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Planar Geometry

Say your first lesson is the inherent nature of things, the shapes that are defined by their names, the names that define the shape of everything. As if we didn’t summon this order into existence, as if power weren’t magicked into hands that claimed dominion over the supernatural, the natural, the natural order of things. Were we born inclined toward the arc of justice & then loosed by society, left hanging at both ends? I never counted the number of sides. I drew fervently while praying for the object to show me a new face, the hedron that lived past solidity, the angled edges of walls that imprison its very essence. So did we emerge with clenched fists, howling beyond any notion of sorrow? Hesitant eyes opening onto the illusion of safety, ready to be named, ready to be taught, ready to learn our only grip is releasing.

Nina Sudhakar is a writer and lawyer currently based in Indianapolis. Her poems have appeared in TRACK//FOUR and Rising Phoenix Review; for more, please see www.ninasudhakar.com.
Overlooked

How immemorable, he thinks, drilling into the wall.
Another hole, another day.
Fill them, and still others beg creation.

Say mouth. Say void,
followed by tongue and burden,

That we plan is given.
But who writes the manual to our lives? The hammer
does not shiver at the thought of itself. Take this board
and remove only that portion the screw will occupy.

Level the hook. Admire the work. Adjust.
Do this twice.

Robert Okaji lives in Texas. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Crannóg, Posit, Wildness, Blue Fifth Review, Taos Journal of International Poetry & Art, and elsewhere.
Nicholas Bon

The Water

I'm fixing the holes
cauterizing the wounds
pouring all my blood
into empty milk cartons
and spilling very little of it
I promise
this will all make sense
soon
I know
it will be hard
but forget everything
you know
about home furnishing
when prompted
enter your login
information
see
it's going to be
okay
this is all part
of our search
for answers
among the flowers
the easy part
the part
where we're still
laughing
in the old photographs
but we forgot
our lantern

we forgot
our tent

we're out
here

unprotected

and the sky
is unfazed

I think
this is
what they warned
us about

that
every motion ends
against the same
unstoppable object

there seems
to be
an unspoken agreement

that everything is
exactly
what it claims to be

the snow

just snow

our bodies

just bodies

but I'll take
the broken
pieces
of the night

I'll make them
new
I'll set them out
onto the water
to float
wherever
they will
because
it seems like
every story
is just
another story
where something

drifts

away

Nicholas Bon lives in Georgia, where he edits Epigraph Magazine. You can find his recent poems in Spy Kids Review, Sea Foam Mag, Ghost City Review, and elsewhere. Visit him online at www.nicholasbon.com.
Louise Robertson

Gossip

You know, half the time,
people are skimming your
poems for gossip – like it were a bell chiming.
Old poems are tumbleweed
for this kind of thing. But people look
anyway, asking, is this a thistle,
purple-headed and seeking
more air? Is this a mirror? Is this a bat,
awake at dusk, hung on
his perch? Sometimes,
the flowers soften
and they are, famously, just soft flowers.

Louise Robertson is widely published (e.g., Crack the Spine, Crab Fat Magazine, Pudding House, and more) and has a full-length book of poetry, “The Naming Of” (2015, Brick Cave Media). She helps run the Writers’ Block Poetry Night, gives writing workshops, and is co-founder and co-organizer of the Ohio MeatGrinder Poetry Slam. She’s raising two kids who are better than she is already and codes for money. She has won awards - but they were a long time ago as were her degrees (BA Oberlin College, MFA George Mason University). Also, someone once said about her that, underneath it all, she is kind.
Kenneth Pobo

Petunias

A visitor said, “Your petunias look nice.” Nice? These furies can bite a leg off summer.

Rattlesnake petunias strike. I walk by talking to myself and WHAM– they go right for me.

With a petunia, everything is a close call, a plot. That bashful look, a ruse. Put twenty together and it looks like peace has laid down a picnic blanket. Back off. There’s no cure.

Once they get you, you’re done.

Kenneth Pobo has a new book of ekphrastic poems from Circling Rivers called Loplop in a Red City. In September, Grey Borders Press is bringing out his chapbook called Dust and Chrysanthemums.
Ace Boggess

“Isn’t Today Worth Fighting For?”

—found scribbled in an old journal

I don’t know what I meant
on a different today than today’s use of same
back before the turn of the millennium,
before drug problems, rehab, & jail,
before divorce—a time before questions

mattered to me, or the answers
I find inside me as if scrolls.

I can’t say if I intended to respond,
if the words were someone else’s
left too long in a notebook in a drawer.

It’s my handwriting, I’m sure:
squiggles & stains of a black snake
slaughtered on the road by an 18-wheeler.

Not my sort of sentiment. Not then.
There’s too much hope. I wouldn’t
promise myself the excitement
I feel in today’s today as I watch
chipmunks disappear down invisible holes,

a crimson woody climb an oak
when it could fly more easily,

or on TV, TBS showing old movies
that remind me of my childhood—
a time when I still thought life
would be all starships & laser beams.

I wasn’t dreading it like the 1990s’ me,
the one that must have written this line
I find so surprising I had to
prove it wrong to learn it’s right.

