

# KISSING DYNAMITE: A JOURNAL OF POETRY

## ISSUE 38 FEBRUARY 2022: "SUBLUNARY"

Welcome to Issue 38 "Sublunary," in which our contributing poets explore the earthly, the mundane, the life lived every day.

This month's featured poet is **Joshua Garcia**.

Issue 38 includes work by Danny Bultitude, Gardner Dorton, Adrian Dallas Frandle, Joshua Garcia, Courtney LeBlanc, Noreen Ocampo, Chelsea Risley, Hassan Usman, and Jenny Wong, and Carmen Barefield is featured in our Baker's Dozen spot "Threat of Rain." Read The Gallery below!

Featured Artist—[Arun Kapur](#)

Enigmatic. Charismatic. Passionate. Lover of life and all truth that binds us together. **Arun Kapur** is a mental health advocate that uses the medium of the arts to raise awareness of stigmas and well-being. Wolverhampton born and bred, he believes that through art, life is forever building humanity.

Poetry Gallery

["as a child, I was known for eating the wax along with the cheese"](#) by Danny Bultitude

'cos it came in waterfalls of sweet kaddish wine  
irradiated     radiating on the ruby jellied tongues  
sincerely asking how it felt to know that they fucked  
more people than me     despite being younger

could it be the headlocks and aggressive team games  
he said he'd learnt in the IDF     grinning, bulging  
through his singlet with the subtlety of a saw blade  
launched through     any Palestinian schoolyard

perhaps the ancient, scholarly women     avalanched  
by bagel crumbs and talent only celebrated within

the slimmest columns of the monthly newsletter  
that throb alive like veins visible through a pink blouse

or the Rabbi who sung and held my waist and  
explained to me what furry fetishism was right before  
my Bar Mitzvah because, by God she knew how  
to ease an anxious teenager's nerves better than weed

maybe the one-eyed man who taught me to barbecue  
the non-binary person in homemade skirt and bangles  
every pink-hatted poet and dark-shirted attorney  
the countless converted in a converted townhouse

and they all sit in the sandpit of my upbringing  
where I spent decades feeling that honeyed cut  
forced into mind whenever rinsing a wine glass  
with tap water, peeling wax away from the cheese

they watch intently in dresses and suits and starlight  
holding memories for me good, bad, queer, callous  
with hands that have lived long and made decisions  
and smiling teeth I've come to recognise from afar.

#### "Final Saturday" by Gardner Dorton

Maybe the earth, too, will lose  
its volcanic traction and be thrown  
into blankness. The sun god dead  
and colding at our feet, offering herself  
finally, as a plain asphodel. Your beloved  
is already carbon miles below  
the last top soil. We are not special  
enough to survive, and if we are.  
I will give my bottom lip as a final blossom  
for all the dirt I have put over us.  
They did not help us, the ivory gods  
of rape and hunger, and I am the god-  
slayer. Every pagan deity equipped  
on my belt. So we blew up  
our finger prints in search  
of our own dominant hands.  
I know I am a prophet of something

unpleasant like sludge or angst.  
3am, the hour fast approaching,  
a saxophone down the block  
is playing its final melody.

“the more i hide / inside” by Adrian Dallas Frandle

the more i hide / inside / peer through windows / the more  
i am convinced / the deer in my neighborhood are truly chihuahuas /  
stacked in trenchcoats / the neighbors may be something / similarly  
chimerical / for all i care / i barely speak / to anyone these days / nights  
are a different story / that’s when apps come alive / feed / open  
mouths / open palms / refreshing screens / replenishing offerings /  
yet it is refreshing / peacocking what you got / inverse *Zorro*-eyed  
mouths / covered / filter / more than need // which should be /  
examined / i urge you to interrogate / presets / especially on porn sites /  
*a lot* of variety never killed / anyone / in Hippocratical hindsight //  
which states / *care is sometimes defined as a system of harm*

*reduction* / hypocrite formulation our /health-care system/ as if  
the terms had insurance / good / at this cheap-ass clinic lounge / language /  
in the CVS this christmas // yes during our current transmissible mess //  
to pick up an emergency prescription for amoxicillin for my busted mouth / a man  
rushed in maskless / scream-asked over the counter / at the pharmacist  
for *HOME TESTS!* / the fucking carelessness / i fantasized

about hoisting the stanchion / bashing his uncovered face / in-  
stead i / stood / glared / did nothing like / i always do / of course // as in  
grit // not the plot / not the river run-of-the-mill direction that’s not the way  
this goes so / follow along / he never looked back / so i turned to salt / or / i just  
disappeared / slipped down the river / whichever metaphor / you care  
for / i don’t know how / they do it / not a care in the world

