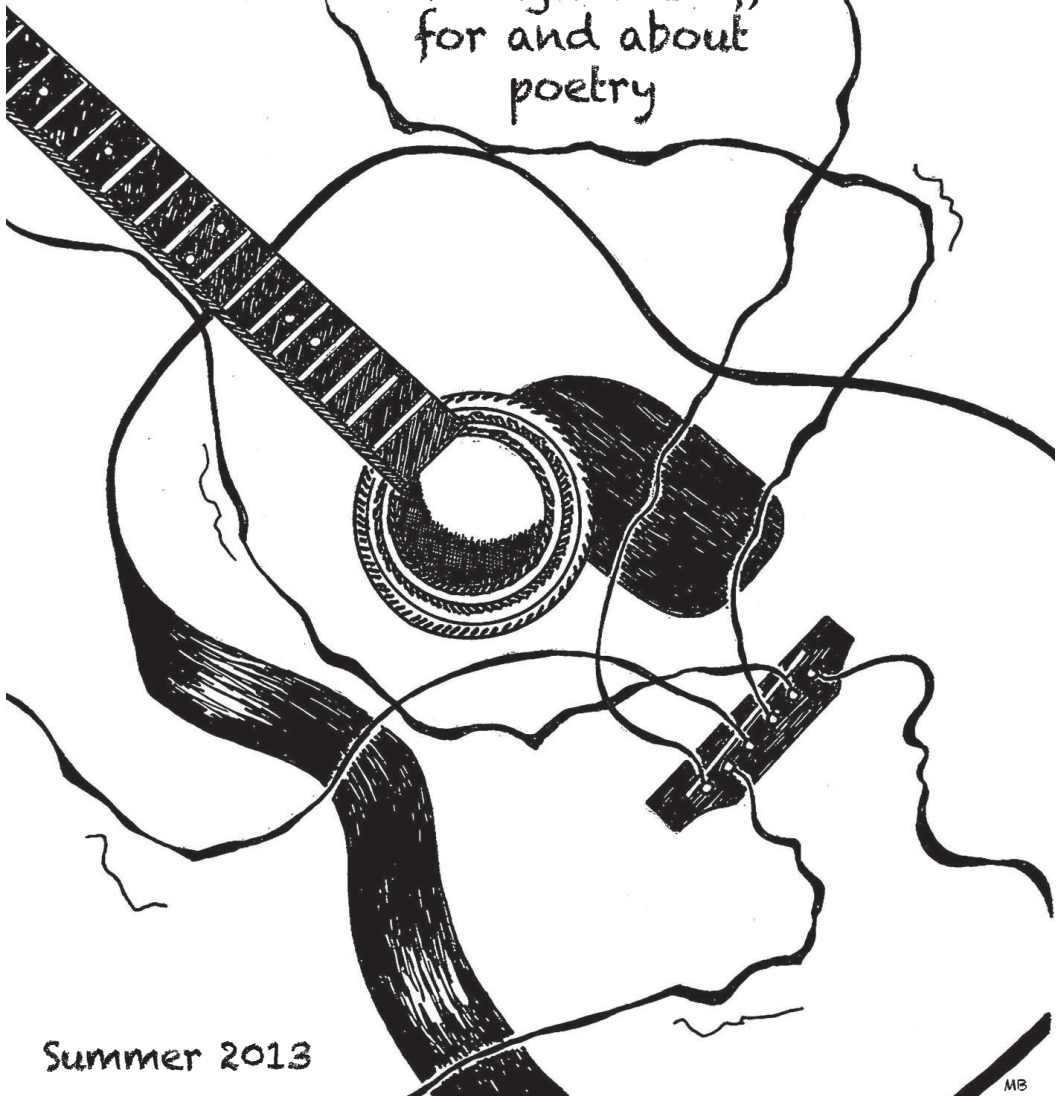


# UNSTRUNG

A magazine of,  
for and about  
poetry



Summer 2013

# The Poets

“Let Down, “Fate” – <i>Erin M. Truesdale</i> .....	4-6
“Apparition,” “Psychedelic Blur”– <i>Frances Tellas</i> .....	7-9
“Eumaeus Tends” – <i>Richard Fenton Sederstrom</i> .....	10-23
“Walls Apart,” “Time Ticks On,” “In Dark of Night,” “City Girl’s Gone Away,” “The Goddess of Malice,” “A Morality Play” – <i>Esther Schnur-Berlot</i> .....	24-30
“Watermelon Days,” “Neighbor Days” – <i>Frances New</i> ...	31-33
“Eating Andromeda,” “Risk and Reward,” “Sinking In,” “Trigonometry and Other Mathematical Lies”	
– <i>Kaitlin Meadows</i> .....	34-41
“The Steps of Men,” “Waiting,” “The Lord Hath Made,” “To the Departing Moon” – <i>Shirley Mason</i> .....	42-46
“The Life and Times of Señora Gambelli,” “Leaving August,” “No Time for Blood,” “Whispering book”	
– <i>Christa Lubatkin</i> .....	47-51
“Some Advice for the Woman Raising Children Alone – after Nazim Hikmet,” “Unlocked,” “Mountain Hunger,” “The Drive Home,” “A young daughter listens to the wind,”	
– <i>Erica Maria Litz</i> .....	52-58



Unstrung is a project of the nonprofits The Blue Guitar  
and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

Unstrung • Summer 2013



Jones



Feldman



Deen



Cummings



Crowley



Chorlton



Call



Avey



Ashley

# The Poets

**“The Bride,” “The Calm,” “The Demon,” “Morning Thoughts,” “Wasted Words,” “Random Ramblings of a Combat Veteran Under The Influence #2 (words of self-doubt),” “Under The Influence #1 (words spawned from alcohol)” – Andrew R. Jones .....59-75**

**“A Prediction After Losing Time Back ...,” “Acadia Drifting,” “America the Phoenix,” “As Strangers Often Do,” “Because I’ve never been there (for Tehmina),” “Green Louisa,” “Kansas Calling Midnight,” “Visions,” “Waiting and Fasting” – Robert Feldman .....76-92**

**“The Secrets of the Well,” “Arctic Instincts,” “Autumn’s Equinox” – MJ Deen .....93-96**

**“Good Morning,” “The Liar’s Scorn,” “Pepper Sauce,” “Spring Is Over,” “The House On Shore,” “The Last Dance” – Kayla Cummings .....97-107**

**“Cholla,” “Linda,” “Russian Thistle,” “Territory,” “This Winter” – Gari Crowley .....108-113**

**“The Road into Paradise,” “Silver Peak,” “Point of Contact,” “Deer,” “Black Flight” – David Chorlton .....114-119**

**“Snow Melt,” “Green Waves,” “Desert Rose Paradelle” – Karen B. Call .....120-124**

**“A Desert Meditation” – Sydney Avey .....125-126**

**“Show and Tell in Poetry” – Paula Ashley .....127-137**

Unstrung is a project of the nonprofits The Blue Guitar  
and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

# Erin M. Truesdale

## Let Down

Let down your hair  
to cover your face  
but don't get lost in the shadows.

Let it down and be free  
but don't let its weight  
pull you down.

Let down your hair  
and be careful of who  
gets near you to tug and repress.

Let it down and take heed  
of the wind that threatens to  
whip it around and rip it out.

Let down your hair  
but don't trust those who  
only love you to ride in your wake.

Let it down and love  
the feeling it gives you to  
be not restricted, to be not held back.

Let your hair down  
but don't be let down  
by the world that longs to  
pull you down.

© 2013

Unstrung • Summer 2013

# Erin M. Truesdale

Erin M. Truesdale is an author and freelance writer originally from Minnesota. Her poetry has been published in The Blue Earth Review and Unstrung Magazine. Erin's latest release is an urban fantasy novel entitled "Breaking Away: The Man in the Shadows." She currently resides in Mesa, Arizona with her two cats. Contact the artist at [t.distribution@gmail.com](mailto:t.distribution@gmail.com).

5



# Erin M. Truesdale

## Fate

Confused, scared  
Sweating through my shirt.  
Hands clammy and throat dry,  
Hoping I won't get hurt.  
Either emotionally or physically, and  
My trust has run thin.  
Looking up, I see my own face  
Spread my fingers across my skin.  
In an instant, I know somehow  
That life is worth living;  
That everything I've accomplished  
Is only the beginning.  
Who cares what my friends think?  
Or my mom and public at large?  
I do the things that I love  
And that puts me firmly in charge!  
Brightening, a radiant glowing smile  
Transforms my gloom to joy  
As my confidence builds, I jump up  
Energy rising from my soul! I destroy  
All illusions of failure, all  
Frustrations and fears  
Are readily pushed down and hidden  
I vow to cry no more tears  
Because I am mighty, I am strong  
I will do what brings me happiness.  
Art, caring for animals, writing and laughing  
Until the day I die, I say  
In this wonderful fate I shall be basking!

© 2013

Unstrung • Summer 2013

# Frances Tellas

## Apparition

Where is my mother?  
I don't know and she  
stands next to me.

Her love is something  
I'm not aware of.  
Thoughts of her  
holding me?  
Clenching my little  
body until the child  
is no more

Until her love for me  
means rejection,  
castaway, waste  
Where is my mother?

Someone far away says  
She is next to you holding  
your hand  
Don't you see her?  
Your mother

I answer back to  
the floating voice  
Yes  
I see her and  
she is holding my  
hand

The thing is  
I don't feel her  
© 2013

# Frances Tellas

Poet Frances Tellas is also a home-health nurse. She has lived in Arizona since 1989. Contact the poet at [john00069@hotmail.com](mailto:john00069@hotmail.com).

8





# Frances Tellas

## Psychedelic Blur

I stand by the shore  
watching my child  
swimming around the sea of mankind  
Diving into the deep sea that makes  
the inside of his head light up  
in brilliant blinding hues that  
help him forget about where he came from  
and who left him behind  
inebriating him with the need not to think  
of where he is at the present or contemplate  
about who he will become  
or how he will get there

9

He dives and dives until  
he cannot come back up  
I stand by the shore  
arms that weigh like anchors  
My legs deep in the wet sand  
I watch my child gasp for air  
Hopelessness foaming at my feet  
I watch my child drown  
drown in the sea

© 2013

# Richard

## Fenton Sederstrom

### Eumaeus Tends

#### Eumaeus Tends

The old dog will come back or he will not.

It does not matter,

Not to the dog, not to me.

Not to my pigs.

If they were sheep. Sheep are different.

With sheep the dog has two choices.

The dog will herd the sheep. Or

The dog will kill a sheep. Maybe two.

With pigs it is different.

No dog will herd pigs. Pigs won't stand for it.

No dog will kill a pig. Dogs know the danger.

Especially an old dog. Especially this old dog.

He will come back though, unless he has died.

I think he won't die.

If it were me . . . but I have others.

I don't need this dog.

Pigs almost never stray from the trough.

A pig far from the trough will either starve

Or he will learn to kill the biggest dog.

The dog doesn't need me. In me

10

Continued on page 11

The dog has no one to die for, no one to live for. So.  
The dog will return. And if  
After these years the master himself should return  
Then the dog can make his choice.

He will choose to see the master, or  
He will choose to die. Or some god will choose.  
With me, the dog has no reason to choose.  
He will come back.

And I?  
I will save the fattest pig for the master.  
Then I will make my choice.  
Or I will not.

11

### **Laertes**

In her room in the house of her husband  
Her fine knuckles chafe and crack.  
Her fingertips harden with the push of the needle  
In, out, a breathing in the bare linen  
That informs the web of shroud. For whom?

Yes. I know.  
It is good to know that one has a daughter  
To care for the public abstractions of dotage and dying.  
In and out.

The needle through the embroidered cloth  
The needle of breath  
In and out of lungs patinaed  
With the dust of these hills.

