

KISSING DYNAMITE: A JOURNAL OF POETRY

ISSUE 32 AUGUST 2021: "BURN"

Join our poets in Issue 32 "Burn," and, well, we'll let that characterization speak for itself.

This month's featured poet is Lillian Sickler.

Issue 32 includes work by Susan Barry-Schulz, Christtie Jay, Samantha Johnson, Koss, Tom Sepulveda, Lillian Sickler, Angelica Whitehorne, Mathew Yates, and Hafsa Zulfiqar.

Featured Artist—Linda Ravenswood

Linda Ravenswood BFA MA PhD abd (CalArts, 2007) is a poet and performance artist from Los Angeles. She is the founder and Editor in Chief of *The Los Angeles Press*. Established in 2018, find this exciting, new publishing house at www.thelosangelespress.com or on Instagram @thelosangelespress

"The Wong-Baker Faces Pain Rating Sonnet" by Susan Barry-Schulz

1. my body is a fine tuned pain machine on a scale
2. of 1 to 10 it will blow you away/would you
3. describe the pain as numbness/tingling/burning
4. stabbing/throbbing/aching/radiating?
5. yes absolutely I would
6. place x on the affected area
7. draw a *why* on your favorite parts
8. follow along as the eyebrows descend
9. and the mouth reverses its curve from
10. *no hurt* to *hurts little bit* to *hurts worst*
11. note the sprinkle of tears at the end of the line
12. yes my body is a fine tuned pain machine/a series of
13. serious ellipses lit up like Christmas lights sending
14. shiny mixed messages from *never* to infinity

“Love Poem” by Christtie Jay

Of course your breath will slump. Your nose will run
Races and win. Your eyes will capture a pond
And decide without permission to let it free
At work. You'll tear your leg jumping
Over her. Will ask, *why are you here?* You'll hack
The walls of your home searching, clean every crevice
Point at the door, *out* you'll scream, *why*
Are you here? You'll scrape your elbow, torture your arms
Punching air, *leave* you'll beg. You'll run to the kitchen,
Pull off the fridge the picture from 06, point and swear
The girl is dead. *Never again* you'll say.
Someone will walk in on you, you'll cry
You'll say *leave me, I only want to drown*
Her. You'll beg. You'll sew your heart a dress
You'll cry. You'll ask *why are you here? Why*
Are you here? What took you so long?

“My Grandfather” by Samantha Johnson

wept often, blue pebble eyes
wet, long chin quivering once
he called me to him, called me pet

and covered my small hand with his
old geography, misshapen riverbeds
seeping blood through band-aids

memory too goes thin, even while
hair remains white and vainglorious
pocket-comb in reach as surely as

he built this house, laid grout
and violence in each chiselled brick
brought up terrible earth in trenches

there is only salt to speak of left
leaning each day against phantoms
watchfully – cargo ships come and go

and so does he, asking for smoko

and forgiveness to be granted
by a child for her mother, and hers

of course I forgive you, Granddad
I say, this is the quickest way to leave
his knee, or receive another biscuit

“Ensnared/Discarded” by Koss

they rise then dour / the fire of Aries' fleeting desire / Báthory / out
of bounds / each broken promise / shaved to its flickering point
another innocent / gone / never seen / never touched / ruined
you coulda been a love bomber if you hadn't been
30 years older / bursting those fire flowers / so flattering
and how could one have such susceptibility? ensnared
by your things to fix / catastrophes / shit-and-spin debris
tricky helplessness / your tacky excess / my value fixed in cleaning
I was purposed / yet crippled by your games / subtle and not / and now
only remains / your sweepings / what you bankrupt
the lion eventually tires of its gazelle / the tabby of its mouse
and what of these fallow pages? and me, so ordinary

“Every day a gift” by Tom Sepulveda

The weight gathering all summer, the pool parties, the late night
driving, a year away from heading out like dandelion seeds.

What was I supposed to know as we quietly fumbled
with our bodies? Our ruin impending every time the floor creaked.

I made my escape after another boy slipped in
through the window, sure that he could be the man you wanted.

It was a season of updrafts, and I could spend mornings transfixed
by cumulus rising before my eyes, like the heat from the night before.

You always mistook a lack of assertiveness for a timid nature, as if
I were a chipmunk on a fence waiting for scraps to drop.

The laundry room had a French door from the bathroom, a little space I could hide
in and repeatedly test my weight hanging from the ceiling beam.

How could I be sure what I wanted? What bodies I wanted? I couldn't even tell you if I knew what a man was or how to own the room.

