

KISSING DYNAMITE: A JOURNAL OF POETRY

ISSUE 24 DECEMBER 2020: "SHIFTING SANDS"

Welcome to Issue 24 "Shifting Sands," which is probably best described in one word—grit.

This month's featured poet is Gustavo Barahona-López.

Issue 24 includes work by Gustavo Barahona-López, Moni Brar, Lynn Finger, Luciana Francis, Vera Hadzic, SG Huerta, Naomi Ling, James O'Leary, Karyn Peyton, Sandra Rivers-Gill, Richard Spilman, and Kate Sweeney. And Jess Blackledge is featured in "Resilience" to make it a baker's dozen.

Finally, we're thrilled to announce our Pushcart Prize nominees for 2021! Join us down below for "The After Party" and revisit the stellar work of these six poets: JK Anowe, Janet Dale, Paula Willie-Okafor, Haneefah Bello, Collin McFadyen, and Elane Kim.

Featured Artist—[Laura Minning](#)

Laura Minning began writing creatively at the tender age of nine. Her first poem was published by her Alma-matter in 1989, and her second received an Editor's Choice Award by the National Library of Poetry in 1993. Laura's work has been featured both in hard copy and on-line, via publications like "Literature Today", "Amulet" and "Stanzaic Stylings".

Laura received her first International Merritt of Poetry Award in 1995 and her second in 1998. Both were presented to her by the National Library of Poetry. Her outstanding achievements in poetry were internationally recognized again in 2005 by Poetry.com, who was kind enough to bestow the title of International Poet of the Year on to her.

Laura's first collection of poetry, "dear diary" was published by Vantage Press in 2003. Her second book, "sunburst" was published by Xlibris a year and a half later.

Laura's artistic accomplishments have been equally impressive. She's been creating and exhibiting abstract work since 2013. Her pieces have been displayed at venues like the Iowa Children's Museum, the Trenton Free Public Library and Barcode. Her artwork, as well as her original photography, has also obtained publication status both in hard copy and on-line.

The Barcode exhibit was held in 2016. It featured thirty-six pieces of Laura's original abstract artwork. Four of those pieces were sold over the course of the exhibition's opening weekend, and the entire event was sponsored by Bacardi.

In 2018, Laura produced a chapbook, entitled "fusion", which featured photographic images of her artwork.

As a person with legal blindness, Laura hopes to inspire other creative people with disabilities to never allow anything to hinder them from reaching for the stars and accomplishing their dreams. If you were to ask her about her creative successes, she would tell you that the difficult is but the work of the moment, and the impossible takes a little longer.

For more information about Laura and her work, please feel free to log onto her web-site at <https://brcartandpoetry.wordpress.com>.

"Self portrait as Blank Name Tag" by Gustavo Barahona-López, December's Featured Poet

I do not question why my classmates
are standing around my bed
wearing jeans and t-shirts
by designers I do not know.
My soccer team runs by but
I feel it would be improper to join them
given I have no cleats on.
Instead, since no one seems phased
by the fact I am in my flannel pajamas,
I contort my body to make myself
seem as at ease as they are.
A girl from my advising group
comes up to me and asks
for me to say my full name.
Gustavo Adolfo López Hernandez,
I deliver, not bothering to anglicize shit.
With a satisfied giggle she turns and walks
away from me. I see a guy from my Calculus class
and remember I owe him a dollar I used
to buy a Coke. Panicked, I reach for
my non-existent pockets.
My mother once told me,
Always pay your debts promptly.
My mother often told me,

California was stolen from México in 1848.
Who then is the debtor?
My head begins to hang. I can no longer
keep my eyes from shutting out their faces.
I wrap myself in my golden eagle-clad blanket,
its talons facing outwards.

Gustavo's Commentary on "Self Portrait as Blank Name Tag":

While part of the of the reason I love reading is the magic that occurs between the writer's intent and the reader's experiences, I often find myself searching for the context in which a piece is created.

