

THE MANTLE



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THE MANTLE

#7

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Each poem belongs to its respective author

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Fault Lines

I have been breaking
shit all week
first the mug second
that glass from our wedding
still muddled with leftover
tea inside base and now
my phone dropped once
or maybe three times
to the ground a good
shake may set it right

every object vibrates
owns a frequency and
not all falls do shatter but

today
this pot for brewing leaves
another plan set trembling.

Stefani Cox is a speculative fiction writer and poet based in Los Angeles. Her work has been published to *LeVar Burton Reads*, *PodCastle*, *Speculative City*, *Mirror Dance*, and the *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers* anthology, among other outlets. She's also an alumna of the VONA/Voices workshops, and has served as an associate editor for *PodCastle*. Find her on Twitter [@stefanicox](https://twitter.com/stefanicox) or her website <http://stefanicox.com>.

Sap

I fall from
a blue spruce
onto moss
that toss
me to you.

viridescent packs,
muse on root backs,
they speak in oracles:
Wait for him,
your match.

tight recessive genes,
lavender breath,
cinnamon hair,
cobalt eyes,
& ginger lashes-

scarcest pigment
in nature. In a
pink clean voice,
you call to me.
uneearthly thing,

malevolent male,
I hate you.
I love you.
you make me wild,
a storm in the wood,

twigs snap,
my hands crack
in your lap, you
wrap my peduncle
right round &

ripen my
deciduous frame
until I shed all
over you &
onto the ground.

Nancy Byrne Iannucci teaches history and lives poetry in Troy, NY. Her poetry can be found in a number of publications including *Allegro Poetry Magazine*, *Gargoyle*, *Autumn Sky Poetry Daily*, *Typehouse Literary Magazine*, *Riggwelter Press*, *Three Drops from a Cauldron*, and *Hobo Camp Review*. Her debut book of poetry, *Temptation of Wood*, was recently published by Nixes Mate Review.

Exigence

The rhizome,

the collection of roots—

Branches, new growth—

How can something so reliable

be bad?

The rhizome,

identity like a seed,

all that is known

about the

ground.

If I am an animal, I only know it
because of the way

I take root,

the way I count

the combination of

tendrils gained and lost—

My life—to obtain water...

How else could I survive when so
much of me is lost to the cold and

ice where
my

body once was?

Someone spoon-feed me the flesh of fruit

saturated with granules of soil, nutrition

for nutrition—

My arrangement is different now,

but I must know—

Must know

how to make myself more like the things I dig up from

the yard,

the set of keys found near the telephone

pole at the end of the

driveway—

Impervious to weather, yet full of rain,

no concept of anxiety

or loss—

Kristin LaFollette is a PhD candidate at Bowling Green State University and is a writer, artist, and photographer. She is the author of the chapbook *Body Parts* (GFT Press, 2018) and has had her writing featured in the anthologies *Ohio's Best Emerging Poets* (2017) and *America's Emerging Poets 2018: Midwest Region*. You can visit her on Twitter at [@k_lafollette03](https://twitter.com/k_lafollette03) or on her website at kristinlafollette.com.

Terri Kirby Erickson

Mockingbirds

It is a cold spring but still, the mockingbirds
are mating. They dance around each other,
flapping their flashy white-patched wings,

hopping up and down between blades of new
grass. He has sung to her his sweetest song,

and she has answered. Soon, there will be
eggs to hatch, and babies to feed. But this
moment is all about them—how they join

together, four wings fluttering and fluttering.
And just before parting, they dance a final

minuet before the female flies to the fence,
her mate to the feeder, their soft *hew-hews*
tender, their feathered bodies still quivering.

Terri Kirby Erickson is the author of five collections of poetry, including her latest book, *Becoming the Blue Heron* (Press 53). Her work has appeared in *American Life in Poetry*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Poet's Market*, *The Christian Century*, *The Sun Magazine*, *The Writer's Almanac*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review* and many others. Awards include the Joy Harjo Poetry Prize and a Nautilus Silver Book Award. She lives in North Carolina.

Smelling the Rain

Water flowed through bark canyons,
elm and planks of weathered pine,
our fort in the farmyard.

That day my foot slipped,
falling down on muddy shards
of slate and cow bones,
my knee scraped and bleeding,
arm twisted like a thin stalk
straining to lift a heavy bloom
of dandelion sun.

You were there,
wrist slung in tee shirt,
fingernails caked with mud,
wrapping my wounds in grass,
your green shoots growing up
through holes in my shoes.

Now my blue jeans drag,
worn cuffs soaked in puddles,
but you are still there
in your forever spring,
waiting so we can climb again
one more time on bending limb.