those deer on the lawn / or whatever they are / like my two rescue  
dogs w/ some skin/memory of danger / flinch / remembrance for how things  
felt / before / now they are cared for / i know there’s no worry / for why / what

they’re in for / cold / so we buy coats to keep them warm  
while we shiver / watch / from windows // like spies // try to learn

their disguises / how they do it / act so natural

“Hymn” by Joshua Garcia, February’s Featured Poet

Margaret doesn’t believe in hell,  
and Rob isn’t sure about euthanasia.  
I ask my friends about these things  
because I trust whatever they’ll give me,  
however formed or unformed.  
Come on up to the house  
or to the yard where we’ll build  
a tent of meaning. What is it?  
This stuff we build ourselves around,  
build beyond our understanding: a naked  
wood unhumiliated by the wash  
of plaster, holes which have not yet bloomed  
into the fixtures they were made for,  
doorways that do not yet have doors.  
Every night, I dream I have found  
the perfect apartment,  
a place I’ve already been but forgot,  
a place to divide time into,  
rooms painted a color that feels  
good to open the eyes to. And windows  
which sometimes permit too much.  
A small apartment with a man and a piano—  
I can’t enclose my hopes any more  
than I can bulldoze my memories.  
I used to think a house could be holy.  
I thought, I don’t want to be penetrated  
by anything but his body.  
In my dreams, God turns my fixtures inside out.  
Once, I fell, and a doctor put a staple in my head.  
*Just one. No need for local anesthesia.*  
And then, like an afterthought, *Well, one more.*  
When God dropped me, I heard the snap.  
Margaret held my hand.  
Shea rubbed my back. My phone is ringing.  
I am singing. I am singing.

**Joshua’s Commentary on “Hymn”:**

“Hymn” was first drafted as I was emerging from some difficult health issues and the dissolution of my Christian faith. Both of these circumstances fundamentally altered my

relationship to my body. In my faith, I believed the human body to be a temple for divine love; in good health, my body seemed like an instrument of possibility. Afterward, it felt like something unfinished, sometimes functional but often restricting. This poem wrestles with these conflicting notions of the human body as a container. The poem's earlier drafts had a much different ending, but it is now framed by the human love that sustained me during this period, serving as a kind of shelter still worthy of praise.

### **Assistant Editor Dia Roth's Commentary on "Hymn":**

From its opening lines, "Hymn" reminds us that human intimacy can be a safe haven from uncertainty, pain, and disillusionment. By layering images of shelter, space, and home, this poem builds "a tent of meaning" in which the speaker seeks to untangle a complex relationship to the body, God, and holiness. All the while, loved ones Margaret, Rob, and Shea watch over the speaker, ready to offer care and counsel should they be called upon—"When God dropped me, I heard the snap. / Margaret held my hand. / Shea rubbed my back." Calling back to its title, the poem ends with singing: a new hymn to praise these earthly loves.

["Poem in Which My Feelings Fuck Each Other into More Feelings" by Courtney LeBlanc](#)

*~after Noor Hindi*

Read the 2am text / slide / your hand down / touch the edge of lace / the layer between / you and you / moan into your / mouth / watch / the mailbox for letters, for postcards, for flowers / from a friend / cry when you forget to change / the water / when the petals fall bruised to the floor / pull out / your thesaurus / find another word for *want* / clutch it between your teeth / your thighs / the slick wet of you / write it on your skin with a Sharpie / pretend it's a tattoo / change / the definition to match the mood / ring on your finger. When your finger turns / green pretend / it's from a lover, pretend / it's a hickey, pretend you didn't / throw the ring into the river, angry / it never / changed from black, never turned / the blue-green of love. Tell yourself / you don't care / anyway. Wash your hands and read / your horoscope, the obituaries, the dictionary. / Learn / a new word for *satisfied*. / Fuck / yourself with your fingers until / the quaking in your thighs / hums / to the tune of *yes*.

["In which I am cast in a Studio Ghibli film" by Noreen Ocampo](#)

I am drawn in a side character's uncertain lines, cursed  
to flimsy ankles & tipping over. I still bike to school

because I have to, because Mom & Pop are running  
a florist-bakery-café combination. I smell like burnt butter

& coffee beans, which makes everyone forget that we also

sell flowers. I am seventeen & having a quarter-life crisis  
that only pays me in my best friend's exasperation  
as he sits in front of me in class. He sighs like he practices  
his perfect exhales in the mirror & is drawn with the charisma  
of a main character whose clothes are always  
suspiciously crisp. I have been in love with him my whole life.  
But he's stuck in a love triangle with the class president  
& the news co-anchor whose teeth literally twinkle  
when she smiles, so I'm surprised when he bikes home  
with me. One day, he tells me he's set on moving oceans  
away after graduation & I pause in the middle of the street  
because there are only twenty-three minutes until the credits roll  
& I'm not sure how we'll patch this up in time. He laughs,  
sparkling with cherry blossoms & afternoon light, &  
for a moment, we're more than a collection of penciled-in lines.