I wrote "Self portrait as blank name tag" in a workshop with Rosebud Ben-Oni centered on self portraits. For this poem I thought back to my high school self. I attended a predominantly white independent high school on a scholarship. My Mexican immigrant parents' entire yearly income would have barely covered the cost of tuition. While my classmates were well meaning, there were vast class, racial, and cultural divides between us that made it difficult for me to feel like I belonged. What kept me grounded during that time were the stories and histories my parents told me. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, their own migration journeys, among so many others. They reminded me to be proud of my Mexican American identity and that I was at that institution for a reason.

Editor-in-Chief Christine Taylor's Commentary on "Self Portrait as Blank Name Tag":

I felt hooked by Gustavo's poem from the first line and found myself immediately empathizing with the speaker. At the end of the poem, when the "talons [are] facing outwards," I was cheering out loud. That final image is one of fight, strength, freedom, and reclamation all rolled into one. And equally complex is the title of the piece: at first the "blank name tag" to me signaled a sense of a challenged identity, but really the poem speaks to the fact that there is an opportunity for creation, such as a blank canvas presents to the artist.

["Questions for the Bears" by Moni Brar](#)

did you stand at the forest's edge?
noiseless in the damp of pine and ether,
sweet warmth of hibernation lingering
thick on your black fur and tongue.

did you watch us with your marble eyes?
as we invaded your domain,
scrambled over mounds of garbage

to scavenge for small things,
precious only to us.

did you circle my father?
his young body bent
as he pushed aside
broken TVs, record players, highchairs
and his imported pride.

did you gape at my sister?
as she rummaged for a purse
with a clasp, silk lining intact,
her beautiful brown fingers running
along the seams that held it all together.

did you see me digging?
through soiled rags for a doll
with all four limbs attached,
blonde hair begging
to be washed.

did you smell the fear?
rich as rot in my brother,
a jangle of sharp elbows and knees
among smooth bags bursting
with the rinds of other people's lives.

did you sense the rage?
that filled the crack that became a chasm
between my mother's brows
as she searched the decay for things
to fill a new life in an empty trailer.

did you taste the shame?
the shame we were digging through,
always digging through,
ripe and nourished
and always on our lips.

["Loss is a magician's trick" by Lynn Finger](#)

with a dove in the silk sleeve. We're the hidden,

the breather of lies, this thin purpose saves me

from confession & judgement. It's all back lit,
staged flimsy as an eyelid flutter. It is my turn

to crack this open. You're gone and the dove
with you. I planted bulbs this fall, their red petal

fingers reach from soil. I am singed by the fire
of their want, their unsparing sway towards sun.

The petals are water cups for sparrows. You can
steal meaning but it still needs to dream. As kids

we played together on the monkey bars & dug caves
in the silted dirt behind the house, you a savior of ants.

We squinted into the wind as certain as sea pirates, your
laugh carried anything. The petals flame, reach up, twine

the sky. In the sycamore over us, we hear the hollow
call of a dove. Why does memory revert to this, when
I think of them removing you from life support.

“Exiles” by Luciana Francis

The past is a foreign country.

- L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between*

A magpie hops on a vacant parking slot
By the cemetery where birds perch amongst prayers.

My chest tight like the sky, riddled with clouds -
My father was born far away from where he's buried.

At the post office, letters to Malta -
Woman wears bright yellow parka over her sari.

Our child fluent in one single language -
I do not wish for him to inherit my exile.

They got it wrong again, the weather forecast.

The sun bright in spite of its foreign accent.

This was never about going back where I came from,
This is a deep pang calling out for Pangea.

Without allies we are islands -
I need your warm hands to ward off the morning frost.