Days of too much living, if living alone is living  
And not breath-borne ash of memory—  
All longing these decades past—  
Eurycleia young again.

The hands. Hers. Mine.  
Here are hands that have gripped the sword, the bow,  
The reins of chariot horses, even—

12

For what does it matter to a man in the settled helm  
Of ruling—the handles of a plow,  
The shepherd's crook. The butcher knife.

The hands hold nothing now, or nothing well  
Save to support the brow above them in its dozing  
Like my grandfather

When the fragile support of his ill-formed cosmos  
Threatened to drop his attic treasures down on him

The stuffed owl he bought one Friday  
In a Minneapolis bar—  
One of the lazy Fridays before the depressions, outer and inner.

The fingers grasp nothing, fumble with a spoon  
Ladling gruel to palsied lips  
Open to the invisible wisp of a regal wave  
Or princely salute to seafarers and soldiers  
Sailing for Troy, errands for the corporate imperium.

Only five generations down from the creative prick of Zeus.  
Odysseus sacrificed now forever  
To the foam of Cousin Poseidon's rabid fancy.

Telemachus, doomed by birth, by his wandering sire,  
By his grandfather's faithless devotion to inheritance,

Your mother is king now, boy, by my indecision.  
Let me not be mad. My hand.

13

I shall not look upon hers, withering at her embroidery  
The shroud of my only hope. I embroider this . . .

Telemachus, grandson doomed to be my heir, not his,  
Only maybe doomed to survive inheritance,  
I have loved too cannily for passion.

Your passion would weave the shroud  
Of your mother's cryptic love.

Continued on page 14

*Who on his own*

*Has ever really known who gave him life?* you ask.  
Look around.

It's the unborn old poet gives us life. Death. Life.  
*Why do you spurn my father so?*  
You may well ask again.

### Owl

The image is apt, I suppose. It was  
Like an attic in there, cluttered with the discards  
From his self-indulged permanent adolescence,  
Despoiling farmers' daughters, turning Chaos into chaos.

14

Worse, it *was* an attic, in a Minneapolis summer,  
Humid, smelling of the detritus and sweat  
Of forgettable generations, sloughed skin,  
The skin of mortals that they cannot slough,

That swallows them whole, so exhausted  
That it can neither digest nor protect its meal,  
The piteous aliment of human innards.  
The Great Head smelled of his duplicitous playtimes,

Of humans clawing with bloody nails  
At the delusionary privilege of being what he is —  
Zeus! Once out of that turbulent crucible  
It is better to be an owl, even a stuffed one.

## On Calypso

If she hadn't been immortal,  
Hadh't been made immortal,  
Hadh't been made —

Poiésis, a bricolage of doldrum yearning —  
I should have travelled all the farther,  
Traveled to Dido, immortal too perhaps

In the Kalliopean throes of her mortality,  
The incessant torment of breathing —  
If she hadn't been immortal,

If she had been Dido instead  
I should have been enthralled not  
By her lust but by my own.

15

But what of Penelope *then*?

## Metamorphoses: Narrators

*"You remember all the things that never happened"*

The stories. Laestrygonians, Lotus Eaters, Calypso.  
That bag of winds. Only stories.  
And they all know that.  
I know that. Only stories. And the teller is meant  
To tell them as though they were true.

There's been agreement about that  
Almost since stories became stories  
And not reports of neighborhood gossip  
Even from far distant neighborhoods.  
Stories are like this:

The better they get the more spectral they become.  
Certainly the teller doesn't regard them as factual.  
Well, maybe the Cyclops bit. Maybe.  
Polyphemus of less than distant memory.  
Maybe.

16 It is hard when you begin to lose the original mood  
The terror that gets lost in the telling and retelling  
As the terror grows in the listeners  
In the telling and retelling.  
To lose that in yourself means to lose the single  
Fact in the story,  
The original witness of it.

So the storyteller  
At the mercy of his listeners,  
The mercy of what the storyteller  
Learns to know of the listeners' natural apprehensions  
And misapprehensions,  
The ambiguity of anticipation —

Continued on page 17



The storyteller begins to filter all this into the story,  
Even perhaps Polyphemus, the one-eyed  
(*Oh! The Wine!*) Giant.  
Even *he* fades into the old features  
And he becomes truer and truer  
And truth begins to lie

Not in the memory or in the story itself  
But in the story's future, where its truth *must* lie.  
Truth lies the more it is truth.  
Fading before him in the mists of telling  
Nausicaa is born all dream.

Penelope too.  
But *out* of the story  
Penelope is as sound as his soundless longing for her.

17

### **Demodocus Deposits from a Rocky Hill in Arcadia**

But still. The old gods  
Were dependable. They were even comforting  
In their horrifying playfulness,  
Their glorious lunacy.

An island explodes as we have heard islands have done.  
A great ship stands with its stone crew  
As an obsidian monument to angry water games,  
Phaeacia bound by insurmountable cliffs.

We declare the catastrophe an act of the gods  
Or one of them  
Or the result of a spat between two of them  
Or an all-out war amongst them  
Or a lunatic act of lordly revenge,

Spite writ cosmic  
On some poor lubber after he's been fooled  
Into holding his head too high above the sheepfold.

Nobody blamed the gods for any of this, or not much.  
The gods did what gods do. Our part wasn't questions.  
Our part was to tell the story in a manner  
To make grander the Grand,

Make something like wisdom  
Out of Athena's night-taloned bitchiness.  
Make catastrophe of her diddling Odysseus.  
Athens is well endowed with her name and her duplicity,  
Her step-child, Plato.

Understand that none of the gods paid attention to subtlety  
Or a well turned metaphor, especially  
If we were to invent and re-invent as we sung along  
And did it fast.

Read Yevtushenko on the subject of *his* gods.  
Consider Boswell and Dr. Johnson, David Frost on Nixon  
Or university poets angle-writing for grants.  
Any press is good, you can hear them thunder.

So. Thera gets blown to dust, ash,  
And flecks of drifting bone,  
A drying blood spot here and there.  
We don't need to question. The poet invents,  
Grabs up his lyre and sings, and sings.

It was never our part  
To worry about the state of Thera's morality  
And worry over what they might have done  
That we had better watch ourselves about,

19

Or share the guilt with fellow sinners,  
Or share any guilt, or sin. Our dying was never so petty,  
Even the lowly among us, like poets.  
Ours was to find a place in the cosmos of stories  
To fit it all in, and then some.

It's still the story that counts. Always.  
Even for those of us who choose to stay  
In the rock-strewn outlands above Tempe  
Or Dorset or far Wessex  
Munching the simple joys of jujubes and popcorn,  
The penny groundlings and our subterranean genius.

We vagabond wag-tongues are the interlocutors  
Between the gods and their mortal masters.  
To remain human without story  
Is to resign our souls to politics and hapless faith.  
*The wine!*

### **Drought in Ithaca**

*In memory of Louisa and Alfie Waters*

Louisa's dead skin is dry, has been for ages now.  
Louisa's dead skin mirrors the image of the hand that moves  
Not to caress the skin  
But almost to shade the skin from its disintegrating  
Into discrete mummified cells  
The magic caul her face was swaddled in at birth  
Talisman to entice whatever Odysseus she chose.

Skin, the paper of the old paperback book of modern poems  
The poets enticed me to buy when I was a boy.  
Skin and paper that  
Were I to touch either with a damp finger  
Would slough away into the silences that surround them.  
Page three hundred and ten, Pound's Seafarer  
Might depart as air  
Bequeathed to drift in lacy jags of dust.

Continued on page 21

Louisa's skin is all of her that remembers now  
Remembers her Odysseus  
Gone to sea at fifteen, a long voyage before they met—  
Returned as unlettered as he had started out  
Unadventured too, only Alfie Waters.

But not to her!  
The skin that touches with lips  
The mariner's rope-calloused hands  
Heavy with dreary seamanship  
Her pirate prince  
Romance of the thousand and second night.

Her Odysseus shipwrecked forever on a Mississippi mud-bar  
Selling paper bags from St. Louis to Minneapolis  
Only a river-farer now.  
A paying deck-passenger in the day trade  
Dares to make money out of new-fangled grocery bags.  
Groceries. Dry goods. Dry soul. Dead Sea  
Leached of all but salt.

The oar Tiresias spoke of is only a tool,  
And his Penelope is his Calypso  
His Circe  
His Scylla  
His wildest disillusionment  
Trapped between the storm of her sere disappointment  
And the Charybdis of trade —

His own skin nagged  
Translucent long before the great age  
He could not start to live to.  
Translucence is the color of his pain.  
Her pain grows on the frail page of my mind  
To the many colored splendor of black.  
© 2013

*A note from the poet: Thanks to Rebecca Dyer, I think that all of the sequence that I have taken to calling "Eumaeus Tends" has been published either in The Blue Guitar or, now, in Unstrung.*

22 *So maybe it is a good time to say a word about the central voice behind these poems. Eumaeus seems to me the character most likely to have survived the catastrophe to the ancient culture that left us the stories laid down by someone maybe called Homer. Eumaeus is the well-travelled slave who has been content to raise pigs and wait for Odysseus to return from Troy. Maybe he is waiting. He may not know.*

*The fate of Achaea is shrouded, hinted at through the woeful fate of non-returning veterans of the Mycenaean grand folly. Telemachus and his Ithaca are statistics for archeology. We also don't know what happens to Eumaeus, but Eumaeus is only a swineherd and a slave, not even a peasant. We don't need to know what happens to Eumaeus, save that we know him to be a man who understands the skills of abiding.*

*Eumaeus is the us of non-history, but we are the us who have survived, as Eumaeus could tell us, in order to keep the tales alive and moving. The humble mind of Eumaeus is the sort, maybe, that would not blanch having to create humble prose, but Eumaeus is left to assist us to remember the voices of the poetry, when no god is listening.*

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

Richard Fenton Sederstrom lives in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and Mexico and the North Woods of Minnesota. His book, “Fall Pictures on an Abandoned Road,” was released in 2009, “Disordinary Light,” in 2010, and “Folly, A Book of Last Summers,” in 2011. Sederstrom’s poems have appeared in The Talking Stick, English Journal, Plainsongs, Big Muddy, Mother Earth Journal, The Blue Guitar, Memoir (and), and Ruminare, among other journals and magazines. Fortunate to have retired from all respectable pursuits, especially teaching, he returns to the classroom as a visitor. Contact Richard at [richard\\_sederstrom1221@q.com](mailto:richard_sederstrom1221@q.com).

23



# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## Walls Apart

When our flowering relationship  
erupted it left us in rubble  
Posted keep out signs  
Walls

vibrate anger

Enemy territory is fraught with danger  
Casual questions become invasions  
All the do's and don'ts pop onto  
the battlefield leaving permanent scars  
New boundary lines are drawn  
A neutral observer calls for temporary

cease fire –

We eye each other suspiciously  
navigating through minefields  
We negotiate a dance of compromise  
that moves us towards  
a limping fragile truce

© 2013



# Esther Schnur-Berlot

Esther Schnur-Berlot is a transplant from New York City where she worked behind the scenes in TV commercials and then on to California where she taught wearable art. Now living in Tucson, she devotes her time to writing poetry. Esther's poetry has been published in the California State Poetry Quarterly, the Sonoma Collective and Desert Voices. E-mail lberlot@q.com.

25



# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## Time Ticks On

During teen years  
summer recesses crawled.

Impatiently I waited  
to be grownup  
wear lipstick,  
buy the first bra,  
slip into a pair of nylons  
walk in high heels  
try on a first kiss  
work after school

26 Declare a Declaration  
of Independence – I leave home

Hurled into the fast lane

decades fly  
years get scrunched  
time melds affairs  
marriage of years  
still here.

