever-smiling wife. *I thank God you
are not my mother*, I tell them. I shirk the blame
from my crimeless shoulders, shed the shame like
ill-fitting burn wounds. I eat their disgust like a
fish hook embedded in my tongue.

Wanda’s Commentary on “I thank god you are not my daughter”:

"I thank god you are not my daughter" was a very painful piece to write. In middle and high school, I was slut shamed incessantly. Slut shaming in general is so incredibly harmful, but it was even more so for me because none of the things people said about me were true. I don't think there's anything wrong with safe, consensual sexual activity, but the problem was, I never performed any of it. I was an eighth grader being slut shamed when I had only ever held a boy's hand before. In fact, a vast majority of the sexual encounters I later had were not consensual at all. An image of me was crafted based on wild rumors others spread or the way I dressed.

Sometimes it was peers doing the talking, and other times, it was adults. My eighth grade teacher and the mother of my high school boyfriend would directly ridicule or harass me. Most often I would see the mothers of my classmates giving me a *look*, like "I know who you are." It was a mixture of disgust and pity and "thank god you're not my kid," like they could pat themselves on the back for raising *good girls*. I spent much of high school feeling like there had to be something wrong with me because the reputation never went away, only followed. I reasoned that, even though I knew who I was and what I did, there must be some truth to the rumors if so many people were saying them. This poem comes from a chapbook about my experiences throughout girlhood and puberty. I wrote a poem for my eighth grade teacher, as well as one for my high school boyfriend's mother, so now this is the one for all the mothers who gave me that look. Part of it was me taking on the persona of these mothers and how I perceived they'd be thinking. Another part of the poem is me renouncing that reputation, and the guilt and shame that came with it. It's me saying, "If you're going to look at me in such a dehumanizing way, I sure as hell wouldn't want you as a parent either."

EIC Christine Taylor's Commentary on "I thank god you are not my daughter":

Wanda's poem resonated with me immediately because I've been the object of mothers' scorn because of my race and because I'm a heavily tattooed and pierced person. People buy into and perpetuate gross stereotypes, and I've been labeled as "dangerous" when I'm really just a book nerd and cat lover. I shared Wanda's poem (anonymously) with a group of students at school who love poetry, and the poem also resonated with them and sparked a discussion about how they feel like they're constantly trying to push back against negative labels. They spoke of the exhaustion of trying to maintain their reputations and the fear that they feel graduating into a world where women are not safe.

[[Approaches Me in A Coffee Shop Asking "why did you leave?"](#) by Marlin Figgins

I'm sickly & no one knows
I'm silent & this is expected
I'm expected & rooms drop to mute—

windows close at my passing & I'm standing
before you taking blame for what
you did to me for my silence & wind
dull enough to take a finger & we're

in public now I cannot yell out without
causing a scene without my scream
leaving my body a whistle without my
body becoming convenience to yours again

*what do you mean
no one knows why?*

I'm silent the wind is dull yet I'm fingerless
 before you

we're in public & I'm still sickly having drawn
enough suspicion of the flu to warrant—

pity? what more?

prayer from strangers an offer of a live chicken
the means to kill myself to kill the chicken
silk handkerchiefs to wipe our blood
butane lighter knife & glove & mask & cough

how does this make you feel?

& so I take & take have killed slaughtered
& burned my hands clean & I'm too sick
to say it I'm in public
armed & drowned in the objects
the words needed to say

[stay silent as I & remember] to cough
 & continue *[you touched me once*
 in a night still

I was sent into motion & became windless
 as the night itself]

“Muscle Memory” by Kristin Garth

is why a housewife in grocery stores
is teleported off flecked, waxed tile floors by
Behind The Wheel. A heel and arch divorced
from time and place will lengthen, linger. Shy
eyelids, escape propelled by hips. Old men
lose grips on potato chips, an audience
by accident, without a dollar, spent
or seen, a stripper walk with shopping list,
suburban routines. Twirl in tennis skirt
with pleats to some synthesized familiar
Depeche Mode beats evocative — perverts
neon lights. Decade lemonade demure,
a strip club soundtrack may erase today.