“Your Name on My Tongue” by Vera Hadzic

The sound of your name on my tongue
Is sweet and secret and swollen with
The crackling of syllables; between each
Letter is a gulf of memory, snippets of
The past clinging to every stray dot on
Your *i*'s, to every loose curl of your *y*'s;
When my saliva sloshes against the nooks,
The hidden creases of your name, it rushes
Over the supple filmy shimmery webs of the
Future; I imagine all the times your name
Will make a home in my mouth and how
I will say it differently each time; the lines
And the curves and the secret tremors of
Your name will crawl over patches of eternity
Like moss and your name will grow against the
Branches of time like snake-green vines
Winding around a garden trellis and
Wind-pale flowers will sprout in the valleys of
Its vowels but for now it's enough for
Only me to say it, over and over again.

“When everything died,” by SG Huerta

I grew painfully aware of my suicide
awareness tattoo. A bug flew into
my coffee while I stared at my wrist
and my cat stole my spot on the couch.

A week ago, I was writing odes to dead
cockroaches, and now this. Dead dad.
I have to get back to work, but the bug
is floating around in my coffee and I

have Facebook comments to respond to.
I've never felt more loved, except
when my dad overdosed two summers
ago. We almost lost him. Now we did.

Facebook keeps showing me adverts
for the American Foundation for
Suicide Prevention. I'm starting to
wonder if that fly purposely drowned

himself. Here I am going on about
dead bugs again. Not you, too, bug.
Not me, too. So many songs on my
playlist mention suicide. I can't stop

mentioning suicide. The word begins
to look funny, the letters blending
together, the "u" running into the "i."
The word just won't make sense.

["self-portrait as unborn chinese girl" by Naomi Ling](#)

—tw: death, historical events, blood

Here, I am the womb of my own mother. consider
how it began—the wailing that cleaved our
girlhood, milky dissection. umbilical cord

cut. our limbs, pried from liquid decay, veiny
diaspora. how honest. I remember hands
breaking into the marrow of my throat. how

they killed something else, too—I didn't know
what. our tongues, sluiced and preserved in a little
red book. tell me how this ends, mother, how

we assumed the form of discarded angels, glassy
eyes puckered up at a cloudless sky. porcelain
wrists. a faceless man, arranging our bodies with

a chokehold of lust. there is no fairytale here.

I've always wanted to end quietly—how desperate
it seemed to leech the blood from your body, a cry

for attention like a righteous knife to motherland. yes,
to end like this, pink ribbons discarded
at the browbone of upturned soil. perhaps someone

will utter an elegy. in these last moments, I fist a happy
ending—see, a girl heading to the market
with rosy cheeks and ebony hips. *she is alive*. I laugh and

laugh in envy. oh, how I've always wanted to end like a
bird—a softened bullet, a trembling powerline, and then
a million feathers, carrying my body to the north star.

“Waiting” by James O’Leary

Atop soft, clean sheets
a pill bug crawls across what is to it an endless expanse of gray.
My skin itches. My prescriptions are overdue. I lie ashamed
a blanket over my head, teddy bears tossed

to the floor. I am terrified of touch
even by a being so small
I could bite it, crunch, swallow,
& my teeth could still shine white & clean.

As I wait for my wife to return from the city, I shake
nervous, bruised by the weight of the outside light
angled in through the shell of the afternoon.
Too soon, I say as I wait to kill the bug.

Too soon, the bug hesitates before my hairy leg.
The violence sitting between us wrinkles, then folds
to hope. What use am I except to stand up
with a plastic cup, a sheet of paper, slide one under the other

& carry the rolly polly outside
to the sweet shimmering stalks of summer grass?
& when a wasp wipes it into the sky
like a buzzing yellow scythe

what choice do I have but to go back inside
& grab the sheets to press them clean

“Dad” by Karyn Peyton

I told my 92-year-old landlady that
My heat was up too high and she kept me down there for an hour just talking to me
About life and death and aging and race and church
And human things lady across the alley with too many cats
Man upstairs who blaes at his mother on national holidays like a forlorn
Foghorn Ooo he is noisy smoking on the landing she said
And he’s always coming in here with his face all beat up
Like he’s been with the wrong crowd if you know what I mean she giggled
She hugged me like a bear and I love you you bring me joy
I see you changing My baby My brother died recently she admitted
How she missed barbecues on the back porch six homes in this house
And nobody says hello or grills steaks anymore

