

KISSING DYNAMITE: A JOURNAL OF POETRY

ISSUE #45 SEPTEMBER 2022: "HOLLOW"

Welcome to Issue 45 "Hollow," in which our contributing poets walk down paths of hollow longing.

Issue 45 includes work by Michael Beard (this month's featured poet), Dina Folgia, Rachel Pittman, Amanda Roth, and Luke Wortley. Please read The Gallery below!

Featured Artist—Alan Bern

Retired children's librarian Alan Bern is a published and exhibited photographer and cofounder with artist/printer Robert Woods of the fine press/publisher *Lines & Faces*, linesandfaces.com. Among his awards: honorable mention for the 14th annual *Littoral Press Poetry Prize* (2021); finalist in flash fiction for *Ekphrastic Sex: The Contest* (2021); first runner-up for Raw Art Review's first *Mirabai Prize for Poetry*, 2020; and a medal in 2019 from SouthWest Writers for a WWII story set in Assisi. Recent and upcoming writing and photo work in *HAUNTED WATERS PRESS*, *Aletheia Literary Quarterly*, *CERASUS*, *Mediterranean Poetry*, *Slouching Beast Journal*, *Feral*, and *Mercurius*. Alan is the author of three books of poetry and performs with dancer/choreographer Lucinda Weaver as *PACES: dance & poetry fit to the space* and with musicians from Composing Together, composingtogether.org.

Farewell

With this issue, the KD team says farewell to Assistant Editor Lytey Kay. Lytey joined our team earlier this spring and has played a critical role as a member of our reading team, adding her depth of perspective to our submissions process. Follow Lytey on her website: <https://www.lyteykay.com/>

Poetry Gallery

"A Golden Shovel for My Grandmother" by Michael Beard, September's Featured Poet

after Rita Dove

It takes a bundle of apricots to climb

death. Straight from the branch, sliced into
small pieces and stored away for a
lifetime. Dying is a kind of fermentation. A jar
of death waiting in the pantry, sour and
breathless—this is how I see you live.
What is any of this life for?
The whole sky is already busy with a
lullaby. You listen to the clouds while

everyone gathers blossoms to chill,
tiny frosts of remembrance. The earth
tightens its nightly lid so that no
body escapes to brush the calling stars.
I want to ask how it feels to be with-in
a body that betrays you, pink this-
tle and bone. We polish stone
so that one day it might reflect back the sky.

I should have visited you
last winter. What is there to have
in this life? The cancer ceased
for now but I can tell that you hate to
admit how such a good thing makes you ache.

So you wait for the indifferent hand to unseal your
apricot spirit, caught between the spine
of memory and morning. What is
a thing left unsaid? Lost and a
part of us, our trees silent in flower.

Michael's Commentary on "A Golden Shovel for My Grandmother":

First, I must give absolute praise to Rita Dove and her poem "Pithos," for my poem here would have never been written without it. What continuously draws me to Dove's poem is how brief and quiet it is, tightly wrapped with an ending so instilled with this sense of release. Around the time I first read Dove's poem, I was also reading Terrance Hayes's *Lighthouse*, and I became invested in his Golden Shovel form, particularly as a way to engage with another's work. I think of the Golden Shovel form, too, as a natural expression of release, how the ending words of each line come together to form the original poem the writer is paying homage to—like a final, lasting breath.

Writing “A Golden Shovel for My Grandmother” was a way for me to process my relationship with my grandmother. This poem comes from an uncomfortable place; I find writing about family very difficult. Identifying and disclosing the intricacies of those relationships is hard, and these are things I need to get used to—being comfortable suspended in that vulnerability. This is a step toward that.

Editor-in-Chief Christine Taylor’s Commentary on “A Golden Shovel for My Grandmother”:

I love a good golden shovel, so I was excited to see one in our submissions for this issue. When I saw it was based on a Rita Dove poem, I became skeptical—like you can't go messin' around with Dove's work! So I was pleased to see Beard handle this work with creativity and care. I (and the other editors) really loved the use of language in this poem: Beard avoids common phrases to keep the reader engaged with lines like, "The whole sky is already busy with a / lullaby." All said, this is an honest and beautiful testament to the speaker's relationship with their grandmother and with life.

