



# THE MANTLE POETRY

Issue 10  
Fall 2019

# THE MANTLE

POETRY

#10

VOLUME III, ISSUE II  
November 15, 2019

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

[themantlepoetry.com](http://themantlepoetry.com)

## Table of Contents

Alexandra Bentayou - Four of us: .....	3
P. Claire Dodson - a hearing .....	4
P. Claire Dodson - well, really .....	5
Michael Akuchie - Violence .....	6
Satya Dash - A fire that sings when doused .....	7
Satya Dash - Litany .....	7
Ellen Sander - Aubade 4x4 .....	8
Hannah Newman - In the boxes that are left glass apples glaze with dust .....	9
Submission Guidelines .....	12

Alexandra Bentayou

## Four of us:

three boys and I was the girl. I could see two faces—the older boys, directing. I had known the boy was bad—Brian or Riley?—I'd heard Shireese say he was, snapping back and forth with him on the red house lawn. I didn't understand the insults boys and girls threw at each other but I liked the way their shouting and laughs made the grey air ripple. This day, maybe the boy from the red house was wearing a red sweatshirt, and Jason was wearing blue. Jason had the same smile he'd have the rest of the years I'd know him. My arms were up over my head, and so was Lincoln, holding them down, as I lay on the ground behind his garage. He was taking orders. He looked up eagerly and jabbered the way he always did but no one listened. My jeans were folded over my knees. I think I tried to kick. I think I was wearing my puffy jacket with a surface like rubber and the color of the sky that day. I knew this was where the dogs went to the bathroom and I was lying in it. The boy from the red house and Jason were smiling

but a little scared. It was their plan to see a girl's bottom. I tried to tell the grownups making spaghetti in the steam-filled kitchen. My dad tells jokes as he pours boiling water into the sink; his face is wet and ruddy. Who is laughing? My mother—my aunt? I don't have my jacket when I come indoors. I'm wearing a red-striped T-shirt. There are cups of wine and I smell a sweet red sauce. Maybe now it's summer again and I missed my chance to say what happened. Maybe it's a new time. This is what happened:

some boys pulled down my pants and looked at me naked on the ground. I don't think they touched me and I know it's not much. Nothing came of it. I know it happened because I can see all of it except my private parts. I wish there was something terrible to see at the bottom of memory behind the garage by some bushes among the rocks where once I found what might have been a fossil of a shell but from then on I mostly see myself more and more making up games stories people I could keep in my yard.

**Alexandra Bentayou** grew up in Shaker Heights, Ohio. She has an MFA in poetry from New York University and she currently lives in the Bronx with her cat Bastet where she is employed in social work. Her poetry has been published in *Soft Surface Poetry* and is forthcoming in *Stonecoast Review*.

P. Claire Dodson

## a hearing

so what are we looking at here,  
a vacated supreme court seat or prison,

or more like shame outrage shame again  
and people never having to pay for crimes

committed in secret. It's not that we don't believe you. You're very credible,  
but also, he—

jot down the sequence of what always happens with these things.  
testify to quiet traumas that follow you around.  
ford the river in order to cross it safely.

i spend my days telling my friends, women,  
you're allowed, you're allowed, you're allowed.

**P. Claire Dodson** is a writer from Tennessee currently living in New York City. Her poetry has been published in *Public Pool*, Sara Benincasa's *The Stories*, *One Trick Pony Review*, and more. She's also an editor at *Teen Vogue*, and her journalism work has been published in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and *Fast Company*.

P. Claire Dodson

## well, really

what sounds like a song is really an alarm  
for when you've stretched out the moment too long,  
it'll soon break. there's gray light through the trees  
and the Harlem YMCA letters glow red-gold and furious—  
no, that's you at what you cannot change, and what you won't.  
remember the age you were when you realized people could lie  
deeply and fully from the broken sides of their mouths?  
i walked along the bluff, by the city college, and stared at the tops of buildings  
the wrong view of new york, the bad picture,  
the staying here and staying here and staying.  
there's a point here i think. there's a way out.  
what sounds like an alarm  
is really a song.

**P. Claire Dodson** is a writer from Tennessee currently living in New York City. Her poetry has been published in *Public Pool*, Sara Benincasa's *The Stories*, *One Trick Pony Review*, and more. She's also an editor at *Teen Vogue*, and her journalism work has been published in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and *Fast Company*.

Michael Akuchie

## Violence

Sometimes it's easy to be without joy at the burst of dawn  
through the window.

Think of me as a flower taking a peek at the world  
& getting plucked up.

Think of the universe as a beast  
that bares its teeth & charges forward.

Think of a cry that rings louder than a lie, a cry that lactates danger.

Think of my eyes as an ocean  
& a boat of dreams paddling hard toward safety.

Think of a waterfall & a crash that greets the ear softly with finality.

For every wound there must be blood,  
sometimes a pouring that claims the floor to widen the terror.

Think of a bird with its sides shot through  
& the possibility of flying again being false.

**Michael Akuchie** is an Igbo-Esan born emerging poet currently studying English and Literature at the University of Benin, Nigeria. An Orison Anthology nominee, his poems have previously appeared on *Collective Unrest*, *Impossible Task*, *Anomaly*, *TERSE* and elsewhere. He is on Twitter as @Michael\_Akuchie. He is the author of the micro-chap, "Calling out Grief" recently published by Ghost City Press.

## A fire that sings when doused

Long before I ever lit a kitchen stove, I sat on verandahs  
and dreamt about the rosy fire of hearths I saw in English movies.  
Years later under the leafless blanket of a strange city, I found it hissing  
in my own pits while drinking from the heat of surrendering

to another's. As a kid I often sat cross legged at temples watching  
flames grow into ochre trees, reciting prayers in beats of multiplication  
tables. Chanting was the tongue's way of living the brilliance of sound.