Do generations regenerate does growing up grow you out of yourself
Does it take your passions and mature you and cure you
So you can write it for once by a black lamp
On a legal pad I miss you Dad

“In the Throat of a Tree” by Sandra Rivers-Gill

After a line in Rachel Eliza Griffiths’ poem “Whipping Tree”

If given in small doses
death will weigh down the throat.

Drowning is tied to a shoulder blade
of gravity. Wait. Hate is as heavy as a fan,

as widespread as contagion is furious.
Heat is compressed until something snaps.

In certain trees there are tangled knots.
The furcula can no longer be wished upon.

Luminous stars are what I dream beneath.
The map of my interior landscape is an emergency.

A response is an urgent call to escape.
Eager hands are hidden wagers in abet.

Barbed wire is the accomplice to a bullet
as a bluesy sidewalk is to scat.

If given in just, harmless doses
air will weigh in on its own existence.

Felled trees are premeditated.
The evidence is a burning forest.

Embers scatter to the wind of jive.
The sound of timber is in different ears.

A mother knows the grave of her child's cry.
It sounds like a dose of less wait.

Until she mourns the loss of lullabies
she will cradle the song of every breached tree.

["The Horror" by Richard Spilman](#)

There are times in every horror flick
when the inklings become real,

when ordered domesticity yields
to the rattle in the wall, the man

in the shadows, masked and armed
with instruments of torture,

when things long dead impale
whatever has replaced them

and every break from conformity
meets the saw or the cleaver.

We should be prepared then
for this new misadventure,

when the savior in his decaying
boat brings us to the heart

of darkness, to the charlatan
who knows that shrunken heads

offer the completest sacrifice.
For in the empire of avarice

you need a boatload of cannibals
to bring home the rotting corpse

of the old century, a charlatan
blaming all he came to exploit

for the sickness, the fever,
the hunger he cannot control.

[“August in Scituate” by Kate Sweeney](#)

That summer you hauled oranges and drove a white truck,
the kind with a single cab and flatbed
where the seat goes straight across the middle.
The kind that the sun heats so hot, when you took a corner,
I’d slide across the sticky humid leather
and land beside you.
leg to leg.

Several oranges always fell on the road
split open and bruised,
but you never seemed to notice.

The same summer,
you let that guy stand over me
in the bathtub, watching,
while I shaved my legs for the
very first time. He kept his
hands in his pockets, and his
crisp white shirt buttoned, this time.

The laughter looping;
you, laid out on the bed,

you, smoking a joint,
you, waiting for him to finish.
and he, slowly dragging a
finger down your thigh
to the arch of your foot.

“Resilience”

In her poem "Gene Kelly," **Jess Blackledge** explores the contrasts of optimism and dreariness and the perseverance to just get through it all.

“Gene Kelly” by Jess Blackledge

The rain outside is hammering
on the tin roof

We wade, knee deep
through the backstreets of Siem Reap
a street lamp flickers
illuminating
the stale smell from the stagnant river
the neighbors sweeping the water
from their sodden floorboards.

I wish I was Gene Kelly
Synergy of the elements
no excess
like the perfectly in-sync routine
with Garland in *Golden Days*

Dark clouds roll in
headlights of our moto barely visible
we make our way through the mud tracks
of the Cambodian dirt road
still we go *with a happy refrain*

The man across the street helps when
the bamboo shutters on my window blow off
like Kelly
boosting the moral of WW2 soldiers
with his mop-mannikin in *Thousand Cheer*

And how much effort does it take
to create those effortless
soft shoe-ins
heart beating arrhythmically along with
his feet
my saturated clothes and
That Black Umbrella wouldn't help me now

Make no apologies
for the seamless cincinnati's and shuffle-hops
that mock the Hollywood Dream.
And was it water, or the rumored gallons of milk?
Either way, strive to *Make 'Em Laugh*
because what else to do?