She doesn't need their cash. She wants to play.

“The Ways Our Languages Reveal Difference” by Marilee Goad

In the kitchen, I swivel my \neg into a g and say
let's make gimhap, which your friend might
call sushi, which is and is not an accurate
descriptor; the way I can never pick apart your
 \equiv — r and l , each the beginning and end of the
other unbuckling into *right* and *light* sounding
the same but not quite the same; the way you
always ask me twice if I mean *roses* or *loses*,
each a flower dying between tongues that will
never capture meaning like the pictures you take
with eyes that do and do not speak the same
language — we forget that even the art of visual
interpretation arrives a product of country and
culture, twin signs in the same constellation
demanding we employ visual clues on which we
agree and then disagree — the way you say
you want *pizza* but I hear something like *pija* —
I capture your mouth in the middle of a vowel
my native tongue never produces, its heavy
awkward hand the fist that mangles sounds
into words neither of us can recognize —
the way *I love you* never sounds quite right unless
we say it three times in the language we heard
in the womb, so distant and different — the same.

“Feedback Loops” by Bára Hladíková

The first section starts
with the aim to correct the research findings

workers in different professions
that measure abilities in
position of body and limbs perceived
now distinctly limited
'good' abilities

as they approach their
patterns generating from
time on the computer

does it reveal the reason why

you have specific
underlying irrational beliefs
with the understanding of a normal
degree of competence

do people really have a choice
in the atmosphere of the actual performance level
once they are beyond the kitchen door;
they must learn to cope with the
philosophies about living

even if you read the words
concepts can be expressed through the
parasthesis and shooting pain
and that of catching a moving object

until they finally
in the development of it all
actually experience ecstasy
I am alive. My goodness

“My best work is often maintenance” by Elisabeth Horan

I stand and stare
at your naked back
for the wrong reasons

it is an escape I long
to splash face first into
---knots, barriers
chinks in the armor
---ribs encircle the organs,
I wonder if I
imagine it harder,

I could plunge in my hand
and feel the lust for peace,
and quiet --- the passion for heat
upon my limp and dull fingers
--- if I pressed my chest into your chest

would it thump me a code,

a drum beat to signify
I'll love you
if I survive
and not implode
here and now

with your lips on my lips;
our foreheads touch and
I suck out the bad drips;
one by one ravens fly
out of your ears,

they love me, I set them free ---
I give you my tongue to play with,
to distract you
from my work;

now the jelly flows out
of your ears
now inert, it's lifeless
--- her evil hold on you

relinquished

you shan't feel badly again today.
Your mother always loved
you. The hand? it never touched you.

Your brother made it
safely to shore, swam
all the way, I watched him stroke. God
holds out his palm, and you jump
on board

---my work is done
for today. Tomorrow
I'll be back again; find you
hunched

and seething
in a doorway, and I'll suck
out the devil

once more.

“The Patron Saint of People Who Have Never Seen the Ocean” by Justin Karcher

boys wearing suits three sizes too large
always looking like they just got back from a forced funeral
they're huffing canned air in Denny's parking lots
the sudden euphoria is better than sex
it makes them giggle and they say things like, “United States of Aerosol”
it's always somebody's birthday, so they buy birthday candles from a nearby truck stop
they also buy DVDs of Marvel movies
they go to the woods
they cut open each other's stomachs
they slide in the DVDs and act out from memory what it means to be a hero
some pass out, the ones left standing light up the birthday candles
they say things like, “In Heaven, we feed each other”
they jam the birthday candles down each other's throats
they burst into thousands of fire ants crawling through the dirt for the rest of time

