

KISSING DYNAMITE: A JOURNAL OF POETRY

ISSUE #49 JANUARY 2023: “NEGATIVE SPACE”

Welcome to Issue 49, “Negative Space,” in which our contributing poets explore harmony and discord.

Issue 49 includes work by Ava Ye (this month's featured poet), Sofia Fey, Jill Michelle, and Adesiyan Oluwapelumi. Please view The Gallery below!

Featured Artist—Edward Michael Supranowicz

Edward Michael Supranowicz is the grandson of Irish and Russian/Ukrainian immigrants. He grew up on a small farm in Appalachia. He has a grad background in painting and printmaking. Some of his artwork has recently or will soon appear in *Fish Food*, *Streetlight*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *The Door Is a Jar*, *The Phoenix*, and *The Harvard Advocate*. Edward is also a published poet.

Artist Statement

I do not believe in formal artist statements. Art should speak for itself, and the artist should maintain a respectful distance and silence. I work intuitively and compulsively, probably believing that there are archetypes that are shared among us all, but amenable to being expressed in one's own individual style.

I have been doing digital paintings and drawings for the last 10 or so years. It is a good fit to my personality and nature, being able to go forward, then back, then back and forward, and not having to worry about wasted canvas. And digital work allows for sharing work with more than one person rather than just one person “owning” a painting.

Poetry Gallery

“New World Sinfonia” by Ava Ye, January's Featured Poet

the leaves a yellow past shattered browning everything
asleep but the crows that voyage feathered in monochrome like

an ink bird swallowing strokes of wind a mother spilled
fluid / flowing wisps of fathers the cigarette paper spit-soaked

like the song where an olive tree strayed into a dream that said
don't ask me where i came from there are ants in the salt jar / a poet a maker

of things ceramic creamers candle dishes counter stools empty
shoe boxes dutch doors the pea pod pendant made of jade

kitchen twine balls of tissue bird cages pomelo peel crampon barrels
the pitter patter of leaving the contour of a thing you should know in vein

a thing like touch how weak is a thing like that? i want to
rest on eyelashes the way raindrops do then grandma won't see me

break under her syllables softened by longing / loving is a massacre with
distance how a river is a birthmark from above & autumn is but

a bruise

Ava's Commentary on "New World Sinfonia":

Along the dry spine of California, there is nothing much outside the car window: road trips are a blur of beige and the smell of farmed manure until you stumble upon a poppy field or an In-N-Out Burger. It was Thanksgiving Day, and I, a first-generation immigrant, was feeling exceptionally American. As I sat in the passenger seat on the way to Solvang, I was shocked by a picturesque autumn in front of the windshield. The landscape reminded me of a Grant Wood painting I had seen in Iowa the summer before, the plaque beneath it describing how Wood chose to depict the humble beauty of the American Midwest rather than scavenging for an unrealistic Renaissance-style scene like many artists in his time.

This half-patriotic, half-nostalgic mood inspired me to relisten to Antonín Dvořák's *Symphony No. 9 in E minor*, which Dvořák composed shortly after moving to the United States from Bohemia. Filled with Native American hymns and African American folk songs, this iconic orchestral masterpiece is often referred to as the *New World Symphony*: a nickname I refashioned to be the title for my own poem. Instead of "symphony," I chose the word "sinfonia," which is an orchestral prelude to a grander work like an opera or cantata--a foreword, a preface, perhaps a disclaimer.

While *New World Symphony* was an ode to the newly emerging American culture and the contributions from marginalized groups which made it unique, it was also a sentimental love

letter to Dvořák's beloved homeland, which he missed dearly while across the Atlantic. This is a narrative I can relate to and try to encapsulate in "New World Sinfonia," which references homesickness and heartache through the linguistic beauty of poetry and the universal language of music. By using caesura form, I attempted to create a catalog of images in a way that resembles the projector cameras children play with or a vintage photo slideshow: the *click* and an inch of blank space being the only transition between separate images kept together in one disk of memory.

The list of household items in the middle of the poem is another reflection of a personal experience. I moved from house to house as a child, and the list includes objects that often need to be replaced in a new home, especially one all the way across the ocean, as well as musical items (a Buffet Crampon barrel is a part of a clarinet) and other things that could carry emotion. But these objects are similar in another way still: over the summer, a poetry mentor shared two life-changing philosophies. First, Dorothea Lasky's "To be the thing," which compares metaphors to boxes and plates, things that hold other things--a metaphor about metaphors. Second, the etymology of the word "poet" from Latin and Greek: a maker, a creator. Each item in the list is an inherently poetic one, an object that could hold something else and be a vessel for some deeper meaning.

Ultimately, the poem is a reflection of the speaker's attempt to come to terms with the present in a new world and let go of the one they left behind in an effort to not be pained by the distance--and an apology for their failure to do so. The song about the olive tree is the Chinese hit, "橄榄树," sung by 齐豫. While this tune is the stylistic opposite of the *New World Symphony*, it features the same bittersweet theme, reminding us that desire, for belonging and a place to call home, is the strongest human emotion of all.

