

THE MANTLE

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THE MANTLE

#5

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Each poem belongs to its respective author

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Table of Contents

Julia Norton - Cipher for Seventh Grade	3
Catherine Weiss - nonbinosaurus rex	4
Virginia Bach Folger - The Dead Come to Me in Dreams	6
Hunter Lewinski - Usufruct	7
Mimi German - Among Antlers	8
Julia Norton - Don't Bring This One to Adam	9
Catherine Weiss - what do dogs know	11
Michael Prihoda - bb gun	12
sally burnette - selected edible mushrooms of north carolina	13
Julia Merante - Alcohol Addiction is 50% Genetics and 50% Poor Coping Skills	16
Submission Guidelines	17

Julia Norton

Cipher for Seventh Grade

Through the bus window,
farmland bowing under hot breath.
The postcard barn, the rough-hewn fence
at dawn- sunlight sifting through a cluster of trees and
gleaming off the side of a backhoe.

My thighs stuck to the vinyl seat. Legs stiff,
shoes on the gum-studded floor.
The bus lurched to a stop and my limbs
jerked into the aisle, half-numb.

Late night in the shower, hair washing
down the drain in a flood of strawberry foam.

I had learned I was topography from the neck down.
That my bare legs were pins, my figure a grenade.
Were I yanked by the ankle, the artifacts of my girlhood
would detonate and the shrieking would deafen every man
within a thousand miles. Sex would be an evaporation of my matter.

Walking home, late August, Carolina.
The skins of worms baking in the sun
'til brown and brittle, littering the new sidewalks like
the shells of peanuts after ballgames.

Julia Norton is from North Carolina by way of Rockville, Maryland. She is a poet, blogger, and podcaster. Her poetry has also appeared in *Rust + Moth* and *Haikuniverse*. You can find her discussing the writing life at Voyage and Verse on iTunes, and talking up her adopted hometown at thetriangleguide.com.

Catherine Weiss

nonbinosaurus rex

when i was a girl i assumed i would grow up to be a paleontologist
mostly because i wasn't aware of all the other options
or how it would eventually feel
to dig and dig and dig
only to uncover something obsolete
some stone formed body
a few pressure-crushed fragments
destined to be cobbled together
into a guesswork construct
just so mankind can pretend
they've found the whole monster
earned the right to name it

in 1869, edward cope discovered the elasmosaurus
but in his haste to publish before his rival
cope reassembled the aquatic dinosaur back to front
head attached to the tail instead of the neck
a blueprint scrambled in the confusion of passing millennia

my 5th grade crush asked me out
by leaving a clammy-palmed message
on our family answering machine
i refused to call him back
even though 110% of what i wanted out of life at the time
was to be publicly adored by this specific boy
instead i practiced the piano melodramatically
one-half of a wistful duet until bedtime

i want to excavate girlhood like people dig up dinosaur bones
to revel in the slow astonishment of time compressing
childhood desire like a wet spine depressed into my mudslick history
each fossilized mystery distorted by the weight of whatever happened next

i feel a bit like the elasmosaurus
like maybe i got myself largely correct
but also fundamentally backwards

when i was a girl i assumed i would grow up to be a woman
mostly because i wasn't aware of all the other options
or how it would eventually feel
to dig and dig and dig
only to uncover something obsolete
some stone formed body
a few pressure-crushed fragments
destined to be cobbled together
into a guesswork construct
just so mankind can pretend
they've found the whole monster
earned the right to name us

Catherine Weiss is a poet based in Western MA. They were the 2017 Grand Slam Champion and the 2018 WOWPS rep of Northampton Poetry. In 2017 they co-founded Pulp Slam, and are a member of the inaugural Pulp Slam team headed to Nationals in August 2018. Their work has been published in *Freezeray Poetry*, *Gravel Mag*, *Voicemail Poems*, *Jersey Devil Press*, *Drunk in a Midnight Choir*, *Buck Off Mag*, *Noble/Gas Quarterly*, and elsewhere. For more: <http://catherineweiss.com>.