there are all kinds of courage though
single moms steal sunburnt hearses under the cover of darkness
they drive nonstop through a history of violence, into the depths of the sea
where they sing songs about exhaling all bad climates in their lungs
toolsheds and tumors passed down from generation to generation
they say things like, “Dreams from our fathers, but not for us”
they want a better life for their kids, they know when it's time to let go

the ones left behind say things like, “They'll come back, they always do”
so they set up inflatable pools on train tracks, fill them up with dollar store Pepto-Bismol
they say things like, “This is the ocean, this will make us feel better about everything”
they sit cross-legged in the inflatable pools trying to wash the dirt away
when the train approaches, they say things like, “This is drowning, the crunching of bones”

most Americans have never seen the ocean
killer whales singin' in the rain, deaf girls jumping off lighthouses
shipwrecks full of treasure, drunk pirates with scissors for hands
making the most beautiful dresses in the world, oh moonlight on the beach
this is how short life really is, blessed are the people who choose to leave
they say things like, “We're not the same people we used to be”

most of us don't let courage take the wheel for the whole trip
most of us stay put wherever we are
hang up punching bags from trees in cemeteries
because we know that when the dead wake up
they're either hungry or angry and it's easier on us if they punch something

“Salam. I Am Sorry for Yesterday” by Akif Kichloo

If I say I am sorry for yesterday, which yesterday am I referring to. Anxiety mimes hysteria, hysteria mimes past tragedies, and you become a ghost. A sick imposter. Hiding. Scaring everybody back to innocence. *Can you call it trauma if you can't show the scars?* You learn to say your Namaste's, fold your hands in gratitude, write your thank you's with sparkling brilliance, and apologize. Repeatedly apologize.

Salam.

I am sorry for yesterday.

Allah Hafiz.

When Prophet Mohammad was kicked out of Mecca, he made a kingdom on its outskirts, called it *al-Madīnah*, called it *the city*, called it *home*. My mother pushed me out at 10:30 p.m., on a hot, humid, summer day, on a government paid hospital bed, and she swears I didn't stop crying for two full days. It was horrifying. Sometimes what is too much for someone looks small. A mother carries a crying child, an ant carries a grain of sugar. A child carries love.

Salam.

Every time a chromosome replicates, some genes are lost at its tail. That's how we age. When I was *five* all the boys in my class were first hooked to sugar, then to *attaboy's* from their dads. Yesterday, when I asked my Dad for forgiveness, I saw an *attaboy* in his hands.

Papa, I am sorry for yesterday.

How do you carry an invisible weight. How do you live standing on the edge of a blade. God created earth in 6 days and had to rest on

the 7th. The last time I had a good night's sleep was when my mother carried me tied to her back.
What else is there to remember.

Allah Hafiz.

“Self-Portrait as Wave” by Robert Okaji

Feeling limited, I succumb to surge,
disperse, reassemble, return
in the calming swirl. Nothing
resembles me. I relinquish this piece,
retain that, and reinforced,
reside in the whorl, swollen,
winnowed to a point and capped,
roar and rumble, shredded,
whole yet apart, a solitary
fist crashing through another
watery torso in response, in
resonance, again, again.

“Testimony” by Bola Opaleke

to follow your light
i grow new eyes on my hands.
i begin where your breast houses my dreams.

as a baby, mom said, i never cry because i always had a suckle in my mouth.

as a man, i always cry
to have a suckle in my mouth;
to follow your light

opening up my body without closing yours, without shattering the windshield

in-between your thighs
subtle as a cheeseburger,
stainlessly white as milk.

you said you have seen pebbles thrown into your river, i said i'll plant a new tree

therein. my heart is a country
that would never cease to burn

for you. the white smoke & the black ashes

scrambling to unmake your hummingbird nipples clot upon my glistened tongue.

“Talkin’ Back”

From EIC Christine Taylor: When I was a kid, my mom would often say to me, "That mouth is gonna get you in trouble." Well, I ain't scared of trouble, and some things just need to be said! I'm not the only one: as we near the end of football season, Sarah Stockton reminds us of the rampant occurrences of domestic violence perpetrated by players that get covered up by money and fame.

