

THE MANTLE

POETRY

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#22

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Each poem belongs to its respective author

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A Brittle Rose

It wasn't like the loss of
a beloved pet or a lost pair
of Nordstroms high heel shoes,
it was the absence of my
brother I'd always pined for
over the years. His words no
longer in my morning email,
his voice never there because
I could no longer reach him by
phone. I never knew if he still
ever thought of me or if his
Crohn's Disease made him
quietly slip away; and now
every passing day I have
dreams of seeing him and my
family in Baja California
again. Would it be the same
I always wondered, or would
I be given a cold reception?
I think of the cards I sent that
intercepted him, my emails
sent his way wondering if he
or someone else ever read
them. I breathe in the stillness
of my unswept kitchen, wishing
for the years or a miracle to
bring us back together again.
Now I look at the broken lip
of my teacup, the tea inside
having grown half cold, and
I feel like a brittle rose about
to snap in two, my head bent
low.

Bobbi Sinha-Morey's poetry has appeared in a wide variety of places. Her books of poetry are available at Amazon.com and her work has been nominated for *Best of the Net Anthology* in 2015, 2018, and 2020 as well as having been nominated for *The Pushcart Prize* in 2020.

The Not Uncommon Dementia of Despair during the Black Death

“Medieval artists made no distinction between past and present.” – Barbara W. Tuchman
– after Tyarah Yambo’s image *Ratamundo*

“Charity be dead,” I note the day
the black flag be raised above our church.
This, to you, be our warning to stay away.
We cannot serve you. Our future be breached.
The town be quiet. It, too, invisible.
The wind erase our footprints. Our eyes
before they close at last be miserable
with disease. Don’t look upon us else you died.
The town be safe. Every plagued soul be died
but me. I talk with ghosts from the buried
and the yet buried. On that church window
I paint a rat. I lower the flag tomorrow.
The town be history. I write its grief with shit
on our flag I wrap me in when I cough regret.

Transactional Mourning and the Spiritual Antenna: Coventry, England, April 29, 1350

None know if her dead
soul has persisted on
to limbo, hell, or between,
so we pray her name.
We lift her corpse to stand
with arms raised to God
to amplify our prayers.
They matter. The Lord and Satan
tally them just before
dawn. That's why so many
resign in bed. That's why
we pray so often their name.
They matter. By accounting
of prayer, a soul may rise
nearer the Lord
(a million prayers away)
should he choose to hear,
or else, the bankrupt soul
does descend. In the end,
if the corpse is true,
if the bones align
perfectly toward
the metaphysical
divide, if our prayers
pay the way, she will
rise. But our prayers
transact
one way. The Lord returns
no receipts. We're between
two fates, one of doubt
and one of lifelong debt.

Winter Psalm

Cambridge, MA

The pewter lid is threaded,
poised for solstice screwing.

*Our light wells empty,
birds abscond with delight.*

Common goods gravitate,
stubbles of surnames come to rest
upon a tea tray.

*Bibbering dust,
they compete for eternity.*

Tooth for tooth, yard by yard,
the tally of church chime all hell-
scar and boil. Puritan snow
forms a spoke-lattice crust.

*Yet a pocket watch strikes
silver, just below the surface.*

Ziggy Edwards

[tanka]

Final bag unwinds
its tight spiral, coaxed open
in the kitchen can.

These white layers took longer
to peel away than marriage.

Ziggy Edwards edits the online zine *Uppagus*, among other things. Her poems and short stories have appeared in publications including *5 AM*, *Grasslimb*, *yawp magazine*, *Illumen*, and *Dreams & Nightmares*. Pittsburgh Poetry Exchange published her first chapbook, *Hope's White Shoes*, in 2006.

Jay Brecker

the burnt man

summer signals his eyes to lift
as the twist of the fan overhead
reflects the ordinary surface

of housekeys in a driftwood bowl
afloat on a lake of polished granite
countertops small-cone conifers &

aspens are suspended beyond the window
—the green evening the red gate shines
between a gap in the trees still

at this hour the air is iron-hot
—beyond the gate magpies land
in a line without sorrow his gaze

takes in everything
& everything that's not
welcomes what is there & what there is

Jay Brecker's poems are or will be in *Folio*, *Kestrel*, *Rogue Agent*, *Poor Yorick*, *Sonora Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *Rattle Poets Respond*, *Birdcoat Quarterly*, *Permafrost*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *Ocean State Review*, *RHINO Poetry*, and elsewhere. His manuscript, *blue collar eclogue*, was awarded the 2024 Marsh Hawk Press Rochelle Ratner Prize.

Mr. Bear

It's a bit like *Antiques Roadshow*:
they mill around the big shed trying
to tease and tempt me
with meaningful objects.
A questionable vase. Childhood driftwood.
Full sets of baseball or Pokémon cards.
Home porn.

We've tried to explain that what gets in a poem
is *concrete universals*: objects that
imply, contain all others, all
forces, the universe. We even flash big
APPLAUSE signs so they can
show they understand.
They never quite get it.

What I choose, to their vast disappointment, for
this poem is a doll so worn, the story
of its lost owner so sad that
I can't get into it;
and I've agreed with the mother, lawyers present,
that the poem won't associate it with
my own lost things.

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. 3-4 issues will be published yearly.

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.