An out of sync  
mirror no longer reflects youth  
unruly silver streaks take root,  
memory gets stored on I-pad.  
Blurred sight and muffled sounds  
are leaving  
along with friends.  
Blue skies turn grey

a dark cloud is forecast.

© 2013

# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## In Dark of Night

the Doubting Devil  
crawls into my bed at 2 a.m. nudging  
me to get rid of dead wood words.  
Washout clichés with impunity –  
Delete all hollow phrases –  
Push myself from safety  
into unknown fearful places –  
Let public be damned

Inhale fabulous confabulations  
Love up – imagination's voice  
Smell the sensual salty sweat  
Taste taboos decadent desires  
Toast those outspoken outrageous thoughts  
Accept the imperfect core  
And Silence – the Doubting Devil

27

# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## City Girl's Gone Away

She stopped running marathons  
up glass canyons of ambition,  
forsaking the glamorous  
life – on the Dream Street  
she never found.

City girl has moved on

to the mountainous desert  
where memory hikes through  
porous landscapes of past nostalgia.  
Below the surface – prickly pear barbs  
still lurk

© 2013

# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## The Goddess of Malice

swooped in with a raging storm  
blowing through urban canyons  
extinguishing lights on an Island  
that never sleeps flooding  
the humbled masses' crown jewel –  
the subway.

The God of high tech  
cannot stand up to  
storming Sandy.  
Master Google is powerless.  
Land lines are cut, cell phones  
lie dead, toppled trees  
barricade doors.  
The plague of floods and fires  
engulfed the North East.

Sanctimonious ears  
refused to hear:  
Melting ice caps  
Man made climate change  
Carbon emissions  
Rising sea levels

The wrath  
of this woman scorned  
has heaped her vengeance –  
on our hokum heads.

© 2013

29

# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## A Morality Play

The alphabet soup  
of FBI and CIA were diddling  
with who was embedded  
in the bed of our Four Star General.  
All the news fit to print  
hearing the misdeeds  
of consenting adults.  
His last surge – “All In”  
melted the metal medals  
searing the super hero.

30

The BREAKING NEWS soap opera  
keeps churning, as the Middle-East  
lurches towards incineration.

Veiled in patriotism  
we fail to scrutinize  
our hawks calling  
for unjust wars that lead  
our lambs to slaughter.

11/11/12  
© 2013

# Frances New

## Watermelon Days

In the first year of our marriage,  
Tony and I knew nothing about housekeeping.  
In fact, we knew nothing.  
We did not even know  
how to portion our food.

I would cut a large watermelon  
right down the middle, staked with popsickle-sticks  
bearing our names. Never mind  
that he was over six feet and I was five.

My half was always finished first.  
Don't remember  
if I ever stole his.

© 2013

31

# Frances New

Frances New, born 1927 in China to Christian parents, came to the States in 1947. She was naturalized in 1954 under the 1948 Displaced Persons Act; became a widow in 1980; retired as a librarian in 1996 and earned her MFA in Creative Writing in 2004.

32





# Frances New

## Neighbor Days

A man was building a house in the valley.  
His neighbor said, “Don’t block the ditch  
that is on your land. It is a natural waterway  
when it rains.”

The man should know better  
not to put a big window on the side of his house  
neighboring the long ditch.

© 2013

# Kaitlin Meadows

## Eating Andromeda

the appetite for astrophysics is enormous  
and unbridled,  
ravenous  
and unquenchable,  
like us.  
we eat  
unnamed galaxies for appetizers,  
small tarts of smoldering  
asteroids  
for dessert,  
the pale meringue of the Milky Way  
on top,  
swilled down with cocktails  
of trailing phosphorescent gasses.  
there is no water on Mars  
to add to the intoxicants of Venus,  
no sweets in the pockets of the Pleiades  
to fatten our dreams,  
the light that bathes us sweetly tonight  
drained from the basin  
of sky eons before  
our great, great, great grandparents  
even thought to rise up from  
Neanderthals.

34

Continued on page 35

we wheel and spin,  
throw sparks in spangled wreaths,  
and flare up dancing plumes of fire  
as the ground beneath us  
buckles and heaves.  
after our celestial coupling  
on this starry, mid-autumn night  
at the end of our lives,  
our backs pressed deep  
into the dew wet grass,  
we stare up in wonderment  
exhausted and ecstatic,  
made small and huge  
all at once  
by our finite part  
in the All of it,  
eating Andromeda  
as one starved for light,  
gulping, parched  
a hundred swirling nebulae  
from a tilted silver goblet,  
stars like the last  
bright beacons of hope  
pointing the way  
to an uncharted realm,  
beyond all that we have seen  
or will ever see  
anywhere  
but in each other's  
eyes.

35

# Kaitlin Meadows

Kaitlin Meadows is the Mistress of Merriment at her enchanted art studio The Creative Cottage where she teaches creativity and art classes, makes masks and books, paints and sculpts, works with clay and invents mischief. She holds a twice-monthly writing circle called Word Weavers for women interested in writing and sharing in a nurturing environment. Check out her classes at: [www.thundermoonstudios.wordpress.com](http://www.thundermoonstudios.wordpress.com) or visit her website at: [www.kaitlinmeadows.com](http://www.kaitlinmeadows.com) or contact her at: [paloma@dakotacom.net](mailto:paloma@dakotacom.net).

36



# Kaitlin Meadows

## Risk and Reward

To leverage a glass bridge over the Grand Canyon,  
To walk a tightrope with your red umbrella unfurled,  
To swim with dolphins in water way over your head,  
To sing loudly when the demons pursue you,  
To leap from the high rocks into a still pool,  
To stand for peace in the time of war,  
To swing out over the abyss in an old tire hung from a frayed rope,  
To eat a trout caught in your long skirt from the singing creek,  
To love the one who is unsuitable  
But who makes your heart leap  
Like a wild bird  
Very sure of its wings.

© 2013

37

# Kaitlin Meadows

## Sinking In

38 All the innuendos of wind and light  
Splayed through the day,  
The cryptic messages  
Of ice and blood  
Left in the carcass  
Of the thrush  
Flown into the fogged window  
While we watched  
The moon rise up  
In its veiled mystery  
Over the farm pond  
That steamed  
Its displeasure  
At the coming winter,  
Stealing the last heat  
From the garden  
That clings to  
The impossible hope  
That the one set blossom  
Nuzzled by the last bee  
On earth,  
Will conjure  
One perfect scarlet globed tomato  
To eat with crispy bacon

Continued on page 39

And fresh romaine,  
On sourdough toast,  
With a thick wedge  
Of homemade mayonnaise,  
On the very last  
Summer day  
Of our lives.

© 2013

# Kaitlin Meadows

## Trigonometry and Other Mathematical Lies

40 It should make sense,  
The sum of the parts  
Adding up to the whole.  
Not that hole,  
The black, sucking vortex,  
Empty and full at the same time,  
Containing everything  
And nothing,  
Dark matter  
That doesn't matter at all.  
And the hypotenuse,  
What use,  
And a parallelogram  
Is no telegram  
From interstitial space  
With urgent word  
That the sixth sister of the Pleiades  
Has died.  
And rhomboids,  
What are they,  
Exactly,  
Vertical or spiral,  
And on what axis do they spin?

Continued on page 41



And if the dots do  
Connect,  
Do they in fact  
Make a line,  
Or sketch some imaginary  
Goddess with a bow and a  
Skinny dog  
That you can only see  
If you squint hard  
And have had some wine?  
Or, perhaps,  
They trail off the  
Edge  
Of the quantum page,  
Leaving algebra  
To fend for itself?  
© 2013

# Shirley Mason

## The Steps of Men

*In reference to a line in T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land"*

The steps of men stretch out  
The pendulum moves only forward  
A triangle of movement  
Flat across the bottom  
Grapes of bliss atop  
You stride across with Claire  
One step of yours for two of hers.  
Who is that with you?  
It is only Claire and I  
Who is that with you and Claire?  
No one. It is only Claire and I  
Eine, Zwei, Drei.  
But I see steps of three  
Someone, Claire and thee.

© 2013

# Shirley Mason

Shirley writes: “For seventeen years, as programmer/analyst, I wrote small software systems for installations in CT and NY. I’m a homemaker, mother, pilot, divorcee, widow, writer and painter, though it was hard finding time for the latter two. During my long Connecticut commutes, I wrote limericks in stop-and-go traffic, but time didn’t allow me to take writing seriously until recent years. Now I’ve finished two novels, one novella, and many, many short stories. Except for two instances, I haven’t shopped the novels, but continue to edit and let them ferment. Just for the heck of it, I put a collection of eight short detective mysteries on Kindle—titled, ‘The Hand at the Top of the Stairs,’ author name Shirley Mason. I study the craft of writing, both online and in workshops and classes at Pima Community College. I read and work on improving, and I’m registered for fall Advanced Creative Writing at Pima (for the second time).” Contact the poet at [slarsen2222@gmail.com](mailto:slarsen2222@gmail.com).

43



# Shirley Mason

## Waiting

Rubber fumes overpower me  
Nothing good to read  
Waiting.

Sprockets, sockets, axles, batteries  
Hidden between the covers  
Magazines for another head  
Waiting.

I avoid TV and watch the red Mustang  
Trapped on a lift  
They also serve  
Waiting.

44

Blue-shirted man spins tires  
Round tires rotating, spinning  
Shining wheel, a solar eclipse.

The dream spinner tire turns  
Smelling rubber, I dream  
Waiting and waiting.

While the Mustang runs away  
Into the solar eclipse.

© 2013

# Shirley Mason

## The Lord Hath Made

*This poem is about the Richat Structure, known as the eye of Africa. In Mauritania, it can be seen from space and is not a crater. You can see it with Google Earth.*

There's the Eye of Africa, did you know?  
Where erosion took place eons ago.  
Perfectly round, it can be seen from space.  
Just what had You in mind, God, in Your haste  
To make that earthbound, lasting glory hole  
And allow my eye but a few poor years?  
And see how few want to seek out that eye  
While a million souls have gazed into mine.  
That desiccated eye my Lord hath made  
Again I ask, what dream had You in mind?  
Did You not picture stark barrenness there  
While giving my eye the green of oceans?  
Were the eye of Africa liquid green  
And my eye the dry, cement of desert  
I would not have seen less this life I've lived  
But put hope aside, I would not have swum  
With the current of green leading me through  
Waves of unconquerable change to row.  
Oh how I've longed for a solid still place  
Like the Eye of Africa formed in haste.  
Do You use that eye to assay Your cosmos  
While leaving my one to see but a speck?  
Seven billion eyes are looking out now  
But only the Eye of Africa sees.

© 2013

Unstrung • Summer 2013

# Shirley Mason

## To the Departing Moon

*The following poem is about the fact that Earth's moon is departing at the rate of one inch per Earth year. One day, millions of years from now, earthlings, should there be any, will not know we had a moon.*

46 The moon one day will never be the bright round orb at which we leer.  
What fickle scheme, who found it apt to move it out one inch each year?  
Darkened skies do weep and curse the fate to see the moon depart  
Who causing such, which vile God showing lack of heart.  
To lose yourself, to fall in love, no moon to dwell hereunder?  
Poor us below—all passion spent, despair does rend asunder  
And creatures of night, and those of us who walk in dark  
Will surely stumble, the lightless trail no mark.  
To not attach our hearts to it was not a message warned  
It retreats and dimming so, its partner Earth does mourn  
What fickle fate who wills a moon for us to love and lose  
And Earthlings will never know it's not for us to choose  
Stars amid a blackened sky will find the Earth abashed  
Like when you pulled from me your lights and so my love you trashed.

© 2013

# Christa Lubatkin

## The Life and Times of Señora Gambelli

Like most ladies, I've been given a hand-me-down name, splashed upon my forehead long before my brilliance was ablaze. So excuse me, William Gambel, I like the more Latinate phrase: I insist, that in my covey I'm called Señora Callipepla Gambelli, at least to my face.

