

THE MANTLE

Issue 9
Summer 2019

THE MANTLE

#9

VOLUME III, ISSUE I
August 15, 2019

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I Think I Know More About the World Than I Used To

in 7th grade i was sure my crush would love me if
we wore the same size shoes
so i convinced my parents to buy me
sneakers to grow on

this was my Very Good Plan for getting a boyfriend

at the pool party i tried to show mikey i was ready
for him to ask me out
look! we both wear size 9 ha ha
he glanced at my feet and said
yours are women's not men's
we still wear different sizes

i tell this story like it's funny because
dramatic irony is when
the audience knows something
the characters don't &
i've read a lot of memes
about gender since 1998

i am trying to figure out
how i am a feminist
and still hate the word tender

by 8th grade i hoped if i called the pretty ones boring
enough times i might steal all their boyfriends

tell me, if life isn't a competition
why am i trying so hard to win it

one time i ran the mile in gym and my face stayed red for hours

one time i flashed my brand-new tit-things
at some grownups just trying to have a quiet lunch

one time i emailed my friend
from a fake hotmail to say
nobody likes you because you're a bitch

i explain all this to help you understand why
i resented the spice girls

there were so many
and none of them were me

Catherine Weiss

But Anyway, How Are You

i seem to be doing this thing lately where i preface
the answer to *how have you been?* by saying
i'm sure this is just the depression talking, but...
before i launch into some over-wrought discourse
about bees and ocean acidity and how photosynthesis works
(though i do not know how photosynthesis works)
to lament our dying planet and how humanity is doomed
and then i explain that it occurred to me the other night
after watching much-too-much netflix that all the art
that's ever been made throughout history will stop having
significance the moment nobody is left alive to argue over it
not the 90s one-hit-wonders or the not-read stacks of new yorkers
and i'm pretty sure an unread poem still counts
but i worry an unreadable poem is just a bunch
of molecules that threw a tantrum one time
and then i go on to explain to my visibly horrified
spouse/friend/colleague that i've been spiraling
because the emptiness humankind will leave behind
is already sorrowing the backyard songbirds and
isn't the impending silence just impossibly tragic?? i ask
and then i do the worst thing of all which is laugh
dishonestly at my overwhelming anguish and confusion
before finally blaming this whole outburst on
the obvious target of *february* with a shrug that
assures everyone my fear is not so large that i can't
tuck it politely into my pocket and get back to work
and it's only much later after i have driven home and had
a good sullen sit and the cheesy half of a burrito
that it even occurs to me any of this might in truth
have actually been the depression talking and it's not
that i'm too cool for hope it's that mental illness
is just something about my body i have gotten used to
like fatness or knee-caps but sometimes there's a sunny
patch of snow over by the fence and i am alone in the kitchen
for a minute neither sad nor un-sad and then i remember
that eventually there may be thaw

Catherine Weiss is a poet + artist + organizer based in Western Massachusetts. Their work has been published or is forthcoming in *Tinderbox*, *Up the Staircase Quarterly*, *Counterclock*, *Noble/Gas Quarterly*, and elsewhere. You can find Catherine at most any New England agricultural fair – she's the one admiring the prize hog, covered in powdered sugar and doughboy grease, and flirting with full-blown heatstroke – or you can check out <http://catherineweiss.com>.

Maddie Ticknor

Doomed for Your Approval

I've had plenty of dreams about losing my shoes at the party

I watch my friends leave without me

Do you remember the first romance you ever noticed

Do you remember finding orchids pressed into your book

Don't ever pull the emergency cord it's actually an unblossomed wisteria

It's a good idea to make a list of every worry you have in a day

Everyone has a cause for concern

My hair tie is tight and my hand might fall off

There might not be enough hot water for me

I don't even know what kind of doubter I am

My history is refracted

My friend Grace is worried that Brooklyn will go on forever

The car horn is my alarm clock, I have to go

Does your problem always have to be my problem

My calendar of grief is wide open

I am comfortable or I can at least exhale on the generally banal fringes

A corpse is always honest, cold as stone

Maddie Ticknor

Online Dating

Would you love me if I was a beautiful respectful sugar daddy

feel free to ask more and yes I'm serious

would you love me if I was a weird cutie with a fat ass

If I was a country gal living in the city

If I was aggressively late and lowkey trying to find a summer job

If I was not here for a long time just for a good time

If I was not New York LA MIAMI

If I offered to carry the groceries

If I was a spontaneous free spirit with old school values

If I told you I was only looking for someone to be the horse's rear end in my Halloween costume