["The Celanese Village – Rome, Georgia" by Chelsea Risley](#)

The toilet in our first house was scotch-taped  
to the wall, a half-assed repair by our 84 year old  
landlord who lived next door. He and his wife  
watched for UFOs from their back porch and  
only bought American bacon at the Piggly Wiggly.  
They had three rules: no pets, no kids, and no whiskey,  
so we drank gin instead. In the backyard was a willow tree,  
a bathtub full of cucumbers, and a melon patch.  
The neighbor at the end of the street sometimes rode  
his horse to chase after his rooster or his goat.  
We would wake up in the morning, make our coffee,  
and eat our grapefruit halves on the back porch in the fog.  
Sometimes we came home in the afternoon to make  
love on our mattress on the floor, too poor for a bed.  
We'd go to sleep at night with the streetlight winking  
like it told a dirty joke nobody got, and the old man next door  
watched TV naked in his arm chair every night,

and I would lie there and think how impossible it all was,  
how the mist and the melons and the scotch tape and even  
the dip in the hallway that I tripped over every day were all mine.

“at the mention of happiness” by Hassan Usman

last year saw me looking for exits in my own body  
this is how black boys abscond from too much darkness  
i learnt that grief is a stubborn grass  
it grows where it's not wanted  
so to survive, i sit within a discolored poem  
adding echoes to the sounds of hope  
but does the world know the sea also suffers thirst?  
it's a new year & *at the mention of happiness*  
i am still unable to command my lips to a smile  
everything i give a name is swallowed by silence  
i swear i do not know the origin of this anguish  
i do not know how to hold grace like an egg  
without cracking it  
i faith in heavens to undo the years spent in ruin  
but it's as if God is on a long vacation  
it's as if the angels, too, have settled on land  
maybe when i offer myself to a whirlwind  
i will find my body shawled around the arms of peace

“Tonight, I Do Not Love the Sea (and Questions I Ask the Shore)” by Jenny Wong

Light wilts along the horizon  
and there is too much noise for darkness.  
The waves  
are incessant  
blue  
bragging,  
about the curved coasts  
touched in a day  
while this shore  
waits. Here,  
a tree that once nursed  
along this bank  
now a body  
returned  
stripped of its bark,

half buried and clean  
as bone.  
I ask  
why stay  
in this erosion?  
why be  
scraped and salted  
every day –  
smaller.

There is warmth  
elsewhere  
in the dry shimmer  
of desert dunes  
a place to hold the slow whisper  
of vultures' wings, away  
from the pry of watery eyes  
and other derivatives  
of drowning by oceans.

[“Threat of Rain,” Our Baker’s Dozen Feature](#)

In "Parkway and Po' Boys" **Carmen Barefield** explores the everyday ins and outs of places we call home.

[“Parkway and Po’ Boys” by Carmen Barefield](#)

My sister says this place  
has the best po’ boys.  
The line wraps around  
from the corner to the door.  
She can’t be wrong.

So, we stand there,  
the air thick with heat  
as gray clouds sneak  
past blue skies.  
Wouldn’t be New Orleans  
if the threat of rain didn’t  
come out to greet us.

We reach the door



Gilmore Tennessee bricks  
beneath our feet.  
The wood roof slants, and  
the patio is adorned in tarp.

Full and faded beige plastic  
tables and chairs  
encircle an old car on display.  
Customers laugh and smile  
between sips of beer  
and bites of hot sausage.

What little sun is left  
beams and fractures  
through water filled  
double ziplock bags  
lining the patio.  
They hang on fish hooks  
and sway like wind chimes.

My sister's friend laughs at me,  
"Girl, that's a country thing.  
Keeps the flies away."

The line moves up.  
We finally order.  
And as my sister and her friend  
laugh along without me,  
the copper glints from  
corners of each zip locked bag,  
catches me right in the eye  
and I float closer to them with the heat.  
They must be pennies,  
but they remind me of  
goldfish won at the local fair  
dead by the time you get home.

My sister smiles as  
we turn the corner,  
hot sausage po' boys in hand.  
A few wild chickens race past us  
and the colorful shotgun houses.

We sit on the sidewalk  
taking bites of our po' boys.  
The storm clouds keep rolling in,  
the heat swells around us.  
I can smell the rain between each bite,  
but it never falls.