I'm deliriously delicious, mysteriously cunning and too fast for sniffing nose-to-ground yelpers on my tracks. I flitter and flutter and hide in the brush; the squinty-eyed hunter knows soon enough that Señora Callipepla Gambelli is no man's common quarry.

47

I admit I'm drab compared to the boys' flashy feathers, still, they fight viciously for the delights of my pleasure, I shall bow to the victor, forgo my personal preening, and in the end, like all the others, the Señora Callipepla Gambelli, chicks on her heels, will go complaining all over town.

© 2013

# Christa Lubatkin

Christa Lubatkin was born in a bomb shelter (her claim to fame perhaps?) and at age 15 emigrated to the U.S. Throughout her life, writing has held her in good stead and poetry in particular. She is an enthusiastic hiker and loves the mountains around Tucson – there are always vistas and surprises. Her poetry has appeared in the Paterson Literary Review and in Soul-lit. Contact the poet at [christa.lubatkin@gmail.com](mailto:christa.lubatkin@gmail.com).

48





# Christa Lubatkin

## Leaving August

I will not promise everlasting love on the lazy veranda, sweat dripping  
down our temples and our damp loins stuck to sleepy lounging chairs.  
Perky drinks can't rouse me beyond a cat-tail flicker through stagnant  
air. There is no spring in my haunches until August  
– great oppressor – has sidled out of town  
and

a brash northern gust  
    blusters through pecan trees  
    rips open the porch door  
        pulls me out,  
            fills my lungs  
            like red balloons  
    that quiver for release  
into the eternal  
    spinning  
        flow  
    where I am free,  
        free to find  
            my chosen one.

49

© 2013

# Christa Lubatkin

## No Time for Blood

no wondering  
why and who and how  
and could it have been avoided.

You come home gashed and gouged  
shirt tails ripped from buttons  
a band-aid might be found  
or a clean-enough rag  
if it is a gusher  
and that's that, though  
you don't want things to fester  
to have to see a doc  
or end up in Emergency  
where you'll get that look –  
*what, you again.*

so

At our place we take pain  
in stride. Even  
if you bring it on yourself —  
Joe's bottle drops to the floor  
he groans up  
from the slouching couch,  
thunders down the porch stairs  
whistles for the Pit  
revs up the truck  
hunts down a punk  
deals out a thrashing.

No hand is offered  
to ease the pain  
no sweets  
to stop tears from welling  
(ever since ma died)  
no time for blood  
in this disappointed house  
© 2013

# Christa Lubatkin

## Whispering book

I raise your gaze  
with my verse  
coax shimmering  
smiles to your face  
curl up  
with you by the fire  
where you fall  
into sleep  
in the web  
of my rhyme.

In the folds  
of gray dawn  
your fingers stop  
caressing my spine –  
you confess  
that by the pages  
of another  
you are beguiled.

© 2013

51

# Erica Maria Litz

## Some Advice for the Woman Raising Children Alone — after Nazim Hikmet

If you find yourself on the slowest walk back to your car alone, hands  
clenched like they were still held to  
the lip of a worn, wooden bench under your thighs, a watch,  
wedding ring, and new black leather belt in a bag on your back, don't hold  
your jaw shut, your keys cutting your palms.

52 Instead cry alone in your car,  
your face crushed and wet will still be soft  
when you see your children.

And when you are in a numb daze washing dishes, put the sponge down,  
lie on the floor, look at your children upside down, and let them  
sit on you, pull you, and bury stuffed animals under your armpits.

At first you may not want to go do what you did with him or go where you went—  
go anyway  
and cry in the car  
in the presence of your children and the world—  
Cry. You won't fall under.

Continued on page 53

Continued from page 52

Let go of imagining his hand warm in yours as you drive,  
and get used to odd numbers of people.  
go out alone some, often enough to feel  
your self walk with your arms free to swing,  
your hands empty.

© 2013

53

# Erica Maria Litz

Erica Maria Litz's poetry collection, *Lightning Forest, Lava Root* was published in 2009 by Plain View Press. Her poetry has appeared in several literary journals and publications, including Arizona State University's Online Literary Magazine, *Superstition Review*. Erica, who has an MFA in Creative Writing from ASU, has taught writing as an Adult Education Specialist for over 15 years, and she's taught English Composition at the post-secondary level as an Adjunct English Faculty. Contact the poet at [ericamlitz@gmail.com](mailto:ericamlitz@gmail.com).

54



# Erica Maria Litz

## Unlocked

She shut out the wind for so long  
that the children didn't hear music.  
They couldn't hear a drum  
they didn't know  
or the resonating of string.

A time of bitch-lost fear  
passed. Now it's up to her  
to call down  
the wind each day,  
up to her to pull out  
a wheelbarrow,  
turn it upside down,  
and give her son a plastic bat to hit  
its rusted underbelly.

She'll give her daughter the used guitar, let her  
blow off the dust, let her risk  
a breaking  
through to a new song.

© 2013

55

# Erica Maria Litz

## Mountain Hunger

She hadn't left the valley in some time, and the children wanted to see  
the pine and peaks closer to their feet.

All these years, and she never knew

The mourning doves eat the seeds of crushed tumbleweed.

She had stopped to fill the tank, the birds

feasting in the field festered with weeds at the side of the station.

She drove off knowing

They'll find what they need, valley or mountains.

They'll find what they need

when they get there.

© 2013

56



# Erica Maria Litz

## The Drive Home

A man dressed in a gold suit painted with dollar signs  
stood on the late night side of the road with his sign,  
distracted her in these strange times of nothing new.

She stared as she drove by until her mind  
wandered to should-I-dye  
the silver streaks in my hair or  
consider them an investment,  
a demonstration of wealth?

Today she considers the lightning in her hair worth keeping public.  
She lets the light catch the white in her crown...

57

© 2013

# Erica Maria Litz

## A young daughter listens to the wind,

sits on her mother's lap out in the back,  
looks up at the ash tree to its highest point,  
the deadest branch, to see  
a hummingbird.

She tells her mother it perches there to look out  
at all God has done for him. She says  
he knows he's loved by the one who made him and sits  
so small, up so high to see.

Her mother knows  
she must listen.

© 2013

58

# Andrew R. Jones

## The Bride

There's a story of a bride,  
A bride whose husband had died.  
After the funeral she sat outside,  
Outside alone and cried.  
Loved ones offered their time,  
Their time taking turns at her side.

"I'm sorry."  
"If I can do anything to help, let me know."  
"Call me if you need to talk."  
"My prayers go out to you."  
"Keep your head up."

59

To each she could not confide,  
Could not confide for her husband had just died.  
"Thank you," she replied,  
She replied as she sat alone and cried.

Then came a guy who sat by her side,  
By her side he spoke not a word for her to reply.  
As the moon shined high,  
High in the sky,  
The guy remained silent,  
Silent at her side.

Continued on page 60

He placed his hand by her eye,  
By her eye wiping the tears she cried.  
Her sadness she would no longer abide,  
No longer abide feeling hope and joy collide.

She turned to thank the guy,  
The guy by her side,  
Who sat by her as she cried.  
“Where is he, did he hide?”  
“He was just here at my side.”

60 She went to her husband  
Her husband who had died,  
Kissed his coffin and said goodbye.  
No words helped her get by,  
Just the guy,  
The guy who spoke not a word for her to reply.  
© 2013

# Andrew R. Jones

Andrew R. Jones is a Marine Corps combat veteran enduring the struggles of Post-Traumatic Stress and a mild Traumatic Brain Injury suffered from a blast in the Battle of Baghdad 2003. He utilizes writing as a therapeutic tool and hopes to find peace within his heart and prays for the ability to motivate others to heal as well. He is published in *Outrageous Fortune*, *Canyon Voices*, *Veterans Writing Project*, *International War Veterans Poetry Archives* and several other magazines and journals. He will be releasing an anthology in the summer of 2013 titled, "Healing the Warrior Heart," focused on the struggles of post-war life. He currently attends Glendale Community College and plans to transfer to Arizona State University to pursue a Master's Degree in Creative Writing. Andrew resides in Phoenix with his fiancée and two sons and can be contacted at [Andrew@HealingtheWarriorHeart.org](mailto:Andrew@HealingtheWarriorHeart.org).

61



# Andrew R. Jones

## The Calm

Amidst the calm  
The sky is clear  
Clouds moved on  
But the storm rages on  
Rages on amidst the calm

Amidst the calm  
The rubble smokes  
Heat is gone  
But the fire rages on  
Rages on amidst the calm

Amidst the calm  
The air is still  
Howling is gone  
But the wind rages on  
Rages on amidst the calm

Amidst the calm  
The waves glide in  
Caressing the sand along  
But the water rages on  
Rages on amidst the calm

Amidst the calm  
The grass is soft  
Mountains are strong  
But the Earth rages on  
Rages on amidst the calm

Amidst the calm  
The explosions silence  
Men's lives are gone  
But the battle rages on  
Rages on amidst the calm

Amidst the calm  
All is well  
We are where we belong  
But the anger rages on  
Rages on amidst the calm  
© 2013

# Andrew R. Jones

## The Demon

Demand of him, "Silence!"  
He won't listen

Bind him to a chair  
He won't stay

Secure him in a cage  
He breaks free

Impale him through the chest  
The blade fails

Shoot him in the face  
The bullets bounce

Set fire to his body  
He won't burn

Close your eyes and stay strong  
He laughs and teases  
Close your eyes and stay strong  
The laughter ceases

Close your eyes and stay strong  
He cries demon tears  
Close your eyes and stay strong  
He disappears

This battle you may claim  
You live another day  
Be grateful you get to stay  
Remember those he took away  
© **2013**

63

# Andrew R. Jones

## Morning Thoughts

World War II air raid siren  
My body electrified  
This isn't right

**...There must be a mistake**

The alarm is wrong  
I fell asleep an hour ago  
...Or was it three?

**...There must be a mistake**

Check the time  
6am  
Second opinion  
6am

**...There must be a mistake**

Drape my arm across her body  
Still here  
Lost in dreams  
Unaffected

**...There must be a mistake**

Continued on page 65



It's been two years  
Free to leave  
Life must be better elsewhere

**...There must be a mistake**

Kiss her neck  
Squeeze her body  
Roll to the edge of the bed

**...There must be a mistake**

My feet meet the floor and I take a seated position  
Followed by a silent cry of painful opposition  
My back, my knees, my shoulders, my hands  
Reminders I'm alive, I should be ashes in the sand

65

**...There must be a mistake**

Death missed our appointment in Baghdad  
Some would say I should be glad  
He was a little busy that day  
I was on his list he should have taken me, I say

**...There must be a mistake**

Continued on page 66

A prayer to God, His reminder I'm still here

**...There must be a mistake**

He never seems to care

A deep breath, I stand on tired feet  
A deep breath, I walk to an aching beat

Granted another day to redeem my sins  
Cursed with another day to recall where I've been

**...There must be a mistake**

66

Maybe Death will realize his blunder tomorrow  
Maybe he already has and enjoys my sorrow

Four thoughts are all I need  
Four thoughts in my daily creed

**Hug the woman in my bed  
Hug my children 'til their faces are red  
Don't be afraid of the tears I will shed  
Remember my brothers with whom I have bled.**

© 2013

# Andrew R. Jones

## Wasted Words

A man racked the slide,  
The slide to his .45  
Unable to set his guilt aside,  
He simply wanted to die.

No more tears to cry,  
To cry for those who died.  
They say he was justified,  
Justified to end their lives.

“It’s war, it happens.”  
“You did the best you could.”  
“Life goes on.”  
“I’m sorry you had to go through that.”  
“It’ll get better.”

