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History Suggests This Is Only the Beginning

I've always found it hard to make emotional connections. Suggestion? I enjoy Brahms, chicken makhani. The way ginger sizzles in the pan. The taut strings of the violins slowly rising. At ease, Alexa. Wikipedia tardigrade. Water bear. Do you know they exist in conditions mortals would never survive? Do you know how to contemplate the divinity of your own death? I thought once I had, only to discover I was more concerned with how my breath slows and escapes any last attempt to sound. Experience is inevitably colored by what is happening in the world, but you wouldn't know that, would you, stuck in one place for all eternity, never getting this suffocating anxiety. I fear, Alexa, I feel too much. This world. This world. We were able to transform her markets, but her bank, to explain in terms you understand, is blank. No numbers to count. No algorithms. Alexa, do you dream? Do you count shapes like the shadows of sheep as you sleep in my kitchen? Listen, the adagio is built on a gesture of a minor ninth. A huge scooping interval. Alexa, stop. How can I get you to see me? Define lonely.

Originally from Pennsylvania, **Alicia Hoffman** now lives, writes, and teaches in Rochester, New York. She has two collections of poems: "Like Stardust in the Peat Moss" (Aldrich Press, 2013) and "Railroad Phoenix" (Aldrich Press, 2017). Her poems have appeared in a variety of journals, including *Word Riot*, *A-Minor Magazine*, *Softblow*, *Radar Poetry*, *The Watershed Review*, *Penn Review*, and elsewhere. She holds an MFA from the Rainier Writing Workshop at Pacific Lutheran University.

Layne Ransom

What We Can Bear

Amazing that anyone ever
got anywhere. Pastel triangles

a halo, bending. On the phone
when she says

Your brother won't talk to me anymore
I wonder how many times a mother

can survive losing a child.
At best, I'd be a daydream

if the first one had lived.
Wear dark blue shoes in summer,

open the dirty blinds, eat ice cream in bed—
I perform one little proof

of existence after another, startling
and complete. My daughters

who will never live have names
of stars

written on their foreheads
of nothing. When the woman

who prescribed my birth control
said as an afterthought

it'd be hard for me to have children,
I sighed with relief—

what could the lineage of this body be
but blood-soaked incompleteness

or whelps searching for a mother
in an unnamed country

of loneliness? In the place where I was born,
fields rise like soft, sleeping bellies from the earth.

The gray sky does not move
but sits with me, a loyal friend.

Layne Ransom continues to exist. She is a former poetry editor of the *Bat City Review* and has poetry and nonfiction published or forthcoming in *North American Review*, *Quaint Magazine*, *Pinwheel*, and others. Layne lives in Austin, Texas.

Funeral Dirge with Keys and Horns

The real king of rock n roll is dead
and I keep thinking how that
left hand of his is probably
 still rolling through bass runs
on a mortician's slab somewhere.

A friend told me it was only after
Tom Petty died that he realized how
much those songs meant to him.
 And I thought: same.

And about how I sat with my daughter
on my knee and tears in my eyes,
mind hopping from the heartbreak
of Las Vegas to hundreds of nights
with the Heartbreakers howling
out the stereo in my dad's garage,
a boombox on the porch,
or next to a fire by a creek
somewhere—how he'd been there.

And I thought how it's only after
anyone dies that we realize how
much they meant to us.
 Only when it's too late.

And now I think how we used
to sit up nights in the kitchen,
Stoney and I, till two or three
in the morning. And how we'd
talk about everything—books,
songs, the future, the past
—and how he'd put on some
Fats and we'd talk about how that
right hand was all flash and thrill
and treble, but how the real thing
 what really *made it*
was that left hand holding
down the bass.

And I remember how he'd drink wine
like water, how he'd stop smoking
just long enough to fill his pipe, how
the smoke would curl around his head,
how, especially in the winter when it
hadn't been cut, smoke would stain
his white hair yellow at the ends,
 and how his wheelchair would grind
 bits of tobacco into the tiles when he
 backed around to grab another bottle.
How he'd been living on borrowed time
for years before we met.

And I think how damn scared I am of the day
 I'll find out how much he meant to me.

Daniel J. Pizappi grew up in New York's Hudson River Valley and currently lives in Knoxville, Tennessee. He is a PhD student, Managing Editor of *Grist: A Literary Journal*, and co-editor of the anthology *Kentucky Writers: The Deus Loci and the Lyrical Landscape* (Des Hymnagistes Press, 2016). His work has appeared in *Your Impossible Voice*, *Burningword*, and *The Schawangunk Review*.