I'm looking for someone to bring home to Hawaii

Looking for someone with air conditioning

Looking for a Manhattan based litigation attorney

Would you love me if I was only one mile away

If I was 6 miles away

I'm not here to make friends I'm here to win

Maddie Ticknor

Dear Computer

Here I am so selfish,
sucking on my teeth, staring at my screen.
I wish you could kill me; I wish you could spit on me
and drain me of my blood.
All the infallible charm, astonishing beauty,
the infinite knowledge of many languages
can't hide forever the cold and profound loneliness
I feel with you.
I look in the mirror at my skin and my hair
and my skeleton so awake, feel my secret places
lost in the miles of digital asphalt and concrete,
nice and smooth for us to drive on.
Take the progress and smash it with a hammer! Throw it in the trash!
I'll check in occasionally to tell my friends how I'm spending my money.

Maddie Ticknor

Draw a Window for Me

Ask me to bring the rhubarb
Let me write in your journal
Tell me you'll call me back
Steal my shorts and never give them back
Snore in my ear while I'm trying to sleep
Let me lie here and tell me the truth
I'll light your cigarette through the phone
Let me be an animal and you be one too

Maddie Ticknor

American Loneliness

What's more of a nature poem - a river of trash in the subway tracks or a fox grazing on late night road kill
Turn the clock forward to trick me into waking up for breakfast or make a mud house with a rusty fork
Flowers look pretty even when they die or how often I think of my life as something growing inside of me
Do you want to talk on the phone in an hour or do you want to lie on my floor and hum

What's more of a nature poem - rats loafing on the trash-night sidewalk
or a snake hanging from wood slats in the ceiling
Have a nice day and avoid confrontation or come and watch the planes take off with me
Its against the rules and very dangerous to be entertained by gum
and also to write landscape poetry without cigarette filters and car alarms
Get bangs and look like my mommy or keep the change inside my canvas bag hanging in the closet
Is this a nature poem: I call you cheap because you let me buy the groceries

What's more of a nature poem - falling asleep on the porch or waking up to the credits
The nearest mall is 45 minutes away or I know we haven't talked lately but I wanted to wish you happy birthday
What about this one: reading the bible or drooling on the cover
Do you wash your feet at the end of the day because they're dirty or because you love me
On Memorial Day we tried to visit Pops' grave but we couldn't find a parking space
I'm coming back in June

Maddie Ticknor is from central New York and currently lives in Brooklyn. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *Susie Magazine*, *Three Gummy Worms*, *Lewis & Clark Literary Review*, and *Post Mortem*. She works at a literary agency and more of her poetry can be found on instagram @runnyprose.

Ashley Steineger

Small Town Living

If you fear needles, don't walk
barefoot except in your own garden.
If you grow roses, bears will eat you.
If you grow anything else, bears may eat you.
The neighbor, not the one who manufactures
crystal meth, but the lady who left
her teeth on your stoop yesterday,
will always make a better strawberry
rhubarb pie. If you don't enjoy
pie, bears might eat you.
They can smell who belongs.
If you have secrets, leave them
on a clothesline so the Southern wind
can blow them through town.
And if for some reason, you moved here
on purpose, to hear your heart
beat against the fragile cage
of your chest, or to stand unafraid
on dark and vacant streets,
then you're already a broken bone,
without sense. Bears will eat you.

Ashley Steineger is a poet, freelance writer, and mental health advocate. Her poetry and personal essays have appeared in *Mohave Heart*, *Tiny Spoon*, *The Mighty*, *Silver Birch Press* and *Life in Ten Minutes*. She received her MFA from Queen's University of Charlotte. Ashley currently lives in Raleigh, NC where she enjoys fishing, avoiding small talk, and tattoos.

Mothra: The Song Remains

...the beads of time pass slow,
tired eyes on the sunrise,
waiting for the eastern glow.

--“The Battle of Evermore”, Led Zeppelin

1.

As drawn to California Sunlight, so I am drawn to you

You know your arms are not scales—even if you say so.
They shimmer—galactic, cosmic—and I have wanted nothing never
more than moments where your movements were a wavebreak
erupting to mine, seismic and somehow—completely quiet, every moment
you are here, earth is lost to me. We are un-shaping our chaos and I am rapturous
constellating to you, stars together, who cares what maw beneath, what stones break
waves. How can it be that when you roar, a kaleidoscope, so, *the world is spinning faster.*

2.