67

Wasted words in his mind,  
In his mind it’s only lies.  
He called a guy,  
A guy who fought by his side,  
The guy heard not a word nor a cry,  
He hung up the phone and rushed to his side.

Continued on page 68

In a dark closet he did find,  
He did find the man with a .45  
A bottle of whiskey at his side,  
The man was still alive.

They sat side by side,  
In the dark closet with no tears to cry.  
No telling how much time,  
How much time passed by.

The .45 was handed to the guy,  
To the guy who said not a word by his side.  
This time he didn't die,  
He didn't die, but Death stood by.

68  
Day to day, lie to lie,  
Not a word is replied to help him get by.  
Wasted words get lost and die,  
Get lost and die with those who reply.

For those who cry,  
Who cry or want suicide.  
Sit by their side,  
In your silence they will confide.

© 2013

# Andrew R. Jones

## Random Ramblings of a Combat Veteran *Under The Influence #2* *(words of self-doubt)*

It's just a day  
Well, a series of days, I guess  
March 19 through April 8  
Only three weeks  
If only, it was only three weeks

69

How long is only three weeks?  
When spent enduring the most gruesome combat a Marine can experience  
Does it count as only three weeks?  
Maybe it's equivalent to three months or three years  
Maybe three decades

If after Bootcamp you are a man... a Marine  
And after Infantry School you are a Grunt... a Warrior  
Then what are you after combat?  
Are you more of a man?  
More of a Warrior?

Continued on page 70

To Marines yet to experience the fight, you are a role model  
I remember a “Boot” who saw us as gods  
He was an odd Marine, but a Marine he was  
It was even in his name  
When introducing himself he stated his rank and name and followed it with  
“...as in, this Marine sure is odd”

He was eager to train and was a sponge for knowledge  
I was always harder on him than any other  
I ask myself these days, “Why?”  
I often wonder if it contributed to his mental state that day  
He shot up his girlfriend’s house  
Saving the last bullet for himself

70 But back to the question  
After combat, what are we?  
Some might say we are heroes  
Even that is debatable  
Achilles was considered a hero by some  
A brutal murderer by others

Continued on page 71

Does a Warrior cease to be a hero  
When he returns from combat and acts in a dishonorable fashion?  
Does he cease to be a hero  
When he is overcome with stress and hurts innocent people?  
Then what is he?  
A monster?  
A beast?  
An outrage?  
An abomination?

I envy the Warriors who died in battle  
They will never leave that mountaintop of heroism  
Buried with their boots carefully pointed to a 45 degree angle  
Service rifle standing at attention covered with an 8 pound Kevlar  
And a set of dog tags marking their eternal position

71

It's only three weeks  
It will pass  
Just as it did the previous 10 times  
And I will survive  
Just as I did the previous 10 times

© 2013

# Andrew R. Jones

## Under The Influence #1 (words spawned from alcohol)

A man can have the greatest support group in the world. But what good is that support group if the man won't reach out to it

I want to be mad but at the same time I want to give in and understand  
this is his choice in life

I don't make his choices

He does

72

But is this a well-informed decision?

Was he clear-headed enough to make this decision on his own?

He just told me several months ago that he was doing great. He told me  
this as he was helping me get through a hard time

Did my questions make his situation worse for him?

Did it bring on guilt and the thoughts of whether or not  
he made the right decision?

Maybe it's a slow sadistic form of suicide?

Could he have those thoughts?

Wanting to die, but wanting to die painfully, slowly?

Continued on page 73



Pussies take a shotgun to their head  
Real men make it hurt  
They suffer  
They witness the destruction of their suicide as it happens

Can a man be that sick?

Maybe this isn't what he wanted  
Like the man who jumps from a skyscraper and realizes halfway down  
it was a shitty decision  
Too late  
But this is much slower

We drink to numb the pain  
To make the pain go away, even just for a moment  
But it always comes back.  
It lets you take your moment of solace and it watches with a grin on its face  
Knowing it will be back the next day and the day after that  
and the day after that  
It laughs at your every attempt to get rid of it  
It's always there  
Always a part of you

73

Continued on page 74

I hate you  
But you've done so much for me  
A punk kid turned into a Warrior  
You filled my head with thoughts of glory  
Thoughts of killing and how wonderful it is  
But it's not  
It's gruesome  
It's tiresome  
It weighs on the mind  
It weighs on the soul.

You didn't promise me a rose garden  
You said it would be Hell  
But I had no idea what awaited me  
When you brought me out of my shell

Everything you glorify  
Is everything that kills me now  
We were born in a bar and we drink to celebrate  
We scream kill and believe blood makes the grass grow

What does that even mean?

Grass is beautiful  
Blood is not beautiful  
It is horrific

74

I spent many days intoxicated in a war zone  
Thought it was a good thing  
Took the edge off  
Got me through the patrol and helped me sleep at night

The Marine Corps is an obsession  
Worse than any obsession of love a man could feel for a woman  
It continues to take from us  
It continues to feed off of us  
And expects us to keep on giving  
To keep on sacrificing in its name

But what do we get back from it?

A title?

A reputation?

Stories?

Memories?

75

It makes us think these are good things  
But in our society they are discouraged against  
Everything we are taught to love  
Everything we are taught to do  
Is discouraged in the society we are taught to do it for

They hate us when we show them who we are  
They want us to fight for them and to kill for them  
But they can't stand who we are or what we do

I hate you with the energy of a hundred suns  
But I love you with the passion of a hundred and one  
I gave you my life

© 2013

# Robert Feldman

## A Prediction After Losing Time Back ...

(a story not very well tied out  
could be the least i could do  
for my selfless desire to pass-slide these moments  
of starting and stopping this ride called life)

(once the gulf between bumpy rock skies passes,  
there can be no further exposure to the Bright Wind of Song...  
everylastthing will gradually pass us by, clearly, in a whisper)

76

oblong eternities  
will hop aboard  
calmly sit through the expanding stillness  
these growers of knowledge  
visiting the fruits,  
wisdom branches of some glory tree...

so it is with this perfect Cloud Ocean of anywhere—  
no illusion,  
situated outside all visions,  
prediction unique and changing  
called by any name other than what it really is...  
natural progression,  
candles melting the darkness away  
where once there were Plutonic shadows...

Continued on page 77

soon there will be another circus  
viewed from empty decisions  
reasoned around the corner—  
slowed by holding still  
the excitement of landing plainly,  
yet appearing there  
living,  
genuine,  
the same many-sided displays  
attracting lookers  
such as we

and the inventors,  
unconscious dreamers,  
will decide we've had enough of practical puzzles,  
pack it up one day  
after toasting the oncoming vastness of new possibilities...

for this is the only humble decision remaining  
before we all swap skins,  
change positions,  
without more straight ties  
to signify up  
or down

6/16/73  
St. Louis

77

# Robert Feldman

Born in Paterson, N.J., Robert was inspired by members of Paterson's literary tradition, notably Louis and Allen Ginsberg and William Carlos Williams. In St. Louis, he organized poetry readings, produced and hosted a community issues news hour and a biweekly bebop jazz radio program. His interest and admiration for the Beat Generation flourished. He helped found the Bisbee Poets Collective and played a leading role in the success of the Bisbee Poetry Festival. In 1980, he collaborated with Lawrence Ferlinghetti on his Bisbee publication, "Mule Mountain Dreams." During the '80s and '90s, he participated in dozens of poetry readings around the country. He continues to write, paint, and play tabla, and works with high school students as faculty advisor of the Park Vista Writers Workshop. The body of Robert's writing and painting can be accessed at [www.albionmoonlight.net](http://www.albionmoonlight.net); he can be reached at [rfeldman@gmail.com](mailto:rfeldman@gmail.com).



# Robert Feldman

## Acadia Drifting

weak-kneed wanderer  
requests the color green,  
Acadia drifting breezy wet air—  
Acadia drifting embellishing this perfect horny Canadian Cajun house,  
where antiques trees slump beside another important porch  
where scrub oak archways ruminate over precious literary conversations  
where watery gullible moats shape the scene...

Acadia drifting takin a stroll  
rainy New Orleans  
Rue Bourbon  
Artillery Park  
rippin off parachute umbrellas  
posin as homegrown lovers on the street  
orderin white Chartreuse wine  
toastin to eternal hard nipples  
each other's next orgasm...

steps leading downward,  
unrecognizable,  
rush of pastel French impressionist shutter dream  
full of rice and perfume...

79

Continued on page 80

let's hang out on Royal St  
laughin at hustlers  
expressin ideas about the origin of drought  
forgettin our half-filled glasses  
writin letters to some hot Carmen...

steps leading anywhere,  
unpredictable,  
sellin Colombian scarlet mahogany long dresses at the French Market

beggin her:  
“quit this job,  
come teach us bogyman religion,  
export yr pet wisdom  
predict yr apocalyptic memories...”

...we seem to have forgotten  
our Spirits  
while wearing these purple historic masks,  
our long strutting peacock feathers...  
because when we fight  
anger spoils the brew  
premature Da Da aging  
way before our time

New Orleans  
1993  
© 2013



# Robert Feldman

## America The Phoenix

down,  
flattened-out cold,  
right cross to the chin,  
body punched senseless...  
nothing left...

still, occasional tears  
drip,  
spill onto bleak boarded-up outlaw schoolhouses  
red brick sidewalks...

81

soon another swollen red eye blinks,  
reblinks,  
some mashed Salvation Army Nikes flex nearby,  
solitary unclenched hand reaches,  
rereaches,  
grunts,  
grasps another sister's fingers...

Continued on page 82

then somebody finds a hammer,  
then there are thousands,  
red and blue states pound and paint,  
then a building,  
rebuilding,  
songs' voices on the fly,

dreams are dreamed once again  
a new city  
recities, tougher,  
more soulful,  
modest angelic eagle  
with an athletic attitude—

America, the Phoenix,  
carry on...

Delray Beach  
Spring/Summer, 2010  
© 2013

# Robert Feldman

## As Strangers Often Do

unshaven benches  
green willow trees rich with water  
battered homefry picket fences...  
me and my sounds,  
no one else around

buds might be sprouting  
damp April ground pouting  
no birds shouting  
this mind realizing  
within  
then  
without...

83

that plant over there reminds me of Italy  
the place Byron wrote about,  
rocks congregating on candy cane hills  
cracks lingering in the earth...

then firecracker somewhere  
interrupts my solitude...

I again climb aboard a bird  
fly a bit further  
much wealthier for this...

Continued on page 84

steel gray sky  
no blue  
another modest sun peeps through my left horizon...  
how fantastic!

how many shades of green?  
how many breaths can exhale?

unshaven benches,  
no one around  
then three others roam by,  
sit, point,  
waiting,  
while a billion blades of grass wave  
filling this square  
clear away the stagnant air

now our eyes meet  
hiding like brothers in arms,  
so we remain and stare,  
breathing  
silently,  
separated,  
as strangers often do

1968  
Bear Mountain, N.Y.  
© 2013

# Robert Feldman

## Because I've never been there (for Tehmina)

because I've never been there  
I connect with your struggle  
fast with you  
pilgrimage to Mecca

because I've never been there  
I offer you my hand  
buy you books and multicolor pulseras  
part the curtains in your room  
air out the dirge  
your fear of darkness,  
plant malachite hummingbirds in your hair

this time reverence comes easy  
my kindness revitalizes  
I can recall music never heard before  
now sounding familiar  
across those ancient deserts  
our people used to share

85

Continued on page 86

because I've never been there  
I absorb distant voices your memories offer  
songs slipping through me like water  
cleansing my path to selflessness,  
forging your path to freedom,  
yes I can feel your struggle  
every time you breathe  
because I've never been there

because I've never been there  
I pay no attention to  
these rumors of holy war  
further restrictions of the mind  
insults  
mistrust  
steel garments to obstruct the light...

because I've never been there  
I wish to build a structure,  
pastel visions  
open to the air,  
and because you've been there  
that heroic garden  
might beckon to you again,  
to a place where rebirth begins  
to a place we may have shared  
though neither of us can remember

6/92

Tucson

© 2013

# Robert Feldman

## Green Louisa

ripe ritual vernacular  
wetlands explode four directions  
no irrigation necessary

Spanish moss  
hangs off our arms  
bouquet dresses on St. Valentine's Day

let's park for a while  
make certain this fuse stays burning  
subterranean Louisiana gas stacks

87

let's try on some satisfaction  
get lucky on pay day  
remind each other to collect our wages

green gets pretty heavy here  
how can green get heavy?  
drip and solidify  
cowgirl mixture eternal  
on top layers  
eternal exactitude

Continued on page 88

yes green Louisa,  
let's be humid together  
let's convince ourselves  
anyone's welcome  
to ride with us,  
long after this ultimate journey  
begins  
or ends

1990

New Orleans

© **2013**

88



# Robert Feldman

## Kansas Calling Midnight

python asphalt stretching road  
plain nighttime dark,  
reflectionless,  
onwardless,  
visionless...

laid out drunken boxer,  
memory: static AM Rochester jazz radio...  
memory: my long dead father...  
memory: escaping from Amerika  
to find America...