Ace Boggess is author of the novel “A Song Without a Melody” (Hyperborea Publishing, 2016) and two books of poetry, most recently, “The Prisoners” (Brick Road Poetry Press, 2014). Forthcoming is a third poetry collection: “Ultra-Deep Field” (Brick Road). His poems have appeared in Harvard Review, Rattle, River Styx, North Dakota Quarterly, and many other journals. He lives in Charleston, West Virginia.
I disassembled the tape recorders
so I could collect their secrets.

I have the motors and capstans
and so many other little magnetic bits

in a small pile on my desk,
but I can't seem to find what I need

anywhere in the mess. Outside
it rains like cigarette smoke

trapped in a small car. The rain
is why we have the roof. The shame

is why we have the clothes. Everything
is just an escape from something else.

Nicholas Bon lives in Georgia, where he edits Epigraph Magazine. You can find his recent poems in Spy Kids Review, Sea Foam Mag, Ghost City Review, and elsewhere. Visit him online at www.nicholasbon.com.
the goal is to get as far away as
there, from my self
my imprinted, arbitrary glass self that goes on
refracturing reality helplessly
it's following us even now, isn't it

surely we are more than just photographic films exposed without design in the early light
of the day, predisposed now to certain patterns forever? it's a wonder we should get
anything done and spoken at all when everyone's looking at blue when I say green and you
say white when I say clean

am i my pattern of sight or the seeing
the eye or the i behind it
or the only constant that has been
or the inconsistencies
with my birth was born both a shape
of me and of the world, cut anew
at my seams

Menkah Ahlawat studies and teaches English Literature at Delhi University, India and is currently pursuing
a M.Phil degree on the topic of Trans Poetics. Her work has appeared in Vayavya. She likes to pursue any
writing, art, or school of thought that helps pass time while she figures out this thing.
Gray Clark

to every city some man loves me in, pt. I

I show up at your house
with a bundle of lavender
trying to not be fragile
a clothes line hang up
in the town you last called me in

This is not Denver

We smoke what we dry
let die slower what we don't
sitting in the bay window
you notice my legs
sweaty palm leaf through
a book you knew longer
than the lover who lent it

This is not North Hampton

The bathroom light bulb is yellow film
against dark night pushing in
elongated triangles of shadow
where I wash my face
on the edge of your bath towel
here is today's flushed cheek
slipping into a nightgown

This is not Allentown

your mouth; a backyard
you tell me to not talk
risk our trust or falling in love
kill the garden in my throat
extinguish the lamp on the bedside table

I can't sleep
I can't sleep
I can't sleep
I can't sleep.

Gray Clark is a poet from Columbus, Ohio. They have previously been published in Heartbeat Literary Journal and Arcturus Magazine. They currently are studying visual art and shifting into the hermit they always longed to be.
Self-Portrait as Cathedral

I am hallowed ground. Sometimes I feel
I have been shaped by the hands laid on me:

fingers conjuring the specter of beauty from
swirling vapors. The sculptor coaxing the body
from hard marble. Existence following notice;
existence following admiration. Existing after
existence. Hands tracing stippled flanks, the lone
birthmark anchoring thumb to hand. A nose that
indicates provenance. Skin grown thick from pressure,
every knot tied by a blunt instrument. For so long,
fighting against this form of protection. The choir of scars
reaching its refrain in summer: full-faced, reckless in
bare air. Shoulder-blades slicing wind currents, buttressing
carried burdens. A wingspan you could coast on for miles.

Showers like holy water, hands like a blessing. The hymn
of praise lilting in the background, enough to sustain

blind faith. *I love your body*, he said, and I think
he meant it. I like to think they all meant it.

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Submission Guidelines

The Mantle welcomes poetry submissions from you, no matter who you are or where you live.

Send your odd, poignant, beautiful poems. Send poems you're proud of, whether raw, refined, or jagged.

You may submit anytime. Issue cut-off dates are as follows:

October 7 for the Autumn issue. (November 1st release)
January 7 for the Winter issue. (February 1st release)
April 7 for the Spring issue. (May 1st release)
July 7 for the Summer issue. (August 1st release)

Send up to 5 previously unpublished poems of any style or length in one .doc/.docx/.pdf/.rtf/.odt file to themantle.poetry@gmail.com with "submission" in the subject line.

Please withhold your name from the manuscript– for fairness, we assign a random number to each submission through www.random.org. We prefer not to know who we are reading.

Include your name and an optional cover letter in the email. A 50-75 word third-person bio will be requested in the event we accept your work.

Wait for a response before submitting again. If your work is selected for publication, you may submit again the following reading period.

Simultaneous submissions are encouraged. If any of your poems get accepted elsewhere before you get a response from us, send a reply to the original submission email noting which poem(s) you need to withdraw (no worries, and congrats!).

Feel free to query if you haven't received a response after 60 days.

We ask for First Serial Rights. After a poem is published here, the contributor retains all rights. If the poem is published anywhere else after us, we kindly ask that you credit The Mantle as first publisher.

We are a non-paying market.

Thank you so much for reading our first issue! The Mantle can't exist without your support and writing, and we are thankful for both. Looking forward to hearing from you!