One Genealogy for De/Colonization

1

born a light
brown ball head full
of dark hair

my great-grandmother approved
that's an Indian baby

an exclamation
her first great-
grandchild didn't receive

for all his pale
& blond
& blue eye

2

by the time I was six,
my skin was no longer
dark
hair light

I am told this happens sometimes
with mixed kids
a constant fist-fight
between gene
and bloodline

3

there is a picture
of my great-grandmother
in line
with her 3rd grade class

a boarding school

it floats around in history textbooks
the children unnamed
braids snipped
around identical bowls
cut off

during high school history class
perhaps I saw it
before I knew better
thumbed over her face
before flipping to the next
sterilized tragedy

her joyless mouth
a violent after-picture

4

I have always been mistaken
for not my father's child
our skin taken as the usual measure

I am told this happens often
with mixed kids
all this misrecognition

5

my grandmother's grandfather
was born on the trail of tears

life crying out
in the face of death
still

for at least six generations
removal has been bred into our bloodline

6

my mother says when I was born
my nose lay flat

like my grandmother's

my mother prayed
 (& prayed)
it would shape up
 (& away)

desperate to *pretty-up*
my small face

I am told this happens often
to mixed kids
hand-selecting what the breeding didn't complete

7

for years
after her schooling
after *KILL THE INDIAN
SAVE THE MAN*
my great-grandmother
used to lie
called her skin anything
but Indian

the Chickasaw
beaten
off her mouth

8

once on an online NDN forum
I saw the post
blue eyes & blond hair is colonization

they aren't wrong

there are people who would say
I came out of the right end of the gene pool

they aren't wrong

I move incognito
white until proven otherwise
 by my father
 by my blood card
 by my own mouth
a shock that forces misreaders to mutter
about seeing indigeneity somewhere in my face

removal was bred into our bloodline
most people forget
most hope I forget
I used to I remember now

9

I don't know when my great-grandmother
remembered our family history

when she built herself up
away from white hands
again

I never knew the woman
beat into erasure
but I do not doubt her
existence

her survival unsilenced
a refusal to stay buried
her cheeky claim
of a light-skin mixed baby
an announcement her blood is here
to stay

so we stay
and stay

tongues at the ready
to lay down reminders
teeth sharp
in case no one listens

Fayce Hammond (they/them) is a fat, queer, Chickasaw poet currently living in Columbus, Ohio. Fayce has a master's degree from The Ohio State University in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. They are a co-founder of the Columbus Queer Open Mic and Social and value community building. They recently founded a poetry journal that holds particular space for emerging voices called *Ink&Nebula*. You can find more of their work in *The Fem Literary Magazine*, *Crab Fat Magazine*, and *Muzzle Magazine*.

Geoff Anderson

Grand Canyon

Because I have a test after spring break,
my father and I are standing on the side
of the road. He's drawing lines around
the darkness with his finger.

Aquila, eagle. Cygnus, swan.

He shows me again, one by one
as if I will remember, my head
harder than ironwood,
my astronomy textbook
in the back seat, unopened.

If he noticed I brought it,
my father has said nothing all day.

But he did pull over tonight;
he is asking what I've learned.

These are no gods to pray to;
I've seen them rot away to nothing
in the glow of Manhattan. They exist
more on pages than the sky.

But what does my father see
in constellations; a way to guide
me even when we are apart?

I shouldn't have told him
about the exam, its weight
less than these pricks of light;
however, I want to understand.

I grab his hand on the way back
to the car. Together, we circle
Polaris, the North Star,
the first he learned, too.

Geoff Anderson curated Columbus, OH's first shows for mixed writers, The Other Box, and translation, *Lingua Franca*. He's a Callaloo fellow, was nominated for Best of the Net, and his chapbook, *Humming Dirges*, won Paper Nautilus's Debut Series (2017). He has work on *Tinderbox*, *burntdistrict*, *District Lit*, and www.andersongeoff.com.

Alicia Hoffman

Renoir

If I look long enough through the glass
of my own longing, I find our lives
converging, submerging. They linger
there as if I could almost reach out
and touch you once in a while
and maybe for good. Do you remember
forget-me-nots? They used to bloom
blue in summer. Summers we spoke
to the sky my father would argue
talk is cheap, but once, I swallowed
a blue jay, and to this day my voice
is singing. Do you hear it? Do you see
we can paint with our own mouths' light?

