

THE MANTLE POETRY

A coastal landscape featuring a sandy beach, a blue ocean, and a distant industrial facility with tall chimneys. In the foreground, there is a wooden fence and a large piece of driftwood. The sky is clear and blue.

Issue 18
Spring 2022

THE MANTLE

POETRY

#18

VOLUME V, ISSUE III
April 27, 2022

Editor: James Croal Jackson
Each poem belongs to its respective author

themantlepoetry.com

Table of Contents

Suhrith Bellamkonda – Another Sunset Poem	3
Kyle Seamus Brosnihan – Poem From a Stoop in Brooklyn	4
Maryfrances Wagner – For What We Don't Know	5
Juanita Rey – Getting By	6
Rebecca Macijeski – To My Brother Eleven Months Younger Than Me Whose Body is No Longer Alive	7
Rebecca Macijeski – Because I Listen for Things	8
Elana Wolff – Ice Lace	9
Lori Lamothe – Why I Deleted My Instagram	10
Submission Guidelines	11

Another Sunset Poem

O, the simple difficulty of it all—
the way the waves wash away the bulging sun,
the blush of twilight clouds, the crackle of a sandy campfire.
I clasp my hands, gather heat, then trace the ridges
of recently-vacated seashells residing beside my feet.
I investigate their lifetimes.
O, the oyster.
The hermit crab.
The snail, the other snail—
its offspring.
O, the seagull wing,
the pelican beak,
the heron and cormorant.
The scent of seaweed.
Driftwood.
O, nature's ominous drone,
the distant giggle of a distant child
stumbling into the ocean,
sea-salt sting seeping into his skin—
that from a distance, the water is nearly still—
but from close, an ancient chaos:
each breath of foam falling under its own momentum,
knotting and unknotting
time and time and time again—
as if to mean to speak about my memories
of castles and plastic toys—
O, to play on the shore with unwatered eyes. O,
to meet myself again.

Suhrith Bellamkonda is an emerging writer from Mountain View, California. He has contributed to the *Blue Marble Review*, *Poetic Sun*, *Stanford Anthology*, and *Cathartic Lit*, among others. He self-published his first collection entitled "Castles and Plastic Toys" in August 2021.

Poem From a Stoop in Brooklyn

And if we would have left it alone—
would the silence—have persuaded us
to renege—on its own enchantment?

It was no accident—the cloud being
in the shape of Peru—the sunflower bowing—
to the rusted bike— the sky a collar—

round the neck of a tree—balancing
there—the echoes of the jets—find a shady
place to die in—like an old cat from an old

farm—a fence and a marigolden field—
rustic doesn't begin to describe—
the small patch of earth—these winds

originate from—toward this city—
yet nobody—around to witness—
this one wind—

drifting through
these specific weeds—
but why should they—

I'm not here too.

For What We Don't Know

I am unsure of the world, but my dog reads
what's underground, what lingers around trees.
She lives by what she hears lurking in spaces we don't know.

Tonight the sunset will expose thin, broken limbs
and gild them in a certain glow
before day dissolves and winks again.

For all trees losing ground,
for all passersby, our porch light—
mystery of blue haze and a small arch—gleams

for the dog tilting her ear, for birds, for the moon
hiding its stars and silvering the snow.

Maryfrances Wagner's newest books are *The Silence of Red Glass* and *The Immigrants' New Camera*. She co-edits *I-70 Review*, serves on The Writers Place board, was 2020 Missouri Individual Artist of the Year, and is Missouri Poet Laureate 2021-2023. Poems have appeared in *New Letters*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Laurel Review*, *American Journal of Poetry*, *Poetry East*, *Main Street Rag*, *Rattle*, *Unsettling America: An Anthology of Contemporary Multicultural Poetry*, et. al. For more information, check her website: <http://maryfranceswagnerwriter.fieldinfoserv.com/>

Getting By

In my apartment
the gas stove
is a bitch to light
and I often
sound like a bitch
when I'm lighting it -

and the refrigerator
couldn't keep
a dictator's heart chilled
while the sink
is as rusty as my singing voice -

the bed is my own
so I am the lumpy sheets
and the too thin blanket
but not the carpet,
not the cigarette burns
in the fake Persian weave -

the landlady
has the hyena's sympathies
for a dead antelope,
and her expression
after any broached subject
is that of parent
looking down on
an ingrate daughter -

like all of her kind,
she figures she's doing me
an America-sized favor
just renting to my kind -

she could kick me out,
she could raise the rent -

I make enough
to afford this place
but to complain
is more expensive.