So, dim the lights of Broadway
in his honor
and patiently wait for electricity
to return to town
solder some steel to your soles
as the fade-out of the music ends with
the calm of devastation
after the storm.

Jess's Commentary on "Gene Kelly":

I wrote this poem in 2019, whilst I was living in Cambodia. The rainy season in SE Asia can be a wonderful, refreshing time after months of exhausting, relentless heat. The farmers rejoice when the rains finally come and everyone's mood lifts a little. On the other hand, rainy season can be devastating. It can destroy homes, streets and lives but somehow, everyone just gets on with it.

I have always loved rain, but being from the UK, our rain is usually cold, drizzly, and accompanied with some biting wind and bitter complaining. In South East Asia the rains are warm, reviving, and tend to invigorate everyone.

Being a huge fan of old Hollywood (think Streisand, Garland, Monroe) the rain always reminds me of *Singin' in the Rain*, one of my all-time favorite musicals. I encourage you to hum it if you happen to have to do a damp and misty commute, tends to cheer up even the most miserable of souls.

In this poem I wanted to combine 3 of my greatest loves: rainy days, old Hollywood, and the Kingdom of Cambodia. The relentless optimism of Gene Kelly, seemingly in all his roles alongside the resilience of a country not averse to devastation.

The biggest and most beautiful takeaway I have from living in Cambodia is that life just goes on, regardless of hurdles. In 2020, this seems even more poignant than ever.

[“The After Party” —Our Pushcart Prize Nominees](#)

We are honored to have the opportunity to nominate the following six poets for the 2021 Pushcart Prize! Revisit their incredible work from our 2020 issues.

“A Musical Malady” by JK Anowe, Issue 13

“It Breaks” by Janet Dale, Issue 16

“Before fire, her lips were not sunken” by Paula Willie-Okafor, Issue 20

“The man” by Haneefah Bello, Issue 22

“Sparrows and Starlings” by Collin McFadyen, Issue 22

“Chromatography” by Elane Kim, Issue 23

[“A Musical Malady” by JK Anowe](#)

my head sings of a departure of all reasoning an echo
a word inside every word ready to break out i fill a book
with the word *remember* to emphasize how badly i long
to remain within the confines of memory once i was
the boy who perceived humans to be the only beings
capable of memory now i return to the awe of being

grown-up to watch a nanny goat after a morning
of grazing return to breastfeed her young my mother
who lets her back in the pen forgets her own
spouse daydreams of shutting the door on his big toe
as much as I wait my father’s dust-feet at the threshold
every dream is a plot to return from the body this place
of unresting we packed for but do not remember

arriving at imagine a wall & on it a painting imagine
in the painting a field any field & at its centre a grand
piano with a finger nailed to its single key blood
-dripping the only possibility of sound go back
to that wall imagined are you there now do you see it isn’t
that memory a sickening we return to for its music

“(it breaks)” by Janet Dale

I.

it’s been exactly 56 days since your body was

~~next to~~
~~atop~~
against

inside my body

II.

women know these things

we have been charting our bodies for as long as we have had bodies:

menstrual / follicular
ovulation / luteal

III.

the moon passes through double the number of phases as a woman’s body:

new / waxing crescent
first quarter / waxing gibbous

full / waning gibbous
last quarter / waning crescent

IV.

that Friday night (which I didn’t know at the time would be the last time), we were so close we mimicked the sun & moon—together, above the horizon at the same time

New moon / 0% illumination
Luteal phase / Day 26

an unfertilized egg cell disintegrated, uterine lining was preparing to be shed

V.

this Friday night (did you know back then the last time would be the last time), the moon is orbiting the earth counterclockwise, moving away from the sun