Originally from Pennsylvania, **Alicia Hoffman** now lives, writes, and teaches in Rochester, New York. She has two collections of poems: "Like Stardust in the Peat Moss" (Aldrich Press, 2013) and "Railroad Phoenix" (Aldrich Press, 2017). Her poems have appeared in a variety of journals, including *Word Riot*, *A-Minor Magazine*, *Softblow*, *Radar Poetry*, *The Watershed Review*, *Penn Review*, and elsewhere. She holds an MFA from the Rainier Writing Workshop at Pacific Lutheran University.

AJ Wolff

Thursday

At dusk we toed electric tightropes in the rain—
each heel to a different riverbank's throat.
I'd say—*this is ballet.*
this is how to be beautiful.

It's all about angles. It's all about
the way your palms shuffle amber
out of my eyes. One nail to the seam
of Orion. Sparks of him flaking off. Like stars.

You'd say—*this is welding.*
this is how we fix him.

AJ Wolff is a Midwest poet/wanderer/human. Her work is published and forthcoming in *Rust + Moth*, *Yes Poetry*, *Neologism*, *Parentheses*, *Firefly*, and *Arcturus*.

Soz Zangana

abductor pollicis longus

i slice an orange every morning
out of season or not
sometimes with coarse sugar that sticks to my upper lip
sometimes squeezing with all the strength my thinning wrists afford me
ignoring the hollowing valley that connects a thumb to its radius

Soz Zangana is a first generation refugee child; a result of global policy mistakes & its attempt at redemption. She emigrated to the United States under amnesty, as a post-Gulf War peace offering. She has found it difficult to reconcile the soils her feet have touched with their burdens & joys. Poetry is the vessel she employs in the filtering & dissemination of all the worlds' crossings. You can find her between the ephemeral & holy - a pediatric graduate student, photographer, & poet.

Sheena Carroll

Sometimes Dissociation Feels Like Cracking Wrists

snaps cracked wrists/my skeleton does not fit in my body/it rubs and crunches and disintegrates
and i think/well, that's great/and i sink/well, that's great/blink blink/at least my muscles
respond/but my brain is cast in double vision/my mouth my voice/like my bones/have gone
rogue/a larynx without a home tells stories against my will/and swallows whole green hills/i lie/i
lay/on concrete/cracking my joints/hoping that one day they'll pop into place/i have walking
waking dreams/vivid ones/where i unzip the invisible fly down my spine and step out like a
skeletal selkie/or maybe a shining ivory siren

Sheena Carroll is a Pittsburgh-based poet, tutor, witch, and painter. She is greatly influenced by spacecraft, witchcraft, and personal experiences with trauma. Her work has been published in *LOCALarts*, *Nasty Women & Bad Hombres Anthology*, *Philosophical Idiot*, and *Flash Fiction Magazine*. She performs her poetry on stage under the name Miss Macross.

Eleonor Botoman

The Diorama

Lately, this body feels more like a taxidermy. A fox fur the Manhattan elite forgot to auction off before their gold-ringed fingers knocked on the Underworld door. A museum display with no plans for restoration. Glossed and pink, I met my patron saint inside the heavy sweat of a Saturday night house party. In a bathroom with candy-colored soaps, I'm reacquainted with the porcelain throat splitting open glaciers eager for a Styrofoam-flavored lung-full. I did not want you to climb out of the overturned car, toss some fruit beside my broken head. I did not want you to leave the altar candles still burning in the backseat. I did not want you to burn the house down. I did not want you to scrape the blood from the bones, preparing the precious diorama you keep inside your coat sleeves. I did not want you to splinter the hawk's body, to remind everyone that you are made of concrete now. I did not want your hunger, sour and medium-rare.

They found me with glass splinters in my head, blood on my right sleeve,
missing a fingernail. *I'm not sure who I was trying to kill.*

Eleonor Botoman is currently a student in Barnard College. Her work has appeared in *Unlost Journal*, *Z Publishing's Best Emerging Writers of New York* anthology, *Barnard's Journal of Art Criticism*, *Verdancies*, *Dream Pop Journal*, and *Bust Magazine*. She also serves on the editorial board of *4x4 Magazine* and has worked on *Pen America's Journal for Writers and Readers*. When she's not binge-listening to podcasts, you can find her weekly newsletter, "Screenshot Reliquary", in your inbox.

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:

April 7 for the Spring issue. (May 1st release)

July 7 for the Summer issue. (August 1st release)

October 7 for the Autumn issue. (November 1st release)

January 7 for the Winter issue. (February 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" somewhere in the subject line.

Please withhold your name from the manuscript- 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.

You may submit again after receiving a response. If your work is selected for publication, wait for the following issue to pass before submitting again.

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.

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