Artifacts

In every childhood photo she and I
are dressed like one another.

By accident, twenty-first century Icelanders
unearthed a settlement beneath their capital.

Fur-trimmed pantsuits, cherry jumpers,
floral pinafores. This is how I learned to see myself.

Their atlases were wrong. Where they thought
their ancestors lived was miles away.

One day the moon consumed my sister's face
and I thought she'd left.

They'd never had reason to doubt
where the old turf walls and longhouse stood.

It took me years to see myself. I wondered about the tides
and where they came from, found people who might know.

An earlier century, previously empty, was now
populated, full of stories they'd need to learn,

Now a photo in a pile: she is on the floor,
we are wearing the cherries. I have climbed her body.

add markers to their maps, stand in old places
with new words for what they know.

I stare into the cavern of my sister's mouth and see her sadness,
the walls of our childhood homes, and the past answers.

I name what I see.

Farnaz Fatemi

Farnaz Fatemi is a founding member of The Hive Poetry Collective and was formerly a writing instructor at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her book of poems, *Sister Tongue* نابز ەاوخ, won the 2021 Stan and Tom Wick Poetry Prize selected by Tracy K. Smith, and is available Aug 2022 from Kent State University Press (pre-order info here). Previous publications include *Poem-a-Day* (Poets.org), *Tahoma Literary Review, Pedestal Magazine, Nowruz Journal, Catamaran Literary Reader, Crab Orchard Review, Grist Journal, Tupelo Quarterly*, and several anthologies, including *Essential Voices: Poetry of Iran and Its Diaspora* and Halal if You Hear Me. More at farnazfatemi.com