I Wrote a High School English Paper on Hand Surgery

I was going to be a surgeon once—

When you're 17 years old,
anesthesia smells like paper,
a cellar after a flood

(old water mixed with mud and glass jars)—

At 17 years old, I wrote about how to be a surgeon
with post-operative skin, a once-moving joint
fused
with metals and glue,

wrote about wrapping
surgical
instruments with colored
foam like I did with
writing utensils—

As a 17-year-old, I stood on a stepstool
in an operating room, watched staples
inserted into skin, smelled bone dust
and cauterized fat, listened to
someone recite the details of knee

replacement surgery

When blood was on my hands, I held them
close to my face, smelled the familiar smell
of wet fabric, the movement of cells collecting

oxygen

The insides of bones are soft, easy to burrow into

An x-ray of my marrow showed the intricate
pieces that hold me together—

I wanted to tell everyone I *would* be a doctor—

the kind with foam-covered
pencils and soft bones

Kristin LaFollette is a PhD candidate at Bowling Green State University and is a writer, artist, and photographer. She is the author of the chapbook *Body Parts* (GFT Press, 2018) and has had her writing featured in the anthologies *Ohio's Best Emerging Poets* (2017) and *America's Emerging Poets 2018: Midwest Region*. You can visit her on Twitter at [@k_lafollette03](https://twitter.com/k_lafollette03) on her website at kristinlafollette.com.

Odio (Hate)

misfit queer boy, spicing up a room
doomed repeat offender of
pronouncing words wrong in
a vacuum of assimilated-Mexican
fumes gorging on a river scourging
brown boy is beautiful with
dirt covering his feet, beautiful
with hands calloused and bleed
inking a wall, a high wall, a high
white-wall, must have been all
the smoke from nearby wildfires
fucking fires, busting fires like
all my ex-lovers turning raw in
my mouth, cannot undo an electric
wire trap of love, whatever the fuck
was not enough, here I come, trying
my best to be better than what they
expect so much out of me, I swear
if I say this word wrong, they will
tear me apart.

Mateo Lara is a queer latinx originally from Bakersfield, California. He received his B.A. in English at CSU Bakersfield. He is currently working on his M.F.A. in Poetry at Randolph College in Lynchburg, VA. His poems have been featured in *Orpheus*, *EOAGH*, *Empty Mirror*, and *The New Engagement*. He is an editor for *Rabid Oak* online literary journal & Zoetic Press.

Leah Kiureghian

Abrahan 6

all's alright reading Ashbery in bed
but missing
words wondering how do you
trompe l'oeil
did you mean how do you
pronounce parameter put down
your pencils put away any quality of blackness
it is just that your hair is no longer
nuptial is wedding office hours are noon
at the bus stop one worker's glove another about a foot
off discarded for Sunday with Fresh Flowers student
revolutionaries Aries tripping echoes--
Far be it from me as a refrain, but in the middle of
the stanza to "re-set" rhythm.
Aim for ten minutes and see what you've got at 5 after
an accident, I am thinking two things my mind's
between absolutes.

Leah Kiureghian was born in Germany and raised in Arizona. She holds an MFA in Poetry from Brooklyn College where she was a recipient of the Himan Brown award. Her most recent work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *SAND*, *American Chordata*, *RHINO*, and *The Portland Review*.

A Well Made Bed

my fitted sheet comes loose most nights,
which i guess means i toss and turn, or
that i dream i have somehow become you.
i am sleeping to block out the part of the day
where dusk hovers over the horizon, and
forces the sun to submission. i am roughing
up the blankets whether they ask me to or not.
i am an unwilling predator. they say it is
likely to become that which has harmed you.
if so, that must be why the buttons on my
duvet are all undone in the morning. it took
me a long time to allow myself to sleep
naked. to look at my pale body and not
wish it a ghost. now, i tuck myself below
thick comforters. now, i take medicine before
bed and wake up groggy. it is worth it to
make it through another evening. to make
it through the next day and the day after.
sometimes, i am afraid to close my eyes.
to slip into a rem cycle and lose track of
everything except for you. you are the
box spring i cannot do without. you are
the empty space on the left side of the
mattress. call it denial or fear of letting go.
i find myself restless, legs kicking the
pillows to the floor. maybe that is its
own form of empathy. to lay my head
down, to wrestle with your memory,
to hurt something soft, and say
look what you made me do.

Sara Trattner is a poet and student from the greater Cleveland area. Her work has previously been published in *Gyroscope Review*, *Bop Dead City*, *Mad Swirl*, and others. She is grateful to be published by *The Mantle* and share the company of several amazing poets.

Vacation

You don't want to eat your depression,
but the kitchen staff gave you extra portions.

You'd skip the room with its uncomfortable bed,
except the doorman at Depression Arms

swung the glass wide, said, *Welcome, welcome.*
When you drift off at last, you'd avoid the courtesy

wake-up call, the continental breakfast
with its desperation-scrambled eggs &

toaster waffles already cold & limp
as depression. You don't want the tour,

riding that bland bus to visit sites
you've passed before. Yet you continue

traveling. You take an unpaved road at night,
rocks crunching gunshots under tires.

I wish I could say it will be all right,
close the door & slow your expedition once,

but you've booked it, bought your ticket.
All I can do is help you with your bags.

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:

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 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.

Thank you so much for reading! *The Mantle* is grateful for your support.