

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition of colors including yellow, orange, blue, and purple. A central figure, possibly a person, is depicted in a dynamic, almost dancing pose, rendered in a style that blends with the abstract background. The figure's limbs are extended, and the overall effect is one of movement and energy.

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Each poem belongs to its respective author

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Table of Contents

Sara Eddy - At the DeCordova Museum	3
Sara Eddy - Pumice Mines	4
Annie Cigic - Sharp Woods	5
George Ryan - Monarchs	6
Nick Martino - Three Cheers for My Friends, Their Hard Labor	7
Paris Jessie - Silhouettes & Makers	9
Michael Beard - Going Out Tonight	10
Beth Konkoski - Demolition	11
Louise Robertson - The Count Is Now 2 and Whatever	12
Submission Guidelines	13

At the DeCordova Museum

I'm cut loose at the sculpture garden;
the frowning busts don't care for me
and I don't care- I might fall
free off this embankment
or float up like helium,
puffy and unreal. You can't touch
me up here: the art is too thick
the air is too clean.
I'm charged up like a Tesla coil
looking for my answering pair;
I'm holding colors in my mouth,
under my tongue. See
if you can find them.

Sara Eddy is the author of two chapbooks of poetry, *Full Mouth* (Finishing Line Press, 2020) and *Tell the Bees* (A3 Press, 2019). Some of her poems have appeared recently or are forthcoming in *Threepenny Review*, *Baltimore Review*, and *Spank the Carp*. She is Assistant Director of the writing center at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, and lives in nearby Amherst with a teenager, a black cat, a white dog, and three beehives.

Pumice Mines

The day we drove to the desert we had breakfast early and nothing
after- not water, not food, only the still dry desert air
and the Sierras crouching either near or far,
no markers to confirm their size. I was bleeding,
I was a woman, and this felt shameful
in the company of two men. I felt too much in myself
in that dry place, and hoped it was nothing worth sharing.
You drove us to the pumice mines, great quiet holes
scooped in the stone, the work abandoned to snakes and spiders,
to creatures that can wait for a mouthful of water.
I was full of love, and empty of everything.
I sat down alone on the cool floor of a mine-hole
where the white walls were too white, and the quiet
carved out my belly. As I stood up my sandal caught a burr,
and the pain was a slap. It was too much, to be a woman
in that sterile place, to be on the cusp of a life held up
in silhouette on the white walls. As we drove out
I cried for the limits of my body and my life,
and a coyote watched us go, watched us go.

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Sharp Woods

In silence, I watch my body retrieve—
pulling itself sunken in the river & picked off
the foliage, dominated.

I taste my throat chase it with the pit
in my stomach— bombs settle.

On my own, I find little treasures, a cave
beneath the sinkhole, the Earth's
core reservoir. I recreate the world
for myself.

Be: a stone on the tracks cut hair
for gardens the highest diving board—the desired
threat. Be: too much pool
blue-bashed back a scooped-out constellation.

George Ryan

Monarchs

The calm ocean and ordinary sand
have to be Southern California.

Nothing is moving in this video –
it could be a projected photograph –
until a monarch flies from left to right
and disappears. Back to lack of motion.

Then two large butterflies appear, a third
is trailing them. Gone. More lack of motion.

Four monarchs flap north. End of video.

George Ryan was born in Ireland and graduated from University College Dublin. He is a ghostwriter in New York City. Elkhound published his *Finding Americas* in October 2019. His poems are nearly all about incidents that involve real people in real places and use little heightened language.

Three Cheers for My Friends, Their Hard Labor

loving me, and three more
for my many gifted enemies
all of whom, I guess, I am.

Among the home invaders
I leave the windows open for

one believes the body is an instrument
in need of tune. Is the wind

through my body like a reed
renting song? I jog by a fire drill tower

where firefighters practice
firefighting. Ringing up the tower steps
is sheetmetal bells in a hurricane,

is rubber angels
held to earth with heavy wings. Lord,

in this poem in which every room
is burning

if I may ask one fever back from this
spring of wilding
despair, let it be a toy of disaster:

on Floor 1 of my private fire tower
the broken necklace of my spine
unravels river stones across the bright

hardwood. On Floor 2, I commit
the rounding error of trusting
in forever. On the top floor,

deep-wading through a sea of smoke—
I put my ear to the white

bulb of my fist. Listen,
the amber of an orchestra
tuning up:

Nick Martino grew up alongside the ocean of Lake Michigan. An MFA candidate in poetry at UC Irvine, his work is published or forthcoming in *Volume Poetry*, *Carve Magazine*, and *Foothill Journal*.