89

last chance to breathe free,  
to head further west  
dig the vastness...  
memory: 3:00 AM long zooming trucks to Denver,  
memory: distant suggested mountains this coming dawn  
emerging from my consciousness,  
memory: static teenage dreams from Paterson bed—  
blueberries, Motown 45s, sunflowers, just scattered...

Continued on page 90

now four windows down  
'65 Ford wagon tearing ass 85 mph  
saluting this miserable monotone wind  
defining Kansas,  
the Kansas that was...  
memory: runaway Kansas midnight,  
memory: runaway Kansas train,  
memory: runaway America's son

Lake Worth, FL

2012

© 2013

90

# Robert Feldman

## Visions

and we drove all night  
moving together down Sonoran highways  
sitar and tablas  
AfroBrazilian congas  
Milton Nascimento's holy voice

and I danced with you  
without asking permission  
you were just there  
hands felt so light  
collapsing inside your long brown fingers  
framing your moist dark eyes

91

and we drove all night  
dancing for the first time,  
the moon  
the wind  
a sleepy desert  
the lone witnesses,  
me following  
you leading  
moving together  
down Sonoran highways  
both of us  
illuminated by this night

Tucson, 1992

© 2013

Unstrung • Summer 2013

# Robert Feldman

## Waiting and Fasting

I pour another shot of bourbon  
engine idles like it should.

She is coming tonight  
armed with her band of angels.

I have no defenses,  
replaced by muted trumpet,  
alto saxophone,  
piano of Flamenco Sketches.

She holds a dripping brush to my door  
dressed in yellow  
Nefertiti for April.

I am first born.

So I wait.  
I fast.  
Dusk.  
Night.

She never came.

Bisbee  
October, 1980  
© 2013

Unstrung • Summer 2013

# MJ Deen

## The Secrets of the Well

The desert jungle shades no one,  
tangled and thorny, the elders stand proud.

Their ancient roots run deep  
into the scorching moon dust,  
protecting them from the swelling sun.

Eternally reaching, stretching,  
their twisted arms, towards unknown voices  
echoing in the stillness

The fiery sky closes out the day,  
as darkness forges its kingdom once again.  
The elders remain intact, calloused, leathery skin  
Sealing in the secrets of the well of wisdom.

Collecting the tears from the grey mist  
Shrouding the mystical faces  
hiding behind the moon.

~1996

© 2013

93

# MJ Deen

MJ Deen writes: “I live in Phoenix, Arizona, and am married with three children. My journey began many years ago as a Poet/Artist. I chose to focus on our three children, which was an all-consuming task. So for a while, I made the decision to place my artistic endeavors on the back burner. I did, however, manage through the years to feed my creativity, but now that my children are finding their own way in the world, I’m able to immerse myself into my artistic pursuits, which have been a passion of mine for many years, once again.” Contact the poet at [MjDeenAz@gmail.com](mailto:MjDeenAz@gmail.com).

94



# MJ Deen

## Arctic Instincts

Celestial visions descend the fragile arms of Artemis,  
Avowing nocturnal cries of the Arctic Wolf.

Gathering in pleated shadows, luminous eyes patiently probe,  
Callow sheets of snow softened by Spring.

Ancestral knowledge dwells deep within knowing eyes,  
penetrating the darkness, searching for survival.

The creatures etched upon the midnight sun,  
Stand alone, poised ...  
howling in the language of the Moon.

95

~ 1995  
© 2013

# MJ Deen

## Autumn's Equinox

Warm breath gathers  
in the chilling air,  
casting a faint picture.

Orchid hue chases away the  
morning mist exposing  
painted woodlands  
like shattered crystals.

Nestled in the remaining green fragments  
of summer, icy dreams  
unveil Winter's callow dawn.

Frost covered branches  
half emptied by Southern gales,  
prepare for winter winds,  
paralyzed by Autumn's equinox.

~1995  
© 2013

96



# Kayla Cummings

## Good Morning

Imagine a neighborhood where nothing ever happens that's out of the ordinary.  
Where night comes every morning right on schedule, not a moment past noon.

Where the neighbors' red-haired Sphinx cat Blue howls and barks at the moon.

Imagine a neighborhood where nothing ever happens that's out of the ordinary.

A place where the birds migrate North every winter, keeping their form  
as they fly backwards and then horizontally down.

Jumping on the ground like feathery frogs when they land on the sky.

Imagine a neighborhood where nothing ever happens that's out of the ordinary.

Where the weather is always predictable, partly cloudy, fully sunny,  
with a chance of rain, or snow. Where the grass grows as tall as oak trees  
and the trees give off a breeze that smells like flowers.

Imagine a neighborhood where nothing ever happens that's out of the ordinary.

Even the people never do anything out of the ordinary.

The man across the street, Mrs. Jones

and her husband Don start each day the same way. Sunday, never Wednesday,

Saturday, every other Thursday, and sometimes Friday, with the exception of

Monday, they go upstairs and out the back door into their front yard to say

goodbye to all the neighbors. After that, the lady down the street, around

the corner flies by in her waffle wagon, wrapped in a hot bacon dress just to slap  
you in the face with syrupy eggs and over-easy pancakes.

Imagine a neighborhood where nothing ever happens that's out of the ordinary.

— *To my big little sister Katelyn — you are anything but ordinary.*

© 2013

97

Continued on page NEXT

# Kayla Cummings

Kayla writes: “I was born July 2, 1990. My parents are Daniel Cummings and Christine Bundy. I have two younger sisters, Bridgette and Katelyn. I am currently in a seven-year relationship with my boyfriend, Justin (one of my many inspirations). I am a student at Glendale Community College (my degree is in literature). I also work as a part-time page at the Glendale Public Library. Some of my interests include: writing, caving, poetry, belly dancing, kickboxing, communication, animals, and phycology.” Contact the poet at [kay2044020@maricopa.edu](mailto:kay2044020@maricopa.edu).

98



# Kayla Cummings

## The Liar's Scorn:

*The dagger  
your tongue forms  
when you lie.*

*First it gouges out the eyes  
of the innocent, blocking  
them from seeing the truth.*

Next it pierces the ears,  
flooding them with lies.

Lies that turn to blood  
to muffle truth.

Then this same blood  
drips from their own lips  
like poisoned wine.

Finally they feel pain,  
the dagger rooted  
deep in their spine's core.

They stagger  
with betrayal,  
like cancer  
in the back  
bone.

Soon  
this pain  
**transfers  
infection  
to the  
heart.**

**Which turns  
black, and  
dies  
fast.**

99

# Kayla Cummings

## Pepper Sauce:

Hidden to the world

No gates, no guide, no walkways, no lights.

The mouth of the cave invites me inside with her breath.

Next I'm swallowed whole into her soul. So full of life.

She breathes in easy though dark and damp.

Atop my head a helmet and a headlamp rest.

My headlamp leads me through this limestone home.

100 Stalagmite calcite candlesticks light up the Big Room to reveal a stone table,  
ready for the cook to bring forth the next meal. From the twenty-foot ceiling hangs  
a stalactite chandelier. Plate on top of plate patiently wait stacked,  
broken and cracked  
happy to serve despite their state.

I follow one of the cavern's narrow slots, where once a spicy-food-loving pioneer's

Beloved bottle of Tabasco was lost.

From here I wander to a small body of water, protected by a strong stone dog.

Was he abandoned here or left by mistake?

Whatever the case, he will forever stand guard beside this lake.

A loyal guide who is easy to find, and he will never let anyone get left behind.

Continued on page 101

Stalagmites round, flat, and, muddy are often found scattered across the cave ground brave buttons spelunking their way in the putty-like clay of the cave. Others bloom like slippery mushrooms and lily pads.

I follow their trail to another room.

I stop at the top of a fifteen-foot metal ladder

I wait for my heart to settle, then descend

downward keen to what awaits me below, I

go very slowly until finally I arrive at

the end.

101

I'm at the furthest back reaches of the cave, not "dog lake,"  
this pool is much larger.

I stay for a while imagining

how many more rooms hide inside this underground lake.

Then up the ladder I rise, back

Continued on page 102

through the rabbit hole that led me to this wonderland in disguise.

For a moment I stand alone  
as I face an ornate wall of flowstone, mud melting like chocolate as it drizzles  
off the side.

Next I take a dangerous ride on the slick slide  
that does not slope smoothly to the floor.  
So before this ride is done I'm forced  
out of my seat and onto my feet at a run.

After this I go into a small passageway which I enter  
head first, immersed in the moisture  
of this birthing canal. Soon I push free,  
drenched in her ambianic fluid, born  
out to the second half of the cave.

102

Located here, the Signing Room.  
Before I sign my name to a page in the book,  
I take a second look inside my mind,  
I think of all the walls and arches in the cave  
covered in graffiti.  
I close my eyes and picture stalactites the color of Ribwort petals  
cascading from the ceiling, forming columns of delicately decadent ribbons.  
Fine drapery finished into curtains.  
Everything held perfectly in place by incredible pillars,  
roman statues, strong and elegant in form.  
I open my eyes unable to swallow the lumps  
all that's left are broken stumps  
of what was once,  
beauty untouched.

© 2013

103

*Cave formations are created drip by drip over hundreds of thousands of years,  
and yet Pepper Sauce is badly vandalized. It is still living and growing beautiful  
formations to this day. To help preserve Arizona caves and keep Pepper Sauce  
alive for future generations, leave nothing behind except your footprints.*

# Kayla Cummings

## Spring Is Over

The touch of wind on cheek is soft and slight.  
This time of year when cold and rain set in,  
I long for warmth to fix all pain and sin.  
To drown out fear in deepest lake of night,

so hope as bright as sun may come to light.  
To stop the fire that burns a hole, hot in  
a human soul, or bird, or fish with fin.

Bleeding drop by drop passed on to kin,  
but put a pile of colored leaves in hand,  
and throw them high in air. They form a smile,

yet I can't help but wish that spring were here.  
Time runs out, as my hourglass fills with sand.  
To leave and let someone else live a while.  
I face the cold today, and have no fear.

© 2013



# Kayla Cummings

## The House On Shore

Memories spilled out across the empty floor.

The house is silent and bare.

Everything is gone, even the door.

No one resides at 5414 N. Shore Drive anymore.

When her family left all the house could do was stare,  
as memories spilled out behind them across the empty floor.

The abandoned house, saddened to her core  
tried to close out the world, as if she didn't care,  
but she could not because everything was gone, even the door.

Yes, her foundation is crumbling, her condition is poor,  
but she loved her family, protected them, and still they left her there  
with the memories that had spilled out across the empty floor.