Virginia Bach Folger

The Dead Come to Me in Dreams

My ex-husband arrives first and opines we both could have should have been kinder each to the other. He could have supported me during our son's illness I could have praised the things he did instead of complaining about the things he didn't say I find myself agreeing until I recall in life he always demanded agreement I turn and pull the blanket over my shoulder. In a corner of the room Aunt Edna raves about the cherry blossoms in Branch Brook Park how beautiful how sweet-smelling My two grandmothers are talking together as they never did on earth One only bemoans how the streets of Paris are so dirty The other speaks of dahlias and weeping willows then moves to her garden bench with its lion-carved marble legs and waits for my father who does not appear When I am again alone my cousin comes forth to say that it death I think she means isn't as bad as we might imagine She says as she did in our last visit together *It's not the end of the world* although then she was talking about insulin injections

Virginia Bach Folger lives in Schenectady, New York. She belongs to Wednesday Writers at Schenectady County Public Library and Hudson Valley Writers Guild. Jobs she has held are: gas station attendant, paralegal, claims adjuster, and corporate learning and development manager. Her poems have been published in: *Constellations*, *Adanna*, *The Fourth River*, and *Lumina*.

Hunter Lewinski

Usufruct

so serenity soft
serenity could be

snowy owl, marsh mud
- between the spine

the sallow postcard
cleaved, thumbing open
the book

pg.
72, Paine:

*the means must be
an obliteration of knowledge;*

*and it has never yet been
discovered,*

how to make man unknow

why I associate posterity with the cold
and tragedy with museums

what am I but
a schematic of forgetting

drawn with
the haunted etching
of horses' hair &

the blistering horizon
& the drip
of perspiration off
my nose, watching it peel
like paint chipping off
my face, my face painted with
the paint of myself
also chipping off.

Hunter Lewinski is a student at Hamilton College studying Creative Writing and History. Outside of writing, Hunter co-hosts a college radio program and plays guitar in the Hamilton College Jazz Band. His work has been previously published or is forthcoming in *Riggwelter*, *By&By Poetry*, *Fourth & Sycamore*, and *Anon Magazine*.

Mimi German

Among Antlers

winter sun scalds your skin of memory
of warmth shattering all reserves beneath the callous

your eyes so almost frozen in the wind the rain
prevented me from going bankrupt

walking past my heart i see you
your shirt wet clinging

hope never hides inside hollow cans
and days just a latch to let in the same

tin bending rain and my heart weeping
we are dry standing tinder

tomorrow is eight letters meaningless
today another rivulet

i can only house you here among antlers
this pasture where mountain goats gather

Mimi German is a poet and activist for the houseless community in Portland, OR. She is currently studying poetry in the Poet Studio at the Attic Institute. You can find her poems in *NewVerseNews*, *Public Pool* and *Ariel Chart*.

Don't Bring This One to Adam

Every night, the moon
I am not meant to call upon. Scooping
out the seeds, flinging them into the dark,
calling them stars. If I sunk
my teeth into the universe,
would the divine drip
down my chin? Should I
denominate the dewdrops one by one?

Every morning, unearthing
the safety coffins.
The words stretching, undulating
into the syllables I drag up my throat
and over my tongue.
I'm a lousy cobbler, gilding Everything
with a name before I walk through it.

In my tower, throwing bones to the floor to assemble.
Assemble.
As-sem-ble.
Looking for skeletons I recognize.
"Talpa europaea.
Mus minutoides.
Draconem."

At Reynisfjara, squeezing black beads of sand
in my fist. Basalt columns stacked high on the beach.
Strange rocks jutting from the water. Strange-
that I should call them strange.

The ant wending through the imperfections
of the house. Paper peeling from the wall,
away from yellowing glue.
Somewhere, sweat trickling
down the curve of your back.

The commas, your silhouette
coiled into sleep.
Blank spaces for the gasp.
Shoving (shov-ing) my
ego into the empty.

Romance and panic are
different edges of the same
bright blade. I can't slip one
between my ribs without being
pierced by the other.

No, I should not subjugate
my feeling to the rattling soliloquy.
Damn finding the lover in the landscape.
Damn finding the landscape in the lover.

How should I live? Dancing with my unrest?
Barefoot and naming the pebbles embedded hot in my heels?
Cloister me in the mouth-to-mouth.
I swear the grass
still whispers. Let it be.

Julia Norton is from North Carolina by way of Rockville, Maryland. She is a poet, blogger, and podcaster. Her poetry has also appeared in *Rust + Moth* and *Haikuniverse*. You can find her discussing the writing life at Voyage and Verse on iTunes, and talking up her adopted hometown at thetriangleguide.com.