A voice recording infinitesimal in everything God had to offer.

Now any small knowledge, any sweetness of smoke is sacred.  
Cold water leaping against the hot of pan, streams sluicing down  
a sinkhole or just human slivers disappearing in blithe light.  
The fever of twirling moments is not lost on my woozy mouth.

In my backyard a baby chases a scurrying cockroach  
thinking it's chocolate moving on earth's floor. Such another  
reason I'm alive is that everyone I've ever loved has justified  
to me the flowing vastness of the human heart.

The earliest cardiologists proved there's a theater of moods  
in a corner of our hearts. Tell me, how do I seek a corner  
in thumping myth, churning force like dam on borders of our thrill.  
Bone orchard dangling bobs of bloodfruit, calling my name.

But still evading tips of fingers, the curving countries of palms.  
The elusion so smooth, even conceit is graceful. A search for  
derelict theater finds me a constellation of clues— usually in a person  
or their room. I swear I would do all of it again in God's lashing rain

to drift on rocking boat, chant verse with hitched throat,  
even in the tongues I don't speak. For the bone of song isn't anthem  
or dirge, it's dim bulb shining an overhead lightning surge. To reach where  
the serpent of thunder winds up is not the reason I so unabashedly sing.

**Satya Dash's** poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Passages North*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *The Florida Review*, *Pidgeonholes*, *Glass Poetry*, and *Prelude*, amongst others. Apart from having a degree in electronics from BITS Pilani-Goa, he has been a cricket commentator too. His work has been twice nominated for the Orison Anthology. He spent his early years in Odisha, India and now lives in Bangalore. He tweets at : @satya043

Satya Dash

## Litany

I'm meeting a friend    it's been years  
the bar's dingy shade    hovering on her head  
her acerbic humour    she hasn't lost a tad  
I read my latest    *your poems are still sad huh*  
we glug whiskey neat    she belches tendrils of meat  
it's a ritual of venom    to culminate in sermon  
her mascara drips    in slow trickle on chilly chicken  
I watch this botched gastronomy    morph into slow blossom  
I ask if she's okay    we recount days from college  
they're now arduous to summon    their total reckless abandon  
she says she wants forgiveness    she doesn't know where to look  
her eyes crackle in dim flood    rubbed soft in Marlboro smoke  
the hands of a dusty clock    in the barren tundra bar  
hum in my ear    the weightlessness of midnight  
thrumming my conscience    it's time to leave  
when she whispers like balm    *read me another, please*

**Satya Dash's** poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Passages North, Cosmonauts Avenue, The Florida Review, Pidgeonholes, Glass Poetry, and Prelude*, amongst others. Apart from having a degree in electronics from BITS Pilani-Goa, he has been a cricket commentator too. His work has been twice nominated for the Orison Anthology. He spent his early years in Odisha, India and now lives in Bangalore. He tweets at @satya043.

Ellen Sander

## Aubade 4x4

The rain is lost  
to fractures  
in the pavement, and  
the horizon bulges  
    with irrevocable distance

I come out of a dark room  
with the latency of a swampy dream  
of a confined space, of a dirty  
empty cup  
a dim begin of day  
    with kettle-eyed filmy sweat

I pretend not to notice  
the cat licked the yogurt  
while I retrieved the toast  
    and eat it anyway

You have my word  
    and I want it back

**Ellen Sander**, a rock and roll heart, was Poet Laureate of Belfast, Maine in 2013 and 2014. Her current poetry chapbook, *Hawthorne, a House in Bolinas*, is published by Finishing Line Press. *Aquifer* will be published by Red Bird Chapbooks. More importantly, the cat is sprawled out over everything important on the desk – snoring – and that's how the day is going.

## In the boxes that are left apples glaze with dust

And in the middle of all the china -  
tea cups and saucers, ceramic tureens,

sugar bowls with a crystal of sweet left  
inside, salad plates and hi-ball glasses

swirled with holiday print, three glass  
butter dishes and the first salt and

pepper shakers you owned, single-stem vases  
and candy dishes from your second

husband, champagne glasses from your third  
- you asked me what I wanted,

held up your favorite porcelain -  
the one from the barn-doored market

alongside a sleep-sogged marina,  
from a day when you had nowhere to be

but under the buttermilk sky  
breathing in the smooth blue

paisley of dishes your  
someday daughters might love.

And when I said nothing you lost  
the air stuck in your throat.

And when you said nothing, I knew  
that you too would rather teach me

how to roast the chicken,  
how to buy a blouse that lasts all

day, days, years until the color slips from  
cotton, how to reread a note and remember

someone thought of you, how  
to make the bed so the top sheet

is smooth as squash soup, how  
to pot the twisted vines

of the Pothos plant, to remember  
the furred lines of our great great someone's -

And when I said nothing  
you pressed the smooth stone into my palms,

lay clotted cream along my forearms,  
tasked me with knowing how to take.

**Hannah Newman** is a founding Editor-in-Chief of *Sweet Tree Review* and a poetry editor for the *Bellingham Review*. An MFA candidate at Western Washington University, she is currently working on a collection of short stories about women, power, and botany. She has previously worked as Editor-in-Chief for *Jeopardy Magazine* and Literary Editor for *Spindrift Magazine*. When she isn't writing, you can find her indulging in expensive cheese, old books, and too many cups of coffee.

## 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. (February 15th release)

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

July 15 for the Summer issue. (August 15th release)

October 15 for the Autumn issue. (November 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.

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