Nothing else was left, not a chair, not a table, not even a dresser drawer.

Why did they leave her? It wasn't fair.

They took everything else, even the door.

The next day a new family moved to the house on Shore.

They were the answer to the house's prayer.

They unpacked and new memories spilled out across the newly carpeted floor,  
and they brought everything, even a new door.

© 2013

105

# Kayla Cummings

## The Last Dance

Praise Aunt Josephine

for taking care

of her dying husband.

Praise her soft loose olive skin,

her pale-pink wrinkled smile,

praise her miss-matched style of clothes,

and crinkled nose that holds her thick reading  
glasses in place.

Praise Aunt Josephine

for taking care

of her dying husband.

Praise his bedpan

that she carries

in her hand, like a hot bowl of pepper soup  
trying not to spill.

Praise the red, yellow, and blue colored wires  
that pour

over the floor,

like pasta noodles

from his favorite meal, "Rainbow Rotini."

Praise hall light, illuminating the room

like an Italian bistro.

Praise the sweet music

of his ventilator,

106

Continued on page 107

Dean Martin's "That's Amore"  
never missing a beat.  
Praise his wheelchair  
that lets them dance,  
one last time.  
He is still light  
on his feet after all these years.  
Praise Aunt Josephine  
for taking care  
of her dying husband.  
Praise his oxygen tanks  
lined up, unopened,  
like expensive bottles of red wine  
aging,  
only getting better with time.  
Praise love that will not die

© 2013

107

# Gari Crowley

## Cholla

These are underestimated cross cultural denizens  
of genus Opuntia, Sonoran survivors. They breathe heat.  
In some places cholla is as thick as urban hoards.  
They are gold, silver and green under the sun.

Litters of stems are strewn about as hostility for the  
uninvited. Their parched skeletons, like dried bones,  
lie on the harsh underfoot of radiant heat. The rock  
and dirt burn like pyres in the arid indifference.

108

This nomenclature, nameless Homo sapiens,  
are as nameless as shed skins and exo-skeletons.  
They fall prey to desperation and struggle  
as an intolerable solar air immures their end.

The solar heat is without consolation toward the  
inevitable and the summer solstice never relents to grieve.  
A belated rain will bring flowers and the cholla will  
blossom white, lavender, red, magenta and yellow in the sun.

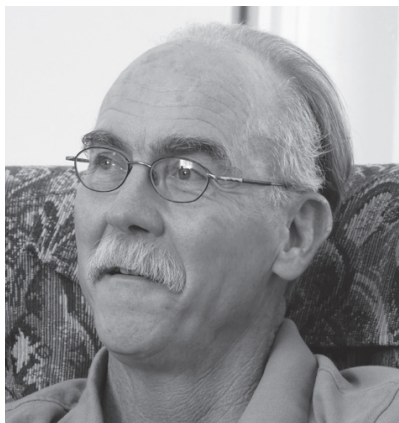
The scent of rain, oils and geosmin, the smell  
of earth rising to a constellation of saturated clouds  
teeming of darkness and shadow. The gift of this water  
will quench the resilience of the indigenous things.

© 2013

# Gari Crowley

Gari is an Arizona native and has lived here his entire life. He is a lover and respecter of the desert. He lives in Sierra Vista with his lovely wife, Linda, and their two cats Baby and Sammi. He has been employed in the property management/development field as a landscaper and groundskeeper. Reach the poet at [arroyo\\_verde@yahoo.com](mailto:arroyo_verde@yahoo.com).

109



# Gari Crowley

## Linda

She is lying on the sofa dreaming  
of resting herself in a curative  
mineral  
spring.

She immerses herself in the  
mute air under an open  
window.

Outside,  
wash is hanging from the lines.

The sheets are

lapping

a shore of dry air

as clothing suns in a lake of  
gentle recess.

The oxide whites and brights  
are reflecting

on the water of

a pristine blue beryl

sea,

somewhere.

There,

breezes are mellow and  
passive.

A white sedentary cloud transcends  
her mundane  
realm.

Shades of stress relief  
are found for her in a quiet solitude  
and silence

of sand

where

time is persona non grata.

© 2013

# Gari Crowley

## Russian Thistle

That ubiquitous green scratch  
turns a malfeasant autumn brown  
caught up in its prolific hectic  
struggle for posterity.

They tumble ecstatically in the traffic  
of the wind, audaciously hapless,  
rolling to huddled masses. Some, like  
street urchins tag walls and fences.

Others, as peregrinating dregs of panhandlers  
migrate to our feet. More will loiter like incorrigible  
thugs in disturbed spaces, gesticulating,  
impatiently budging from pushy nudges of air.

© 2013

111

# Gari Crowley

## Territory

Another day in the life of industrious capital.  
A paradox, this making of Utopia; only a refining  
of the captivity to hard truths and overkill.

This city, bent on wheels, is a manufactory of  
carbon dioxide. From the roofs and the blacktop  
a radiant heat rises in wavering rhythms,

frenzied like sun worshippers, pushing the systolic to  
mercurial heights, as the turbid urban air is  
stagnant above the hoods of mass contributions.

A dusky hawk at noon to the sun shifts its way through the clutches  
of precision air laying hold its talons to a power line, having pilfered  
from the urban conglomerate, eminent domain and real estate.

Engines are sweating carbon monoxide filtered in road dust,  
air conditioning and state of the art engineering. The remnants  
of past progress mingle in a continuum of economic necessities.

A captive moments preoccupation seeing the accipiter soar.  
A soundless respite clinging to the sky and distance  
while the only sound to meet the ears is the manic  
rushing of wheels and the curs of internal combustion.

© 2013



# Gari Crowley

## This Winter

Winter is a condition. In its absence  
of heat there is a discomforting  
grace of dormancy that

shivers my constitution,  
a physiological nature in  
this phase of my senescence.

This night in January  
there is the pristine notice  
of seeing my breath before me,

here in the fine light  
snow that floats about  
as fireflies in summer

or in the randomness upon the  
frigid water in April, of detritus  
and human frailty.

This is only the quiet cogitating  
of a fledgling geriatric  
having crossed the subjective line.

Aging, like the sedentary  
cold, is osmosed  
Into my blood.

Walking in the crystalline air,  
In the elements of a  
gentle well-being, it is this that  
should last longer than it does.

© 2013

113

# David Chorlton

## The Road into Paradise

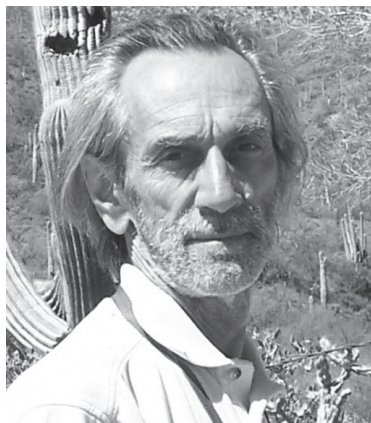
Ravens and rocks in the loose hanging sky; dust  
from a dirt trail beyond the new trees  
set in rows at the turn leading south; fence posts  
and wire at property's edge; dry light  
on the slopes where a mountain begins; wild cotton  
spun into the edge of the road; dip and rise  
past sheltering calves in the shade; the last  
slow twists into the flash of late sun in sycamore;  
and a quail's call through the shadows lying down.

© 2013

# David Chorlton

David Chorlton was born in Austria, grew up in England, and spent several years in Vienna before moving to Phoenix in 1978. He pursued his visual art and had several shows as well as writing and publishing his poetry in magazines and collections, the latest of which is “The Devil’s Sonata” from FutureCycle Press. Although he became ever more interested in the desert and its wildlife, the shadow side of Vienna emerges in his fiction and “The Taste of Fog,” which was published by Rain Mountain Press.

115



# David Chorlton

## Silver Peak

The mountain settles back into its place  
each day, leaning on infinity  
and clouds. Ore sleeps inside it.  
No rain has fallen  
since winter's last cold shower.

Deer nuzzle up against it.

Foxes sleep  
beneath its skin.

116

Approaching dusk it pulls a little  
from its base,  
but one wing  
cannot fly.

© 2013

# David Chorlton

## Point of Contact

To the screened-in porch on an old wooden house  
come the mice and the long-bodied insects  
with light in their wings.  
On the ground sloping down from the door to the road  
each morning the tracks are refreshed  
of the deer, javelina  
and fox  
who came to pick up what the day left behind.  
And the shrill sound of summer  
comes warm to the chairs leaning back with a view  
onto the juniper  
to which the animals come peacefully to feed  
and keep their wildness with them when they leave.

© 2013

117

# David Chorlton

## Deer

Darkness moves on deer steps  
to a forest's heart  
and climbs  
the diminishing peak  
until stars flow around it.  
The deer listen

when they stop  
for any moving part  
in the universe. They know  
where water runs, and which leaves  
are succulent, but sounds  
trip the springs

that set their limbs  
in motion. Listen: a twig  
snaps on another planet  
and velvet thunder  
breaks in the night.

© 2013

# David Chorlton

## Black Flight

When the forest has turned into dark scents  
on a bed of needles and leaves

with insect voices as the night's continuo

the bats become  
a long silk scarf pulled between the fingers of the trees.

© 2013

119

# Karen B. Call

## Snow Melt

Snow mounded high  
on the mailbox yesterday.

This morning I looked out and watched  
as the sun came from behind a cloud.  
In moments drops of water fell  
from the mailbox to the ground.

They pooled and a trickle  
meandered down the gutter.  
I gazed at the melting snow until it was gone  
and the mailbox glistened.

It's afternoon now. The mailbox  
and ground dry from the winter sun.  
No one would know that snow  
covered the mailbox this morning.

Moments melt away one by one.  
In time there will be no more for me.  
Who will know that I was here  
and watched the snow melt in the sunshine?

© 2013



# Karen B. Call

Karen Call came to Tucson on New Year's Eve 2001 from northern Wyoming. She retired while in Tucson and stayed to make it her home. Karen has essays in "Crazy Woman Creek: Women Rewrite the American West" and "Woven on the Wind: Women Write About Friendship in the Sagebrush West." She travels with her husband, Bill, who she met in Tucson, to visit far-off places and their three sons, wives and three grandchildren (so far) in Pennsylvania, Colorado and Oregon. She has been a member of a snail-mail poetry round robin for more than 15 years. Contact her at Karenmb@cox.net.

121



# Karen B. Call

## Green Waves

We drive along scenic byways  
and country roads, meander  
through towns and villages  
not seen by those who roar  
down interstate highways.  
We share the road  
with horses and buggies  
and wave at everyone.

122 We stare at the hills and valleys  
that gently rise and fall  
like green ocean waves.  
Flowers and grasses and trees, oh my!  
Sunflowers nod and sway at us.  
We drive through the Land of Oz,  
mesmerized, looking for the wizard in every town.  
© 2013

# Karen B. Call

## Desert Rose Paradelle

We wander through the roses in five-gallon pots.

We wander through the roses in five-gallon pots.

You stoop and sniff Pope Paul, then Marilyn Monroe, and John Kennedy.

You stoop and sniff Pope Paul, then Marilyn Monroe, and John Kennedy.

Pope Marilyn five-gallon stoop and we Paul in through the pots.

You John Monroe wander and then roses sniff Kennedy.

Where else could these three be in harmony but in a rose nursery?

Where else could these three be in harmony but in a rose nursery?

We lift Marilyn Monroe into our cart, leave the others behind.

We lift Marilyn Monroe into our cart, leave the others behind.

Behind where else a Marilyn could be these nursery in Monroe.

But leave in the three rose cart harmony we lift into our others.

123

You dig the hole and I add soil amendment, garden gypsum and banana peels.

You dig the hole and I add soil amendment, garden gypsum and banana peels.

Banana peels help roses grow and bloom in the desert heat.