Waxing crescent / 10% illumination
Follicular phase / Day 6

an egg cell has been stimulated to grow

VI.
the moon & the body

recycle ✓
continue ✓
move on ✓

but what does the heart do

“Before fire, her lips were not sunken” by Paula Willie-Okafor

(An ode to Leah Sharibu)

Come girl residue
womaned out thing
woven into a night perforated
Girl who learned unstitched blood & tears
& rust & the promise of sudden stillness
blackness & rust
the crust of lostness
teethed gentle

Do you sometimes wonder if you had
said the words halved your tongue
tasted (unnamable)
learned to arrange the broken pretty
Or did you know it took too long
piecing and the body knew its
grafted bits anyway the heft of them

Come girl & gather
Your mother does not leave you unsung
she kneads you into odes mangled

Sing prayers in contralto
sing amen amen

“The man” by Haneefah Bello

We found him in an embrace
with the ceiling,
body bent that way like a mutiny.

All is fair in love and war.
All was fair

when he washed ashore as a
seashell
bearing lacerations of a former
salty life.
A Jonah, whole again.

Inhaled enough seaweed in his gills
to buoy him into the sun.
That skin, until it caught fire
& all that was left was anthracite
stillness.

His body bleeds the sound of
fossils singing a dirge,
faint applause, tongue leaking
saltwater.

Cut him down, hush. Now,
a prayer.
Pay close attention to our lips
stumbling across overgrown
pikes.
We sound like dogs dying a blue death.

“Sparrows and Starlings” by Collin McFadyen

neighborhood regulars
a welcoming committee with something to prove
picking apart the untested hipster
his tattoos of sparrows and the St. Johns bridge
pretty and sharp, bright and clean

Where'd you go to school?
What street do you live on?
Where did you live before?

atop barstool perches, we sink our roots
in lengths of months or years,
not generations
our white faces smug when he explains
he's used to a "rough" neighborhood
this neighborhood hasn't been rough in years
not for us, anyway

we stumble North to the corner store,
faded 7up sign glowing like mist in the dark
window ads for Newport Menthols and Yerba Matte
mismatched offerings
us/them old/new black/white

like his parents, Charles likes to talk
from behind the cash register
family photos under the counter glass
graduations and babies
Black men in barber shops
ancestors

Where'd you go to school?
Where do you stay?
Where did you live before?

do we all feel a twist of shame?
standing in the beer cooler's spotlight
name-dropping places
knocked down and buried
under hipster bars and coffee shops
as we were moving in
like starlings into stolen nests.

"Chromatography" by Elane Kim

Never look for your reflection in the spine
of the city. You will find nothing but blood

in its sewers & rusted mouths in its graves.
A body measures how much it has bled
by how well it remembers the rupture. I can't
tell you how a body recovers, or what it buries
to forget. I can only show you the cracks
in my mother's hands: the way they have
cleaved into her skin & burrowed. This is how
the city whittles skin into skeleton under
the cover of smog. This is how you forget:
first a body, then its bones. Someday
you may realize that a mother's curved spine
is the home this city never gave you.
That you have been mistaking mirrors
for homes all this time. That your
mouth is waiting under bedrock, buried.

Poet Biographies

JK Anowe, Igbo-born poet and teacher, is author of the poetry chapbooks *The Ikemefuna Tributaries: a parable for paranoia* (Praxis Magazine Online, 2016) and *Sky Raining Fists* (Madhouse Press, 2019). He's a recipient of the inaugural *Brittle Paper* Award for Poetry in 2017, and a finalist for the 2019 *Gerard Kraak* Award. Recent works appear in *Glass Poetry*, *The Gerard Kraak Anthology 2019*, *The Shore*, *The Muse* (University of Nigeria's literary journal), *Agbowo*, *20.35 Africa: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, *Fresh Air Poetry*, and elsewhere. He's Poetry Chapbooks Editor for Praxis Magazine Online. He lives, teaches, and writes from somewhere in Nigeria.

