



# THE MANTLE POETRY

Issue 15  
Spring 2021

# THE MANTLE

POETRY

#15

VOLUME IV, ISSUE IV  
May 8, 2021

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

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

## Table of Contents

Lorette C. Luzajic - The Boys of Summer .....	3
Manuela Williams - In December .....	4
Louisa Schnaithmann - Sincerity .....	5
Julia Lisella - MS and Cancer .....	6
Cheryl Aguirre - Mortuary .....	7
James Owens - Driftwood .....	8
Suchoon Mo - I Was Stupid .....	9
billy cancel - our Plots merge it's an OMNISHAMBLES .....	10
Margo LaPierre - Ride .....	11
Submission Guidelines .....	12

## The Boys of Summer

It was a one trick town, I told you, but you shrugged, said you'd been tricked before. Let your wheels spin dust at the edge of the lot where you waited for me. I was world weary already, even though I'd never left. Slipped in shotgun with an armload of popsicles and a jug of Domaine D'Or. Wondered if you'd kiss me or grope at my thigh. Once I booked an appointment with the school shrink, cried, asked her if anyone would ever touch me. She said, one day you'll think about this meeting and laugh, you'll have had so many lovers. I didn't think the years would go by, that I would blink and be fifty. No one does. After school I would vacuum my grandmother's room for a five spot, then sit at her swollen feet with a plate of stale cookies and listen to her lamentations. The summer was almost gone and you hadn't yet made a move at me. I doused myself in Love's Baby Soft, showed up with hash in hopes of hurrying things along. You didn't bite, and I was worried. *You think you won't find love, Oma said once, pushing her ivory white brush through long and oily silver tresses. But the real story is how it is so fleeting.*

**Lorette C. Luzajic** is an artist, writer, and editor living in Toronto, Canada. Her poetry and flash have been widely published, in books, in anthologies, and in hundreds of print and online journals around the world. She is the founder of *The Ekphrastic Review*, a journal devoted to writing inspired by art.

Manuela Williams

## In December

I'm just an ant  
under winter's boot  
I'm sorry  
I've been sick twice on our nice rug  
but look how relentlessly you scrape  
it up with a dustpan  
look how carefully the TV casts  
its neon colors over the curve  
    of your back  
Nyquil arranges my limbs  
gently  
while outside the moon is a big  
nothing  
how could I have prepared  
for weather like this  
it fills me up  
    with only a temporary kind  
of satisfaction before going sour  
    earlier I saw you outside shoveling  
snow & the clouds broke long enough  
to reveal a sliver of clean sky  
a cut I could fit myself  
into completely & crawl through  
    the winters back home were better  
I'm sure  
but who can say  
what tenderness might look like  
under different circumstances  
& who can transcribe it  
except in remembering  
how you once leaned over me  
    & held a mirror to my nose  
waiting for the cold glass to fog

**Manuela Williams** is the author of two poetry chapbooks: *Witch* (dancing girl press) and *Ghost in Girl Costume* (originally published as part of the 2017 Hard to Swallow Chapbook Contest). Her work has appeared in *Queen Mob's Teahouse*, *Bone Bouquet*, *wicked alice zine*, and other magazines. She is a columnist for *DIY MFA* and is currently pursuing an MFA in Poetry at the University of Nevada, Reno.

## Sincerity

A dog laps water  
from a dented  
metal bowl in summer.

The girl nearby waits  
to tell me that my  
skirt is riding up.

I want to thank  
so many people for  
their blank honesty,

an art which we've  
almost lost. Blank,  
but not brutal. There

was no meanness  
in her small voice,  
just facts. Sometimes

that helps. I'd like  
to know who decided  
that cloaked words

are better. Hiding  
from the truth just means  
waiting longer to hear it.

But there are no excuses  
for what I've done here—  
even now, I'm fibbing.

**Louisa Schnaithmann's** work has appeared in *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, *E-Verse Radio*, and *Wine Cellar Press*, among others, and is forthcoming in *Gargoyle*. She is the consulting editor for *ONE ART*: a journal of poetry. Her chapbook *Plague Love* is forthcoming from Moonstone Arts. She lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Julia Lisella

## MS and Cancer

Maybe it is just interference,  
the sound that culture makes when the woods are still green with saplings.

Like new forests your words are suspicious to me  
but don't I have to honor them? Turns out all weekend

while we waited to hear your news about a cancer growing inside you  
you'd decided without any of us, your friends,

that if it were true, you wouldn't treat it, that you were already  
too wounded to repair that piece of your body.

Now I think to that early summer night, your walker spun from our circle  
and set to break beside the patio table

and the fire smoking while you sipped your wine  
you'd been having your last laugh,

so when you tell me now the nurse called you and said NO CANCER  
you were mine again just like that; I hadn't known until then

I had lost you even for a day.