Catherine Weiss

what do dogs know

what do dogs know about windows / or faces / what about
hands / what hands can break / how do i
measure someone else's nothings / or / why
should i count my own echoing wants / what
does a dog know about boundaries / the
stern no / the met glance / or the broken /
tongued words and tooth / full / and
running spit / what do dogs know about
history / or terrible decisions / what's a
mirror to a dog / besides a one-sided love
story / a smooth surface / very pretty / this
/ a dead polished / stone / looking back at
me with hungry / skin / what goes unspoken
/ what's said / unwisely / what do dogs
know about secrets / an open door as
invitation / a closed one as a wall / what is a
bone / to a dog / except bloody-mouthed
kissing / relief / is not the same as the
digging hole / else / what do dogs know
about / devotion / that i might bury /
deeper /

Catherine Weiss is a poet based in Western MA. They were the 2017 Grand Slam Champion and the 2018 WOWPS rep of Northampton Poetry. In 2017 they co-founded Pulp Slam, and are a member of the inaugural Pulp Slam team headed to Nationals in August 2018. Their work has been published in *Freezeray Poetry*, *Gravel Mag*, *Voicemail Poems*, *Jersey Devil Press*, *Drunk in a Midnight Choir*, *Buck Off Mag*, *Noble/Gas Quarterly*, and elsewhere. For more: <http://catherineweiss.com>.

Michael Prihoda

bb gun

my father
got the bb gun

& later he got
the rabbit

who'd been
rutting

the berry
patches.

its body slumped
against the storm drain

as my father returned
like the Second Coming

with gloves to resurrect
that dwarfish heartbeat.

after years i'd dig for bone,
to find how swift

a heart decays
when locked in earth.

Michael Prihoda is a poet, editor, and teacher living in central Indiana. He is the editor of *After the Pause*, an experimental literary magazine and small press. His work has received nominations for the Pushcart Prize and the Best of the Net. He is the author of eight poetry collections, the most recent of which is *Years Without Room* (Weasel Press, 2018).

sally burnette

selected edible mushrooms of north carolina

i. indigo lactarius

the blue milk
tattoos my skin

as the fleshy cap detonates
between my thighs

like a dye pack

ii. beefsteak polypore

see that sunburned liver
frisbeed into a chestnut trunk

cup the pale underneath
tough thawing tongue

sour pink cocaine
scrub your gums with the spores

excise the organ using both hands
wring out the blood

iii. fragrant chanterelle

the waxy cluster
of radioactive cornflakes

sits on the cutting board untouched
my grandmother says

*gotta eat em while they're fresh & young
the older they get the worse they taste*

i tuck the biggest one behind my ear
& admire my reflection in a paring knife

iv. chicken of the woods

at first these gill-less shelves
look like a melted creamsicle

mangled in its wrapper
but i hear with the right seasoning

it tastes just like bojangles'

v. black trumpet

when you die i'll dig a cylindrical hole
& slip you down it

like a piece of chalk
into a soil test tube

i'll tilt your head up
& cover it with moss & a prayer

written on a beech leaf
& it'll rain goat's milk all afternoon

by late summer
you'll be buzzing away

until i return
to harvest your instruments

vi. witches' butter

when i die put my ashes
in a mountain dew can

& bury it with a wet pine log
under the waning moon

the first day you don't think about me
i'll cover your door with my jelly spell

& you'll stab me with straight pins
til i've leaked all my juices

my fruiting body rots

vii. lion's mane

white & droopy
saprophytic

yeah
that's how i like it

soak it in vinegar
pull it like pork

extract the beard-teeth
one by one & repeat after me:

i am loved
i am not

sally burnette is the author of the chapbooks *laughing plastic* (Broken Sleep Books) and *Special Ultimate: Baby's Story: a Documentary* (Ghost City Press). They are originally from North Carolina but currently live in Boston and read flash fiction for *Split Lip Magazine*. Say hi via [Twitter](#) or [their website](#).

Julia Merante

Alcohol Addiction Is 50% Genetics & 50% Poor Coping Skills

I did not know that glass could talk-
but it told me to kiss it gently
like it wanted to be loved;

we both did.
It even kissed me back.

They say that when
buttercup flowers glow golden
under chin-
 meaning: she must like butter.

and this is why she cannot
be hung when

she was born
to drown.

Julia Merante is a junior at SUNY Geneseo in Upstate New York. She currently studies English, Biology, and Human Development. She hopes to earn her MFA, and possibly attend law school. She has a poetry concentration, and is excited to see where her writing takes her. She loves reading, watching movies with her mom, and suffers from a terrible shopping addiction. She has been previously published in *Red Queen Magazine* and *Minute Magazine*. She is grateful for all opportunities, and for those who continue to spread the beauty of language throughout the world.

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" 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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