Twitter: @JkAnowe

Gustavo Barahona-López (he/him) is a poet and educator from Richmond, California. In his writing, Barahona-López draws from his experience growing as the son of Mexican immigrants. His micro-chapbook 'Where Will the Children Play?' is part of the Ghost City Press 2020 Summer Series. A VONA alum, Barahona-López's work can be found or is forthcoming in *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, *The Acentos Review*, *Apogee Journal*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, among other publications.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TruthSinVerdad>

Website: <https://linktr.ee/gustavobarahonalopez>

Haneefah Bello (she/her) is a Nigerian poet who is currently obtaining a degree in law. Her works have appeared in *Nantygreens*, *Ripostes of Locked Down Voices* anthology and *Praxis Magazine*. She is @HaneefahBello on Twitter and @ha_neefahh on Instagram

Jess Blackledge is originally from Birmingham, UK but has spent the past 10 years in North and SouthEast Asia, most recently in Cambodia where she worked for the international creative writing organization Writing Through. Her work has been published in *Snakeskin Poetry Magazine*, the *Trouvaille Review*, and *Facemasks and Handgels: a Year of Living Covidly*. She enjoys drinking tea whilst unashamedly watching old Hollywood musicals.

IG: @jessieblackledge

FB: Jess Blackledge

Moni Brar is an uninvited settler who lives, writes and learns on unceded, unsundered territories of the Treaty 7 region and the Syilx of the Okanagan Nation. She is a Punjabi, Sikh Canadian writer exploring diasporan guilt, identity, cultural oppression, and intergenerational trauma. She believes in the possibility of personal and collective healing through literature and art. Her work appears in *PRISM international*, *Hart House Review*, *Existere*, *The Maynard*, *untethered*, *Hobart*, and other publications. She is a member of the Alexandra Writers' Centre Society, The League of Canadian Poets, and the editorial board of *New Forum Magazine*. She has worked in 13 countries and is grateful to call Canada home.

Although she claims Memphis as home, **Janet Dale** lives in southeast Georgia where she teaches first year writing at Georgia Southern University. Her work has appeared in *The Boiler*, *Hobart*, *Zone 3*, *Really System*, *Pine Hills Review*, and others. You can find her @THEsisterjanet on Twitter.

Lynn Finger's poetry has appeared in *Night Music Journal*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *8Poems*, *Perhappened*, *Daily Drunk*, and is forthcoming in *Twin Pies* and *Drunk Monkeys*. Lynn is an editor at *Harpy Hybrid Review* and works with a group that mentors writers in prison. Follow Lynn at @sweetfirefly2.

Luciana Francis (she/her) was born in the city of São Paulo, Brazil and has lived in the UK since 1998. She is an Anthropology & Media graduate from Goldsmiths University. Her writing explores themes such as identity, sense of place, estrangement and motherhood. Her poetry has appeared in issues of *Poetry Quarterly* and *Popshot Magazine*, amongst others. Over the years she has been a regular contributor to the online ekphrastic project "Visual Verse."

Vera Hadzic (she/her) is a writer from Ottawa, Ontario, currently studying English literature at the University of Ottawa. In the past, her work has been published in *Bywords.ca*, *Fever Dream*, and *Crow & Cross Keys*. She can be found on Twitter @HadzicVera.

SG Huerta (they/them) is a Chicana poet from Dallas. They are pursuing their MFA at Texas State University and currently live in Texas with their cat Lorca. They are the author of the chapbook *The Things We Bring with Us: Travel Poems* (Headmistress Press, 2021). Their work has appeared or is forthcoming in *perhappened mag*, *Serotonin Poetry*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *The Daily Drunk Mag*, and various other places. Find them on Twitter @sg_poetry

Elane Kim (she/her) is a high school student based in California. The editor-in-chief of *Gaia Lit*, she enjoys chemistry and rainy days. Her writing has been recognized by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, and can be found in *Rust + Moth* and *Vagabond City Lit*, among others. She is very happy to meet you!