### **Carmen's Commentary on "Parkway and Po' Boys":**

I remember starting this poem while sitting in the Louis Armstrong airport. I was already missing New Orleans before I'd even gotten on a plane, and I wanted to write down as much as I could.

I had flown down to visit my sister, who was attending Xavier University at the time. It had been a while since I'd last been down to visit. Though our dad was born and raised there, our visits had been sporadic, especially after Hurricane Katrina.

Sometimes a few images or lines pop up in your mind before you really know what a poem will look like as a whole. Writing this poem was definitely like that, but I knew I wanted to capture the nostalgic craving I'd been feeling. A craving for food, for connection, for family, and a place that feels like home. It was a moment I didn't want to lose to the haze of heat and time so I started writing. I'm thankful I have the opportunity to share that moment and this poem with readers too.

### Poet Biographies

**Carmen Barefield** (she/her) is a poet and writer living in Salem, Massachusetts. Some of her work can be found in *Popshot Magazine*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Black Heart*, and *littledearthlit*. You can find out more about her at [carmenbarefield.com](http://carmenbarefield.com).

**Danny Bultitude** (he/him) is a Jewish Pākehā working at Ngā Taonga: Sound & Vision, New Zealand's Film Archive. He has had fiction, poetry, and essays published in several literary journals, but this is his first publication beyond the shores of Aotearoa. Despite popular opinion, he still prefers sweet kaddish wine to all other varieties. If you disagree, feel free to debate him on his Twitter: @dannybultitude

**Gardner Dorton** (he/him) is a poet living in Knoxville, TN. He graduated in 2019 with his MFA in Poetry from the College of Charleston. His chapbook *Stone Fruit* was recently published by Glass Poetry Press. Find him on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/gardnerdorton>

**Adrian Dallas Frandle** (he/they) is a queer poet & queerer cook. A reader for *Variant Lit Mag* & *Okay Donkey Lit Mag/Press*, they have poems in or forthcoming in *HAD*, *Daily Drunk Mag's* "Marvelous Verses" print anthology, *Moist Poetry Journal*, *the lickety~split*, Stone of Madness Press & elsewhere. Work & more online at [adriandallas.com](http://adriandallas.com) - Tweets: @adrianf

**Joshua Garcia's** poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Arts & Letters*, *The Georgia Review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Shenandoah*, and elsewhere. He holds an MFA from the College of Charleston and is a 2021-22 Stadler Fellow at Bucknell University.

**Courtney LeBlanc** is the author of the full length collections *Exquisite Bloody*, *Beating Heart (Riot in Your Throat)* and *Beautiful & Full of Monsters (Vegetarian Alcoholic Press)*. She is also the founder and editor-in-chief of *Riot in Your Throat*, an independent poetry press. She loves nail polish, tattoos, and a soy latte each morning. Read her publications on her blog: [www.wordperv.com](http://www.wordperv.com). Follow her on Twitter: @wordperv, and IG: @wordperv79.

**Noreen Ocampo** (she/they) is a Filipina American writer and poet based in Atlanta. She is the author of the forthcoming micro-chapbook, *Not Flowers* (Variant Literature, 2022), and her poems can also be found in *{m}aganda Magazine*, *Taco Bell Quarterly*, and *Hobart*, among others. She edits for *Marías at Sampaguitas* and the *COUNTERCLOCK* blog and studies at Emory University. Say hi on Twitter @maybenoreen!

**Chelsea Risley** (she/her) is a writer and floral designer in Chattanooga, Tennessee. She is the Editor-in-Chief of the *Southern Review of Books* and has an MFA from Queens University of Charlotte. Her work has appeared in *Juked*, *Barrelhouse Magazine*, and *Lunch Ticket*. Find her on Twitter: @chelsea\_risley and Instagram: @chelsearisley

**Hassan Usman** (he/him), pen-named Billiospeaks, is 2/4 of Next Generational Poets. He studies Counselor Education at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin. He sees poetry as a way of relieving stress and filling up emptiness. Winner of Poetry Unlimited 3.0, 2nd place winner (Age 15-18) Dawnprojectnetwork Poetry & Pictures, Top10 ManiPoetry Competition, and runner up AMBNPL'21. His works are/forthcoming in *The Shallow Tales Review*, *Kissing Dynamite*, *Arts Lounge*, *My Woven Poetry*, and elsewhere. He's on Twitter and Instagram @billiospeaks.

**Jenny Wong** is a writer, traveler, and occasional business analyst. Her favorite places to wander are Tokyo alleys, Singapore hawker centers, and Parisian cemeteries. Recent publications include *Acropolis Journal*, *Five Minutes*, and *Tiny Molecules*. She resides in Canada near the Rocky Mountains and tweets @jenwithwords.

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ISSN: 2639-426X  
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