**Sweet Calcutta Rain loads my wings
and you descend forever**

what I remember most is precious
is that once we were not
starcrossed and
once is maybe
enough
to know that
you were really
here once
when you said

I'm here now--
my love for you
is ancient.

*

what I remember most is radiance
is that once we were not
tremors noxious and
thrice is maybe is maybe
enough to know that I ache
for knowing that
your hands were once here
You were really here, not once--
thrice—and thrice is maybe enough
when you said

I'll leave you--
my love for you
Is petrifying.

*

3.

Honolulu Starbright falls and from the rift you are ignited

When you emerge it brings a chaos and I know before the mountains.
You do not know, but the earth breaks open and you do not know
but you are a beacon, and I dishevel a palace of soil to unbury myself
to return as you make maelstroms. *We whisper tales of gore, of
how we calmed the tides.* You do not know this world, but you know me
and I am softer than your bed deep in the ocean. I am brighter than the
flames that woke you. I am sweeter than a bloodbath. I am safer than the
moon underwater. My love, I know how to read your tremblings and my
love, I will draw you into my song and I will hold you still until forever is
over. Until the world forgets us. Until we are cocooned and fathomless, no
more scales and cilia, only a hum in the atmosphere, in the ether, and we are
so radiant that you cannot be afraid of this. The world is quiet, the ocean is calm,
and I am wilted with my hope that here in my wings you will *rebuild all your ruins.*

*

Kristian Macaron

Your Blood Is What Builds You

When I tell my mother I want to know about blood she tells me that everyone takes connective tissue for granted; without connective tissues we would all be some unfilled, constellational shape clutching an ocean of organs, and my blood is my mother's blood, some new structure of star frame. She pulls her hands from the dishwater to check the pot on the stove. Stirring careful circles, she says without blood we have no blood vessels. *Your blood is what builds you*, she says. You are made of many roads and waterfalls. We are not afraid of our wounds. Your wounds are your healing, each one folding its own deep ocean; you can't know the depth of these.

The oldest chasms are in Ethiopia. Deep and whole, lakes of breath from when the world poured out of the roaring sea with fire in her throat. A tumbling field of igneous *sangre*. Our planet has many open wounds, but has learned—as we have—to bury them, to cover them with other beauties—tendrils of planet, tree-root, rock cavern wind, animal breath—eden speaks. Artery in ancient Greek is *raise*: to give form.

In Erta Ale, the land that crawled from the core made shape, millennia of coating a fire-stone skin over the Danakil. Inside, the fire roils, broils, breathes. The desert is bone-filled and artillery-locked. It is an artery to the beginning, but we have stopped listening. Tremor becomes wind, destruction, hurricane spilt, spent breath, Earth crawling beneath wavelength.

The night before my uncle's open heart surgery he whispers that he has filled his car with gas and packed an extra bag. His blood is not moving any longer the way we wish to live—he craves a road in darkness, gasoline, stars rampant over freeways. He is afraid for his heart to feel the world outside of him, but he has filled his veins with prayer and nitroglycerin for weeks. These tablets the same as, but smaller than the ones he has used to open mountains.

Do you know what it feels like to fly? he says, looking East over the Sandia mountains where his plane, the one he built in his garage, is hangared. *It's like nothing else*, he says: To look down and know that the wind is a passageway. To see the world and beneath—to be beyond shape and

scars and a heart still beating, a temple breathing. Your blood is what builds you and you can't know the depth of this.

Originally from Albuquerque, NM, **Kristian Macaron** received her MFA from Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts, and thus melded her love for the colorful Southwest with the stunning New England coast. Her first poetry chapbook, *Storm* (Swimming with Elephants Publications), was released in July 2015. Her fiction and poetry have been published in *The Winter Tangerine Review*, *Philadelphia Stories*, *Ginosko Literary Journal*, and forthcoming in *Gargoyle Magazine*. She has featured at Chatter Albuquerque, and the podcasts "Vessels and Voids" and "Pen & Poet". Kristian is a co-founding editor at the literary journal *Manzano Mountain Review*. She is part-time faculty at the University of New Mexico-Valencia branch campus and the University of the People. Kristianmacaron.com

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.

Submissions are read year-round. Issue cut-off dates are as follows:

October 15 for the Autumn issue. (November 15th release)

January 15 for the Winter issue. (February 15th release)

April 15 for the Spring issue. (May 15th release)

July 15 for the Summer issue. (August 15th 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 to not 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.

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, we kindly ask that you credit *The Mantle* as first publisher.

We are a non-paying market.

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