Assistant Editor Matt Hsu's Commentary on "New World Sinfonia":

If I had to describe this poem in one word, it would be "ethereal." The imagery transports the reader to a moment that's gorgeous, yet fleeting, a breezy autumn day flooding with nostalgia. The simple, specific descriptions of objects that remind the speaker of home—"ceramic creamers," "pomelo peel," "dutch doors"—allow us to truly experience their pining. Beyond this imagery, Ye weaves a gorgeous web of familial connections that pack the piece with complex emotion. The "strokes of wind a mother spilled" and "fluid/flowing wisps of fathers" make me imagine a mother attempting to fill the space an absent father has left. The speaker's attempt to "rest on eyelashes the way raindrops do" demonstrates their need for stoicism amidst their grandmother's "syllables softened by longing/loving." Another aspect of this piece I love is the use of touch for sensory details. Phrases like "the contour of a thing you should know in vein" or "a river is a birthmark from above" inspire me to touch a finger to my arm and try to feel what the speaker feels. *Sinfonia* is the Italian word for *symphony*, and that's what this piece is: an exquisite, melodious symphony.

Sofia Fey

I tell my friend, the painter, that my favorite color is orange. He says he doesn't really believe in orange, that it's just the space between yellow & red. He's not exactly wrong. Orange was known in olde English as "geoluhread," meaning yellow-red. It wasn't until the 16th century that we started calling it orange— and even then, the color was named after the fruit, not the other way around. He says he thought my color would be mustard, I said *it's that too*. Carmen says my color is coral with blood. Fitting, light with a price. I'd say my favorite color is exactly that, the whole path from yellow to red. & haven't we always had to make space? At home in the journey. Something wild between primaries.

"Haibun for Cookie-cutter Divorces" by Jill Michelle

Mom navigates the grocery cart down the commissary aisles while I sit up front, tight-covered legs dangling from square metal holes, fingers plucking animal crackers from the red Barnum box with its drawn bars holding back the circus-ready beasts who seem to lose all ferocity when baked into sugary treats. Mama lion downgraded to clown-collared dog. Prowling leopards reduced to beige blobs.

My brother munches creatures from a matching pack, trooping the market's epoxied floors in blue rain boots alongside Mom as she tosses butter, bread, ice-creams and meats into the basket with little thought, unlike next spring when there will be no more Dad, no lessons, no grocery trips without the calculator. *No extras*, as Mom puts it, like those cookie boxes we pass now.

summer's oven
bakes us into animal
cracker children

"grief as a new language" by Adesiyan Oluwapelumi

a strange numbness strangles the widow's tongue
as she seeks to vowel a gore-stricken dirge,
& silence grazes like a cid heifer on the blisters
of her tongue. a famine of healing droughts
her green wounds & nothing corrodes
the heart more than the alkalinity of grief.
i beseech, how do we teach a woman to
swallow loss & digest the hard crumbs of sorrow,
for today my mother's voice is a prodigious
horse mouth in exile & nothing kills noise
more than this murdering silence.

yesterday, i wore my father's coat & like
an animated scarecrow, she screeched eerily in horror;
the scabbard of her blunt tongue slipped off
by the drawing hands of a stale memory.
today, i learn firsthand the language of grief
as mother's body roles as the sacrifice for a funeral
& my lips tremble like weathering rocks in silent
shivering shudders. i learn loss is the
root word of grief, & silence: its semantics.

Poet Biographies

Sofia Fey is a Lesbian and Non-Binary writer living in LA. Currently, they are the founder of the Luminaries Poetry workshop, and poetry editor at *Hooligan Magazine*. They love to beat their friends at Mario Party. They tweet @sofiafeycreates.

Jill Michelle's (she/her) latest poems appear/are forthcoming in *Hole in the Head Review*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Sheila-Na-Gig* online, *SWWIM Every Day* and *Valley Voices*. She teaches at Valencia College in Orlando, Florida. Find more of her work at byjillmichelle.com.

Adesiyan Oluwapelumi, TPC XI, is a young genre-bending creative who scribes from Ibadan, Nigeria. He is an Honourable Mention in the 2022 Coexist Lit International Metamorphosis Writing Contest, Winner of the Cheshire White Ribbon Day Creative Competition, & a shortlist in the August/September 2022 edition of the Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest. His works are published/forthcoming in *Visual Verse*, *Kissing Dynamite*, *Ice Floe Press*, *Unstamatic*, *Eunoia Review*, *Afristories*, *Brittle Paper*, *Lumiere Review*, *Opinion Nigeria* & elsewhere. He reads poetry for *The Kitchen Table Quarterly*. Find him on Twitter @ademindpoems.

Ava Ye/叶曳 (she/her) is a Chinese writer attending high school in Los Angeles. She has been recognized by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers and is an alumna of the Iowa Young Writers' Studio. Aside from writing, Ava is often enjoying iced coffee and waiting for the next rainstorm. You can find her on Instagram @avayeye.

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