“Damage Control” by Sarah Stockton

Pigskin won't bruise and tackle dummies
are more compliant but it's game on woman,
he's jacked up and ready to start/
when he moves on her like a wall of steel defenders
and special teamers, she recognizes the trap
but he's blanketed by fame so he takes his shot/
breaking free he's raging toward the red zone
her voice a broken whistle shrieking
in his headset/ he moves the chains
that bind him by slamming into his target
for the highlight reel cameras cut to/
the bros in the control booth as they nod and agree-
she shoulda called a timeout cause
it doesn't take a play-by-play to explain
the outcome of this call but there's confusion
on the field and in the stands
so let me break it down lady
he made a rookie mistake, c'mon coach, waive
the penalty/ we've got a schedule to keep
hey ref re-set the clock, play on
here in the home of the brave.

Sarah's Commentary on “Damage Control”:

I watched football games on TV as a young girl so I could hang out with my grandfather, and now I'm more of a fan of the game than most people I know. The NFL mirrors our country in many ways, both good and bad. My disillusionment with the sport increases every year, for many reasons: CTE; the blackballing of Colin Kaepernick; the militaristic patriotism; rampant homophobia, sexism, and racism, for starters. As a domestic violence survivor, I'm appalled by

how off-the-field domestic violence is still treated as a shrugged-away consequence of violent men engaged in a violent sport, even after the Ray Rice tape emerged, which was supposed to be "a game-changer". Writing *Damage Control* didn't solve my moral dilemma of loving football while hating the NFL, but it did help me grapple with my denial.

Poet Biographies

Ray Ball, PhD, is a history professor, literary journal editor, and writer who lives in Alaska. She is the author of two history books. Her creative work has recently appeared in *Coffin Bell*, *Ellipsis Zine*, *Moria*, and *UCity Review* and has been nominated for Best of the Net and Pushcart. You can find her in the classroom, the archives, or on Twitter @ProfessorBall

Jane Murray Bird studied creative writing with the Open University in Scotland, gaining a First Class Honours degree. Her work has appeared in magazines including *Magma*, *Mslexia*, *Under the Radar*, *Poets Republic* and *Freak Circus*. She lives in Edinburgh and is equal parts flâneuse and garden hermit.

Wanda Deglane (she/her) is a Capricorn from Arizona. She is the daughter of Peruvian immigrants and attends Arizona State University. Her poetry has been published or forthcoming from *Rust + Moth*, *Glass Poetry*, *L'Ephemere Review*, and *Former Cactus*, among other lovely places. Wanda is the author of *Rainlily* (2018), *Lady Saturn* (Rhythm & Bones, 2019), and *Venus in Bloom* (Porkbelly Press, 2019). Find her on Twitter: @wandalizabeth

Marlin Figgins (he/him/his) is a Midwesterner, writer, math nerd, cat lover and college student. His work has appeared in or is forthcoming in *The Shallow Ends*, *Cotton Xenomorph*, *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, and *Frontier Poetry!*

Kristin Garth is a Pushcart & Best of the Net nominated sonnet stalker. Her poetry has stalked magazines like *Glass*, *Yes*, *Five:2: One*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Former Cactus*, *Occulum*, *Luna Luna*, & many more. She has a chapbook *Pink Plastic House* (Maverick Duck Press), three forthcoming: *Pensacola Girls* (Bone & Ink Press, Sept 2018) and *Shakespeare for Sociopaths* (The Hedgehog Poetry Press Jan 2019), *Puritan U* (Rhythm & Bones Lit March 2019). Her full length, *Candy Cigarette*, is forthcoming April 2019 (The Hedgehog Poetry Press). Follow her on Twitter: (@lolaandjolie), her weekly poetry column (<https://www.rhythmnbone.com/sonnetarium>) and her website (<http://kristingarh.wordpress.com/>).