Silhouettes & Makers

a cracked reflection you bore
place a soul
behind glass sphere

thoughts run
along faulty roads
trace the flood of eyes

seeing only dirt
that lures them in
it has made home

though with no belonging
a body in recession
rain kissing springs

surrender rifts for stars
and cliffs for clouds
this grace swims with bees

tugged and cloaked // sharp splits

as moon scarred with craters
idly between
the earth and sun

those like you
do this

she is losing herself
 runaway syllable
 a stain mouth seized
hopes to be wiped clean

Michael Beard

Going Out Tonight

after "Conversation" by Charles Ladson, 2018

Mannequin gray, bare skin,
even the sun could not witness
the two of us, strange
in the most common ways.
Are you looking around
for the other black sock?
Maybe you'll find it
where the other boot hides;
besides, purple doesn't go with
what you're wearing.
I'll be gone soon, remember;
feed the dog while I'm away.
I don't want you getting lonely.
Make sure to let
the light in; make it guess
at what you have
planned for the day.
And please, don't forget
to water the plants
in the windowsill, the ones
that remind me of the times
we looked forward to
who we would be
when we die.

Michael Beard is a first-year MFA student in Poetry at Bowling Green State University. In undergrad, he served as the poetry editor for *Sequoia Review*. His poems have appeared in *Glass Mountain Review*, *Oakland Arts Review*, the 2021 Southern Literary Festival Anthology, and elsewhere.

Demolition

The walls around us,
russet and charcoal
years of struggle, need
the sledgehammer, but
we lack the strength
or daily courage to lift
and take the first swing.
Plaster crumbles at our feet
like old cake; the steady
damp of our disregard
has weakened even the studs
that once held things aloft.
We lower our heads and move
through mornings in which
the dust and smoke of electric
weather hold court. We need
to bust it all apart, place
rolls of orange construction
fence between today and
this pain. If I bring you
graph paper and a ruler
could we start to make a plan?

Beth Konkoski is a writer and high school English teacher living in Northern Virginia with her husband and almost-grown kids. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Mid-American Review*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, and *Gargoyle*. She has two poetry chapbooks: "Noticing the Splash" with BoneWorld Press and "Water Shedding" with Finishing Line Press. She is currently at work on a novel.

The Count Is Now 2 and Whatever

for Bob Petric

2 being the number
of people whose feelings I hurt
I mean the last thing I did
I mean the last thing I did to them
was I hurt their feelings
and I have the text messages to prove it
it feels like I am Peter
— deny deny deny — like that
and it feels like if I were Jesus
and my friends denied me
well if I were Jesus I would know
that cowardice is how
Peter survived the day and if I were
Jesus I would think my friend Peter
should survive the day and if denying
me was what did it then ok deny
I told my daughter to do that to blame
me to say my mom is such a bitch
I have to go home
she won't like me drinking
and then I taught her to pass the joint to the next person
if that's what she wanted
she had my blessing
my parental blessing and I am no Jesus
she had my blessing to kick me in the head
metaphorically
if she had to and I let her know ahead of time
so she didn't have to pause
I said blame me say what a bitch say that
and I heard her do it once
so proud
and so if my friends are denying me that's fine
so I think if I am hurting
my friends like that I think
they would forgive me
like Jesus and if they wouldn't
then we hurt each other and that is how

they left the world in pain and me too
I'm in pain too
they are gone and I hurt them.

Louise Robertson serves as the marketing director for Writers' Block Poetry Night in Columbus, OH. She counts among her many publications, awards, and honors a jar of homemade pickles she received for running a workshop as well as a 2018 Pushcart nomination (*Open: A Journal of Arts and Letters*) and a 2018 Best of the Net nomination (*Flypaper*).

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.