“longing” by Dina Folgia

today I saw five ladybugs / red hemispheres / lingering on the glass
luck constellating / connecting lines between / their dotted bodies
netting my attention / I haven't seen / a ladybug in months so *why*
are there so many / I trace patterns with my fingers / smudging the pane
with sun-stained skin / I don't know if you can wish / on ladybugs but
I do know that luck / comes far between these days / so I shut my eyes
usually when I see a streak / across a moonless sky / or release a fuzz
into the drifting wind / I pray for my sanity back / but there on my dust
caked sheets / I wish for something else / because by god
I would rather / have her

“Cemetery Haibun” by Rachel Pittman

My grandmother brings artificial flowers to her dead husband every Sunday. Even when it's raining. It has been six months, and I don't know if she will still visit when June turns the air to hot soup, when the grass yellows under the sun and crunches under her feet like bird-bones. This is her new religion, a kind of worship, a kind of repentance. Grief is the thing that swallows her even as she chews it. Muscle memory dragging her body back to this grave like driftwood caught on faithful tides. His funeral never ended, but she has run out of black dresses. The funeral starts in five minutes, but no one else is here. The funeral is a game of hide-and-seek, and he has been winning for years, since his language was buried in the endless night of stroke-bitten brain. The rest of us stopped playing, when words turned to misshapen keys, tossed in the empty garden, gathering rust. My grandmother is still seeking. She listens for his voice in

the house, like a prayer returned to sender. On her birthday I bring her flowers, real living ones, and she is afraid to touch them.

Beautiful, she says,
and means delicate. *Roses*
are his favorite.

“Down to the River to Pray” by Amanda Roth

The river is an empty, wide palm
long closed to a fist. In my pocket,
there are stones. It is dawn and the truth is that
I no longer pray. Still, I am here
because I heard a rumor
that a woman can learn to unfold
her body from the machines. So I lay myself out
in the mud and measure the day bird by bird: cardinals
when I have grown weary
of sleeping, sparrows as I begin to hunger.
What is a promised land
without water? How long have I
known that the cost of being a woman
is this pocket full of stones?
I was a child when they baptized me, held me
under. Now I am becoming
the woman they’ve always wanted drowned.
The sun burns and a red shouldered
hawk nears. Everything on these banks is insatiable
hunger, myself included. With each bird,
each shade of daylight seared into my skin,
I feel myself slipping
into another body. Untethered,
the wind begins to howl. What is there to eat?
A trio of vulture circles; the sky
hangs black and suffocating.
I hear the trees pray for water; I hear
my arms scissor through the dark.

“Sunflower” by Luke Wortley

There were mass blackouts across the state. Rolling waves of loss, lights out. The rain came down with abandon, the river rising. We couldn’t charge our phones, but my father called for the first

time in nearly five years. I saw the word Dad flash on the screen, felt my stomach turn, the lilted waves of resistance starting to pinpoint themselves in my fingers. And yet there was a stooping desire to answer, to see what he wanted. We'd recently had a kid, and it was hard. Two weeks in the NICU and endless stretches of worrying about breath. Our son had been home for three weeks before my father finally called, and it was in the middle of this storm. It went to voicemail. The storm careened through the blotchy sky above, and I sat there watching the battery drain, watching the rivulets rise in the street. Eventually, the storm died, too, and the power came flickering on like a toe tap. I looked at my phone to see the screen cracked, a single sunflower blooming stupidly in the night. I plucked the stem from my screen and gave it to my wife, who laid it next to our son in the crib.

Poet Biographies

Michael Beard (he/him) currently studies poetry at the Bowling Green State University MFA program and serves as the managing editor for *Mid-American Review*. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Anti-Heroic Chic*, *Jupiter Review*, *the lickety~split*, *Bending Genres*, and other places. He can be found on Twitter and Instagram @themichaelbeard.

Dina Folgia (she/her) is an MFA candidate at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her work, which has been nominated for Best of the Net and the AWP Intro Journals Project, has appeared in *Ninth Letter*, *Dunes Review*, *Stonecoast Review*, *Sidereal Magazine*, *Kissing Dynamite Poetry*, and others. She is a poetry reader for *Blackbird* and *Storm Cellar*. Keep up with her work at <https://dinafolgia.com/>

Rachel Pittman (she/her) is an MFA candidate at McNeese State University where currently she serves as Poetry Editor for the *McNeese Review*. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *miniskirt mag*, *Stillpoint Literary Magazine*, *Gingerbreadhouse*, *Whale Road Review*, & *Grimoire Magazine*.

Amanda Roth (she/her) is a poet and folklorist living in Central Texas. Her debut poetry collection, *A Mother's Hunger*, was released in 2021. She is published or forthcoming with *Portland Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *the lickety~split*, *MAYDAY*, and elsewhere. On Twitter @amandarothpoet and on the web <https://msha.ke/amandarothpoetry>

Luke Wortley is a writer living in Indianapolis, Indiana. His fiction and poetry have appeared or are forthcoming in *monkeybicycle*, *Hobart*, *Best Microfictions*, *Pithead Chapel*, *The Florida Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, and elsewhere. He also has a chapbook entitled PURGE coming out later this year (2022) that centers on disordered eating, male bodies, body dysmorphia, and the intersection of those things with closeted bisexuality. You can follow him on Twitter (@LukeWortley) or visit <https://www.lukewortley.com/>

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