**Julia Lisella** is the author of two poetry collections, *Always and Terrain*, and a chapbook, *Love Song Hiroshima*. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Pangyrus*, *Lily*, *Ploughshares*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Nimrod* and others, and are widely anthologized. She teaches at Regis College and co-curates the IAWA Reading Series in Boston.

Cheryl Aguirre

## Mortuary

I must put my dreams to bed  
quietly, tuck them in  
with an extra blanket or two,  
it is cold in the morgue  
they shiver on the metal tables  
waiting to be cradled  
in the slotted walls.

I slide them in and close the doors,  
shut them softly with a gentle clink  
and when they are silent,  
and still, and unmoving,  
I put myself to bed.

**Cheryl Aguirre** is a queer biracial poet based in Austin, Texas. You can find their previously published work in *Ghost City Press*, *decomp journal*, *South Broadway Press*, *Pine Hills Review*, and *The Whorticulturalist*. You can follow them at @drowsy\_orchid on Instagram and @Wheat\_Mistress on Twitter.

James Owens

## Driftwood

The stones here are stones, the water is water,  
and the spiny, scoured branches are not the bones of the lost.

What else but to stand here in the late sunlight,  
as shadows flow over the flood-borne,  
bone-stripped detritus of the years?

Thought is like this:  
scattered, permeable to the dark.

**James Owens's** newest book is *Family Portrait with Scythe* (Bottom Dog Press, 2020). His poems and translations appear widely in literary journals, including recent or upcoming publications in *Grain*, *Dalhousie Review*, *Presence*, *Wild Court*, and *Honest Ulsterman*. He earned an MFA at the University of Alabama and lives in a small town in northern Ontario.



## I Was Stupid

he told me I was stupid  
I asked him to explain that to me

he told me I did not understand  
I asked him to explain that to me

he told me I did not understand because I was stupid  
I asked him to explain that to me

he told me I was stupid because I did not understand  
I asked him to explain that to me

he told me I did not understand because I was stupid  
I asked him to explain that to me

he told me I was just stupid  
now I understood

**Suchoon Mo** lives in the semiarid part of Colorado. Recent poems appear in *Aji Magazine*, *North Of Oxford*, *Armarolla*, *Transnational*, *Modern Literature*, *World Poets Magazine*, *Emerald Elegies*, *Blue Lake Review*, *Literary Yard*, *All The Sins*, *Rabid Oak*, *Seattle Star*, and *Jonah Magazine*. His music compositions appear in *Treehouse Arts*, *Forge*, *Fishfood Magazine*, and *Kissing Dynamite*.

## our Plots merge it's an OMNISHAMBLES

unresolved fable riddle hybrid push pull  
current static in the attic everything  
dual-use (a) to create a collision + (b)  
1 other function synchronicity as  
narrative our early morning dew  
wash no thanks to the CIA. to think

you were in such good twist already half  
way home through the disused railway  
tunnel filled with glowing lights making  
progress under American guidance. i had  
spent too much time tapping on the glass &  
considered but 4 things Condition - Embellishment  
Historical Significance - What's Hot. craggy  
peaks wind blasted trees rural hush where  
we met jerks seemed chill. with our

fangs out situational  
awareness it's just another  
day of pattern seeking not  
a case of getting it out of  
our system this is  
THE SYSTEM.

## Ride

Mauve-mottled mountains spear the clouds, a roller  
coaster of stilled bones, pastels creak  
in the crowing wind of the fairgrounds.  
Old wooden fences hold back zombies.  
The young ones' eye sockets  
level with my charging breath.  
My husband holds my hand. Blood warmth.  
My dead cat is here, alive now, his ears  
frostbitten, so I take the velvet slips in my hands  
gently to warm them up, sweet kitten.  
They warm up. I wake up.  
The slatted wood a hiding place, ants crawling  
spaces where sleep falls away, a car  
pulls in, headlights broad as childhood.  
The groundwood disintegrates soft under my feet.  
My feet disintegrate soft into the ground.  
My old drug-dealer sex hookup  
waits in his pink convertible, moving new  
shit, that superdangerous stuff that makes you  
an exoskeleton if you take too much.  
I can see him from inside while we talk on the phone,  
discuss what I will wear. He starts on about his  
gun and I remember when he first tipped his  
backpack over my bed and it tumbled out  
and my belly constricted. I'm not ready, I tell him  
to go on ahead. My husband drops me at the theatre.  
I walk over to the pink convertible, get in the car.  
We rev and roll, a beach clotting the air  
with sand. A surf, shooting blue plumes  
into the sun. The horizon is a cliff. I say, stop.

**Margo LaPierre** is an award-winning queer, bipolar Canadian poet, editor, and author of *Washing Off the Raccoon Eyes* (Guernica Editions, 2017). She is *Arc Poetry Magazine's* newsletter editor and member of poetry collective VII. Her work has been published in *Room*, *Arc*, *filling Station*, *CAROUSEL*, *carte blanche*, *PRISM*, and others. Find her on Twitter @margolapierre.

## 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.