Juanita Rey is a Dominican poet who has been in this country for five years. Her work has been published in *Pennsylvania English*, *Opiate Journal*, *Petrichor Magazine* and *Porter Gulch Review*.

To My Brother Eleven Months Younger Than Me Whose Body is No Longer Alive

I wake up some mornings
and wonder what it felt like for you to breathe.
Was your breath like my breath,
slow and deliberate,
or did air leave you
like breeze through an open window,
as sure as mountains or birds in nests?

I keep making you my story
because that's the only version I know,
but I want to hear how I'm part of your story.
I want you to tell me things I need to hear, like

*You wake up in the morning and you do something.
It may not be right enough or smart enough
but you do it because that's being alive.
Sometimes it's hard because your mind
is a light-up map of everything you want
and different buzzers keep going off.
It's okay. Light up the world.
Light up the whole damn room.*

But I'm stuck for both of us
in the hard work of remembering,
and all you can do is make a home here in my mind
—the memory of you, anyway. Sometimes,
in the alternate world of my thinking,
you invite me over for dinner.
You cook lasagna and we talk for hours.
You tell me what it's like being dead, how no poet
has gotten it right
they put too many flowers
and I say
so clearly some part of you is still alive
sure, you'll say, if that helps things
then you put dessert on the table
but there's a knock at my door and you're gone again
who knows for how long this time.

Rebecca Macijeski's poems have appeared in *The Missouri Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Barrow Street*, *Nimrod*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Fairy Tale Review*, and many others. She is Creative Writing Program Coordinator and Assistant Professor at Northwestern State University. Her chapbook, *Autobiography*, will come out with Split Rock Press in 2022.

Because I Listen for Things

How the mind wants what it wants
like the river wants the sea.
How you can learn how someone loves
by the way they watch a bird.
How light pains the eyes.
Too much or too little
and the distance keeps burning.

How an apple, when eaten slowly,
reveals itself in stages, teeth biting their little excavations of red,
white pulping and juicing underneath. Then the cave of seeds.
Sometimes I wonder if they even know what lucky place they are.

How my feet's flat skin curves the carpet
and turns soft circles there.

How the joy of this quiet is my day's best work,
something still and certain no other person can know.

How crickets build into belief in the night,
their open window whirring anchored in me.

How each silence holds its own exquisite song
clearing out what's no longer there
burnished for a moment, hulled out.

How the idea of me, of this,
is what I'm building. Even into tomorrow.
Even past certainty, past my own death,
past creation and into legacy.

How a life grows. Slow at first, then bursting.
Hands gathering up what they know
like nests, like hurricanes, libraries.
How the body becomes a museum,
my mind always straightening shelves, dusting keepsakes.

Rebecca Macijeski's poems have appeared in *The Missouri Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Barrow Street*, *Nimrod*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Fairy Tale Review*, and many others. She is Creative Writing Program Coordinator and Assistant Professor at Northwestern State University. Her chapbook, *Autobiography*, will come out with Split Rock Press in 2022.

Ice Lace

I went forward, biting wind. Cold
created ice lace in my nostrils,

crinkled my skin. *Nobody needed
to know where I come from.* Snow

descended, blinding as a blast and didn't ask.
We landed in the same dank class

at opposite ends of the table. My binder
broke, you fixed it with a tool

you brought from home.
Verily, I say, my heart enlarged.

Nothing have I kept in the way of relic
from that passage. The building,

with its airless rooms, was wrecked.
The room we sleep in now has seven

windows and a sleigh bed. Snow
continues falling white as edelweiss

and stars. Gently and for everyone—
the beauty of the beam,

of what is see-through.
As for disappearance, it behaves

the way of veils—
gauzily and thin as pre-existence.

Why I Deleted My Instagram

Because the architecture of failure
is always more beautiful.

Because its towers are bells
filled with half-formed things—

paintings where all the body parts
are out of proportion

and songs nobody can hum
and relationships one malfunction away from fire

and discordant rainbows of outfits
no one has ever worn—

the whole place so gorgeously broken
that even the future with its enormous, invisible wings
seems a little boring.

Lori Lamothe's fourth poetry collection, *Tulip Fever*, is due out from Kelsay Books this fall. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Blackbird*, *Blue River Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *The Shore*, *Memorious*, *Superstition Review*, *Third Coast*, *Verse Daily*, *ZiN Daily* and elsewhere. Her latest obsessions are NFTs, box-brownie variations, creepy photos of Victorian twins, and enormous earrings.

Submission Guidelines

The Mantle Poetry 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:

January 15 for the Winter issue.

April 15 for the Spring issue.

July 15 for the Summer issue.

October 15 for the Autumn issue.

Send up to 3 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.

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 journal, for the time being.

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