Marilee Goad is a queer writer residing in South Korea. She has work published or forthcoming in *Ghost City Review*, *ELJ*, *Barrelhouse*, *Yes Poetry*, and *Homology Lit*, amongst others. You can follow her on twitter @_gracilis and find her website at marileethepoet.tumblr.com.

Elisabeth Horan is an imperfect creature from Vermont advocating for animals, children and those suffering alone and in pain - especially those ostracized by disability and mental illness.

She is Poetry Editor for *Anti-Heroine Chic Magazine* and one half of Animal Heart Press.
@ehoranpoet / ehoranpoet.com

Bola and Elisabeth have teamed up to create a chapbook together "The Shape of (Wo) man", forthcoming in 2019 from *Flypaper Magazine*. These poems are from that collaboration. They hope you enjoy this preview of the dynamite... <3

Bára Hladíková is an artist and writer based in Montréal. Her work can be found in *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *Seafoam Mag*, *Rose Quartz Mag*, *Charcuterie*, and elsewhere. Her book *Behind the Curtain* was recently published by Publication Studio. You can tweet her @baroslavka

Justin Karcher is a Pushcart-nominated poet and playwright born and raised in Buffalo, New York. He is the author of *Tailgating at the Gates of Hell* (Ghost City Press, 2015), the chapbook *When Severed Ears Sing You Songs* (CWP Collective Press, 2017), the micro-chapbook *Just Because You've Been Hospitalized for Depression Doesn't Mean You're Kanye West* (Ghost City Press, 2017), *Those Who Favor Fire, Those Who Pray to Fire* (EMP, 2018) with Ben Brindise, and *Bernie Sanders Broke My Heart and I Turned into an Iceberg* (Ghost City Press, 2018). He is also the editor of *Ghost City Review* and co-editor of the anthology *My Next Heart: New Buffalo Poetry* (BlazeVOX [books], 2017). He tweets @Justin_Karcher.

Akif Kichloo is a poet of Indian origin currently alternating residence between Saginaw, Michigan (USA) and Kashmir, J & K (India). With a bachelor's degree in Medicine and Surgery, he has been eating shoelaces for the past year because he gave up everything to write poetry. Currently signed with Andrews Mcmeel Publishing for his book of poems *Falling Through Love* (Fall 2019). Find him on Facebook/Instagram/Twitter/Tumblr/Pinterest : @akifkichloo
<http://akifkichloo.com/>

The author of five chapbook collections, three micro-chapbooks and a mini-digital chapbook, Robert Okaji lives in the Texas hill country, where he occasionally works on a ranch. His work has also appeared in such publications as *MockingHeart Review*, *Crannóg*, *Reservoir*, *Vox Populi*, *Eclectica*, *Boston Review*, *Panoply*, *Oxidant|Engine* and elsewhere.

Bola Opaleke is a Pushcart Prize-nominated poet. His poems have appeared — or are forthcoming — in, among others, *Frontier Poetry*, *Rising Phoenix Review*, *Writers Resist*, *Rattle*, *Cleaver*, *One*, *The Nottingham Review*, *The Puritan*, *The Literary Review of Canada*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Dissident Voice*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *The Indianapolis Review*, *Canadian Literature*, *Empty Mirror*, *Poetry Pacific*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Temz Review*, *St. Peters College Anthology* (University of Saskatchewan), *Pastiche Magazine*, and others. He holds a degree in City Planning and lives in Winnipeg MB. Further information about his life and work can be found [here](#).

Bola and Elisabeth have teamed up to create a chapbook together "The Shape of (Wo) man", forthcoming in 2019 from *Flypaper Magazine*. These poems are from that collaboration. They hope you enjoy this preview of the dynamite.

Sarah Stockton is a poet and editor. She lives between the Olympic Mountains and the Salish Sea, in the Pacific Northwest. Tweets and Insta @sarahpoetica

©January 2019 *Kissing Dynamite: A Journal of Poetry*
All rights reserved.