When I was outside, thunder always made me flinch, even afternoons when I was lying in the open and watching the wall clouds begin to swirl.

The weight was a gift I couldn't understand. The summer rolled on, and we never solved each other. In that August heat, I found new ways to keep myself locked up.

To be honest, when I gave up on the laundry room and began planning how far I could get away from here, it was a trivial thing to most.

Sometimes, the storms that blew through would leave great swathes wrecked in its wake. I got out of town without fanfare and no one was the wiser.

“it was Lilith who first ate grief as a spondee” by Lillian Sickler, August's Featured Poet

in the beginning I ate the snake.

I wasn't hungry but she was made just like me
just like *heartbeat* *nightgown* *ribmeat*
and I coveted her like you coveted me let me explain.

I know I was a raft in my last life, my boards
rotting soft as sugar as I dissolved into juniper salt.

but in this life, I was cut clumsily from clay and slip
of tongue to suckle white milk until I could bite through
caul, feather, and thew. I balanced on wood only to cross it.
I married you and we kept every faucet
running in our house so God wouldn't hear us fucking.

in this life there is hunger, one I know exists only
because I loved you.

before love there was the snake and always after
is the way the snake eats me back. whole mouth gulps down
my *heart* /*break* *sunset* *birthday*
great grief, I hate you even though you have
swathed my throat in untamable thirst and thus made me
into a drain let me explain.

if you've ever felt your chest tighten to ophidian coil
when your lover lays beneath you--

if you've ever put your famine on their
famine and fast on their fast
and allowed love to pump
you full
of hunger
until you
go blue as
slack and rancid
with
want

then you'll know why I devoured the snake.
why I have her flay me open like opaline fish

disembowel and deprive and remove everything
that dares to want what is not snake

Lillian on "it was Lilith who first ate grief as a spondee":

I am hesitant to explain this poem or to say what it is or isn't about. and to tell you the truth, the meaning of this poem has changed for me since I wrote it.

but at its bones, this poem is about grief and hunger.

think about tangle & writhe & tightness (picture something for a second; a memory of a person or a house or the golden hour oozing over hay bales in August. feel what I mean?). when I decided to write this poem, I wondered how tanglewrithetightness got there. if someone had put it there or if I had been born with it.

I wonder if you could eat a snake because you love it (or because there is nothing else to eat). but then what do you do when you realize that you cannot get rid of the snake because it has become a part of you? when the snake's survival has somehow become linked to your survival?

because sometimes grief is the hungriest part of me. and sometimes I find solace in feeding it.

Supervising Editor Zora Satchell's Commentary on "it was Lilith who first ate grief as a spondee":

The snake in the Christian creation myth symbolizes temptation. As the story goes, it was the snake that tempted Eve to defy God and eat from the tree. The myth of Lilith puts the passive rebellion of the snake in stark contrast. Instead of being lead into temptation, Lilith defies God to his face, before walking out of the garden of Eden. Both symbolize defiance, rebellion, sin and with the first line "In the beginning, I ate the snake" our speaker presents Lilith and the

snake as mirroring creatures of grief. For the speaker of our poem, to love is to covet, to consume, to run the faucet so God may not hear the carnality of her want. The snake must be consumed.

“To Survive the Summer” by Angelica Whitehorne

Let me check your pulse. Let me put my head in the freezer when I want to scream. Let me put the fan on high. Let me run down the parched cement to a hot weather song. Let me always choose to come back, right before sunset and stinking, but still a good daughter. Let my key always fit the lock. Let me open the door and find that everything is right where I left it: solitary and safe.

Our traumas can be cracked, can be soft-boiled, run nicely over fresh bread. Let us have a full breakfast. Let us crack the windows open, invite the flies as brunch guests. Let us cry into our glasses of sparkling grape, and fall sweat first into the non-bargain summer we begged for.

“sonnet in no-time” by Mathew Yates

with effort the sawdust retree'd
in no time in fleeting no-time
one can compress this mess into
new trees & expect vast blessings of shade
who can see the sun from down here
anyways who can see the sun
with all the sawdust in your eyes
the world must look less alive it
does it was it never was but
with effort the ashes can be
balled back up into a world
in no time the hurling no-time
negative-willpower to rest awake
what are you waiting for to wait?