Naomi Ling (she/her) is a Sino-American student on the East Coast, USA. The founding EIC of *Gossamer Lit*, she also serves on the editorial team of four other journals. Her works have been recognized nationally by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, *Sad Girls Lit*, and Top Ten Poetry and are forthcoming in *Eunoia Review*, *FEED*, *all guts no glory*, and elsewhere. She tweets unprofessionally @naomilingwrites.

Collin McFadyen (she/her/they/them) is a former owner/chef of a busy little diner, and the rhythm and patter of daily life influences their work. By focusing on the small moments around them, they're often lead to explore challenging topics, emotions, and the occasional bursts of humor and joy. They have been published at *Subjectiv* and *Tealight Press*. Happily, they live in North Portland with their wife, two sons, and a wicked cute terrier. Follow them on twitter @crayonsdontrun

James O'Leary (they/them) is a gender-fluid Pisces barista from Arizona. After spending some time up and down their home state, James has currently relocated to New York City, where they are pursuing an MFA at Sarah Lawrence College. James's most recent work has appeared in such places as *Frontier*, *Random Sample Review*, and *The Indianapolis Review*. James wants to share some coffee with you and talk about birds. You can find them on Twitter @thesundaypoet

Karyn Peyton (she/her) is a screenwriter and new poet living in Los Angeles, where she's held support staff roles in writers' rooms at AMC and Showtime Networks. She's been published in two anthologies from Z Publishing. Her humor writing has been featured in many-a-zine. She's also written an indie documentary series about police misconduct, worked with the Department of State to implement sustainability education programs in Lithuania, and made a guerilla-style documentary that severed a university's relationship with a psychiatric hospital. She loves cats, coffee, and well-worn chairs at the library. You can find her on Instagram at @karynp1.

Sandra Rivers-Gill is an Ohio native. She is a poet, writer, and playwright and performed her first one woman show in 2020. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Dissonance Magazine*, *POP UP Poetry*, *The Kerf*, *Of Rust and Glass*, *Common Threads*, *Flights*, and *Mock Turtle Zine* and has received numerous writing awards from Lourdes University Poetry Jam, Toledo Museum of Art Ekphrastic Writing, Toledo City Paper Ode to the Zip Code, and Promedica Revealing Hunger Spoken Word Competitions. In addition to her work as a panel judge for local poetry competitions, Sandra has served as a board member for Naomi Inc., and

poetry workshop facilitator for non-profit organizations in her community. She is the editor of “Dopeless Hope Fiends,” and is a recipient of the Toledo Arts Commission Accelerator Grant. Sandra is a Master of Liberal Studies candidate at the University of Toledo. More about the writer at sandrariversgill.com.

Richard Spilman was born and raised in Normal, Illinois, half a block from Main Street and on the banks of Sugar Creek. In some ways, he has never escaped. He is the author of *In the Night Speaking* and of a chapbook, *Suspension*. He is also the author of two books of short fiction, *Hot Fudge* and *The Estate Sale*.

Kate Sweeney (she/her) has poems in *Feral*, *SWWIMM Everyday*, *Adanna Literary Journal*, and *Littledeathlit*, and poems forthcoming from *Ethel Zine & The Shore Poetry*. She is Marketing Director for *The Adroit Journal* and currently resides in Los Angeles. Find her on Instagram @katerenaud and Twitter @imperfectthirst

Paula Willie-Okafor (she/her) is a student of the University of Nigeria. Her work has appeared in *Praxis Magazine* and *The Muse (A Journal of Critical and Creative Writing)*, Nsukka. She enjoys photography, comics, social commentary and hanging out with her sisters. She hopes to be a teacher.

©December 2020 *Kissing Dynamite: A Journal of Poetry*
ISSN: 2639-426X
All rights reserved.