“Abecedarian on Inheritance” by Hafsa Zulfiqar

Anemia anger *ahem* Abuse

Bad breath big Boobs boy byes Bitches Burning
Calligraphy Curfews Caring Cursing
Debt diabetes dildos Dandiya
Eve earfections ew Enemosity
Foreignness fake feelings fat Foolishness
Gaane ghee (gates) guns gapes guests gods Gallows
Holy homesickness humsafars Hotness
Idioms ignorance izzat *Ich Ich*
Jealousy jerks Jouska jabs jackpots Jinns
Karma kebabs Kindness kisses Kafirs
Late latifs ludo laxatives Lament
Mud maar men Marks magnets maggots Mantras
Nests nets Neediness norms nawabs Navels
Obscurity Obeying Oddities
Procrastination Promises Pyaar
Quite quotes quirks qualms Qawali Qalandar
Racism rationing rot rain rape Ragdolls
Shame shams sacks scabs saris Sindhi Sehras
Tablets tablas tar tangarines *Tsk Tsk*
Uncagedness ulogies Ultrafasting
Vanity Vagrancy voice veils voids Vows
Wudu wallah weeping Waiting War Woes
Xanthin xenial xerosis Xerarch
Yearning yeux yelling *yay yay* yaars Yaadein
Zeal zulm zameer Zindagi Zulfiqar.

Poet Biographies

Susan Barry-Schulz grew up just outside of Buffalo, NY. She is a licensed physical therapist living with chronic illness and an advocate for mental health and reducing stigma in IBD. Her poetry has appeared in *The Wild World*, *New Verse News*, *Shooter Literary Magazine*, *SWIMM*, *Barrelhouse* online, *Nightingale & Sparrow*, and elsewhere. She lives in a lake neighborhood in the Hudson Valley with her husband and one or more of her adult children. It all depends. You can find her on Twitter @suebarryschulz

Christtie Jay is a Nigerian Lawyer and Writer. Her poems have appeared and are forthcoming in *Kissing Dynamite*, *Praxis*, *The Rumpus*, *Glass: A Journal Of Poetry*, *Kalahari*, *Agboowo*, *Poetry Potion*, and *African Writer*.

Samantha Johnson (she/her) is a poet in Melbourne, working on her debut collection. Her work explores grace and grief – apron strings of time spent in the domestic. She writes on the

unceded land of the Traditional Owners of the Kulin Nation and acknowledges their elders, culture and creativity. You can find her tweeting words at @joyandcorduroy

Koss (she/they/them) is a queer writer and artist with an MFA from SAIC. They have work in or forthcoming in *Diode Poetry*, *Hobart*, *Five Points*, *Spillway*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Anti-Heroic Chic*, *North Dakota Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Prelude*, *The Lumiere Review*, *Amethyst Review*, *Bending Genres*, *Kissing Dynamite*, and many others. They also have work in *Best Small Fictions 2020*. Keep up with Koss on Twitter @Koss51209969 and Instagram @koss_singular. Their website is <http://koss-works.com>.

Tom Sepulveda is a nonbinary Chilean-American poet. Their work has appeared in the *San Joaquin Review* and *Santa Clara Review*, and more recently *Wild Roof Journal*. They hold an MFA from Fresno State. They currently work at a newspaper in California, and after decades in journalism are finally getting around to finishing that first book of poems.

Lillian Sickler is a queer Chinese-American poet, writer, and birth doula currently living in the South. Her work can be found in magazines such as *The Shade Journal*, *Crab Fat Magazine*, *Empty House Press*, and *Hobart*, among others. She has a black cat named Junebug who is a Gemini-Cancer cusp.

Angelica (she/her/hers) is a writer from New York who enjoys creating stanza-formatted cultural rants, making the mundane the magnificent, and slipping cuss words into otherwise prettily crafted lines. She has published or forthcoming work in *Westwind Poetry*, *Mantis*, *The Laurel Review*, *The Cardiff Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, and *Hooligan Magazine*, among others. Find her on Instagram: angelicawhitehorne and on her website: <https://angelicawhitehorne.myportfolio.com/>

Mathew Yates (they/them/any) is a poet & artist from Paducah, Kentucky with roots in Mississippi & Appalachia. Their poetry can be found in *Barren Magazine*, *Screen Door Review*, *Malarkey Books*, *perhappened*, & more. (@m_yates on twitter) (@mathew.yates on instagram) (www.etsy.com/shop/mathewyatesart)

Hafsa Zulfiqar (she/her) is an international student from Pakistan, studying literature and psychology at Bennington College. Her work explores brown identity, dreams, language, liminality, and above all the notion of *home*; it can be found or is forthcoming in *AAWW: The Margins*, *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, and *Anti-Heroic Chic*. Currently, she serves on the staff of *Muzzle Magazine* & *Pollux Journal*. You can find her on Twitter @vibingwithabook

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