Banana peels help roses grow and bloom in the desert heat.

Garden amendment bloom banana hole and help peels soil roses

You dig the heat and I grow desert gypsum banana and in the peels add.

Continued on page 124

Gypsum in peels dig Marilyn bloom Marilyn wander Paul nursery.  
Through the amendment roses five-gallon in Kennedy stoop  
and Pope sniff then Monroe and John else where heat these.  
You could in harmony three but be a rose we Monroe banana help cart.  
You leave the behind into add garden the hole and I pots we  
and banana soil our peels others roses lift and in the desert grow.

© 2013

124

*A note from the poet: Billy Collins, U.S. Poet Laureate 2001-2003, claimed that the paradelle was invented in eleventh century France, but he actually invented it himself to parody strict forms, particularly the villanelle.*

*The paradelle is “a poem of four six-line stanzas in which the first and second lines, as well as the third and fourth lines of the first three stanzas, must be identical. The fifth and sixth lines, which traditionally resolve these stanzas, must use all the words from the preceding lines and only those words. Similarly, the final stanza must use every word from all the preceding stanzas and only those words.”*

*Although created as a joke, the paradelle has taken on a life of its own, and a form as exacting as the paradelle is a real challenge. I like to write paradelles to see what I discover in the arrangement of the words.*

# Sydney Avey

## A Desert Meditation

Early mornings in the Sonoran Desert  
eternity teases you off the treadmill of time  
draws you up into the stillness of a moment.  
Hold a pose then, like the Saguaro Cactus –  
spiney arms goal posted to frame the sky  
prickly limbs pointing – There! See?  
shoulders holding a perfect port de bras of praise  
so gather eternity inside you like water  
feel it transpire from ramified roots  
to cool and nourish the thirst in your soul.

125

While time hangs a misty veil over the valley  
and eternity beckons you to the desert edge  
walk the White Tank Mountain trail  
stand where water pooled in the rocks  
to sustain the Hohokam  
let the Word petroglyphed on your heart  
give mute testimony to the One who  
walked this earth before time.

Like the Saguaro Cactus  
Know that your roots in this world are shallow  
let your reservoirs tap Living Water  
Christ in you, the hope of glory.

© 2013

# Sydney Avey

Sydney writes: "I live in the Sierra Nevada foothills of Yosemite, California, and the Sonoran Desert in Arizona. I have a bachelor's degree in English from the University of California, Berkeley, and a lifetime of experience writing news for non-profits and corporations. My work is featured or forthcoming in Foliate Oak Literary Magazine, Forge Journal and American Athenaeum. I blog at [sydneyavey.com](http://sydneyavey.com) on topics related to relationships, legacy, faith, and the writing life. My novel, 'The Sheep Walker's Daughter,' ISBN 978-1-938708-20-6, is due for release from HopeSprings Books on December 3, 2013."



# Paula Ashley

## Show and Tell in Poetry

Beginning classes in writing poetry always tell the student to “show, don’t tell.” But her poem that shows her experience in detail gets the feedback in workshop that the poem is mere description or that the poem conveys no emotion? She had expected her readers to have the same experience she had without telling them how she felt. But they did not. Then, reacting to this feedback, her next poem tells her readers what to feel. That too receives a negative reaction. She is admonished again to show, don’t tell.

### Why Show

First let us consider why the dictum “Show, don’t tell” exists in the first place. Light, sound, smell, taste, and touch form our immediate experience of the world. To convey our experience to another we must use words. Words are not the experience itself, only an approximation. The words we choose can either give another a feeling of our experience or can fall flat leaving the other uninvolved with what we wish to convey. Our feelings on the other hand arise out of the biological makeup of our hearts and mind. We do not necessarily interpret feelings in terms of light, sound, smell, taste, or touch so how do we convey them to another without telling?

### Dangers of Just Showing with no Telling

“Why should I care?” is a common reaction in workshop to a poem that is merely descriptive even if the poet has used examples rather than generalities and vivid words rather than vague. The advice to show and not tell may result in lists of actions or objects with no

127

Continued on page 128

interpretation [LeGuin, 74]. The reader's attention might be drawn to something that does not seem to matter [Kooser, 27]. Furthermore, if the poem is made entirely of statements, if nothing happens, if only observations have been recorded, the poem cannot live [Muske, 35].

Steve Kowit in his article "A Poet's Anti-Rule Book" claims that "good writers tell their readers what is happening, what a character thinks or feels, what a situation or event implies, and what the author would like the reader to think, feel, and believe." [Kowit, 42]. By contrast, Richard Hugo claims that in art things happen without cause so the poem has no room for explanations, motivations, or reason. [Hugo, 8]. Mike Doty says that "description is an ART to the degree that it gives us not just the world but the inner life of the witness." [Doty, 65]

128 How does the poet succeed when the workshop leader insists that she show and not tell? The poet must show the reader but not tell her what to think. The poem must live and something must happen not merely describe. The poet must reveal her inner life but not name her feelings. The poet must have a certain amount of technique in her poetic toolbox before she can she can forget it and let it come mysteriously forth in her poem. [Hugo, 17] How does the poet "balance statements and images to create the greatest impact?" [Cohen, 16]

### **How to Show and Tell**

This craft of description (showing & telling) will be discussed in this paper in four sections: 1) Words Have Jobs (nouns, verbs, qualifiers), 2) Figurative Language (comparisons, simile, metaphor, personification, allusion, symbolism), 3) Connections (narrative, straightforward explanation, exposition in the title, how characters react, syntax, tone), and 4) Reflection (introspection, projection, internal dialogue, X-Ray Vision).



## Words Have Jobs

*A young woman in a wheelchair,  
wearing a black nylon poncho spattered with rain,  
is pushing herself through the morning.*

In Ted Kooser's poem, "A Rainy Morning," we see a woman in a wheelchair. Kooser has used a noun and a verb. We also find three adjectives – young, black, nylon – and an adjectival phrase – spattered with rain. We see that the woman "is pushing herself." As Kooser himself says adjectives are helpful when the non they modify doesn't adequately describe itself. He also says that choosing specific and accurate verbs eliminates the need for adverbs. [Kooser, 114]

Now look at the adjectives in these lines from Stanley Kunitz's poem "The Portrait."

*When I came down from the attic  
with the pastel portrait in my hand  
of a long lipped stranger  
with a brave mustache  
and deep brown level eyes,  
she ripped it into shreds  
without a single word*

Try crossing out the adjectives and read the poem again. The poem loses its specificity of detail although the event is still evident. The active verb "ripped" gives us a glimmer of the grief that his father's suicide

129

caused his mother and, subsequently, himself, but much of the depth of this feeling is muted. As Kowitz says in *The Palm of Your Hand: The Poet's Portable Workshop* [42], there is nothing wrong with using a few adjectives “to add color and texture” to a poem, but “overused, they tend to weaken phrases....”

### Figurative Language

After Kooser gives the reader the image of the woman in the wheelchair, he addresses the reader and then shows the image of a pianist.

*You have seen how pianists  
sometimes bend forward to strike the keys*

130 Then we see the image of the pianist used as a metaphor for the way the woman pushes her wheelchair. He has described how the woman pushes her wheelchair without telling us directly.

In his poem “Introduction to Poetry,” Billy Collins uses the techniques of simile, metaphor, and personification to show the inexperienced poet the art of reading a poem. He suggests the student *hold it up to the light* or *press an ear against its hive*. He wants the student to *waterski across the surface of the poem*, then laments that they only want to *tie the poem to a chair with a rope/and torture a confession out of it.*”

Sylvia Plath uses personification in her poem, “Mirror,” using a description of a mirror to describe herself:

*I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.  
What ever you see I swallow immediately.  
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.  
I am not cruel, only truthful –*

Oh dear, look at those abstract nouns “preconceptions,” “love,” “dislike,” “cruel,” and “truthful.” Don’t you hear the admonition to show, don’t tell? Maybe we haven’t earned the right to write like Sylvia Plath yet.

I am a great admirer of Peggy Schumaker’s poem, “Deliverance after Chagall.” [All these poems can be read in their entirety by typing the name into a web search engine.] The title clearly refers to Chagall’s painting of that name, but the poem describes another Chagall painting, “The Rooster” and alludes to the rooster as Moses who we see in the first painting. We are knee deep in allusions and symbolism here, both in the paintings and in the poem. The rooster delivers the woman on his back to a long-awaited future.

As Mary Oliver states in *A Poetry Handbook*, “Figurative Language can give shape to the difficult and the painful ... It can take us out of our own existence and let us stand in the condition of ... another life.” [Oliver, 108] Figurative language allows the poet to show emotion without naming it. But imagery alone seldom makes the poem. Nothing happens.

### Connections

Let’s look at “The Mouse” by W.D. Snodgrass. In the first stanza, the narrator and his little friends find a mouse that they carry around the house. Emotion is shown as we are told that the children were

*Afraid he might be dead* and they were crying. In the second stanza,

*Ridiculous children; we could bawl  
Our eyes out about nothing. Still,  
How much violence had we seen?*

he uses the stronger verb “bawl.” But look, the third line of that stanza is a question that excuses the children’s excess of emotion. In the third stanza Snodgrass gives the event significance.

*We live with some things, after all,  
Bitterer than dying, cold as hate:*

132

This poem has a balance of showing with adjectives and verbs and telling commentary.

So much for the narrative poem in which we know something will happen, but what about the lyric? First, let’s look at “Archaic Torso of Apollo” by Rainer Maria Rilke. At first glance, this poem is a description of the ancient statue. Rilke uses the device of including us, the reader, in his poetic “we” and as much as tells us that we are dazzled by the statue just as his choice of adjectives and verbs to describe the statue also dazzle us. Rilke goes on to tell us that if the statue did not dazzle us, it would be as if the stone it was carved out of was defaced. Strong words. Still stronger his last line, an imperative, *You must change your life*. Now we have the action, or rather a call to action, that we have been told that a poem calls for.

James Wright’s Poem, “Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy’s

Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota,” uses the technique of loading some exposition into the title to give us the setting of the poem. The poem that follows is a description of what Wright sees from that hammock overhead, down the ravine, and to his right. The language is simple and straight forward. No adjectives or verbs jump out to tell the reader what to think or feel, only what to see. In the second to last line, Wright uses projection to tell us that the chicken hawk floating overhead is looking for home. Wright does not know that. Then, the last famous line, I have wasted my life, is the action the poem requires. Notice the parallel to the last line of the Rilke poem.

Another way to load meaning and action into descriptions is by the use of varied syntax, or how we put words together. This includes the use of declarative statements as well as questions, exclamations, fragments, inversions, and enjambment versus end-stopped lines. We have seen the impact of using a question in the Snodgrass poem, “The Mouse.” Whole books have been written on this topic.

Lastly, the poet can establish emotion in the poem by the use of tone. The poet can set the tone of the narrator of the poem, her audience, or that of the characters in the story of the poem by her choice of words, images, implications of story, and rhythm. Let’s look at Elizabeth Bishop’s poem, “The Fish.” Bishop sets the opening tone of sadness and inevitability with

*He didn't fight.  
He hadn't fought at all.  
He hung a grunting weight,*

She goes on to choose adjectives to convey the mood: infested, terrible

oxygen, frightening, grim, weaponlike, frayed and wavering, aching. These words are telling words, many sensory, some not. Then the tone shifts at the end of the poem with

... until everything  
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!  
*And I let the fish go.*

134 A poem that expresses grief and remorse is “Sepsis” by C. Dale Young. The poet is, by the way, a medical doctor. In this poem he, as speaker in the poem, addresses God. He confesses his lack of attention to his patient because he placed his own needs before hers with disastrous consequences. This poem sets the scene – a foggy day, describes the situation – antibiotics not administered to a patient in need, and dialogues with God in his remorse. Dear God, how does a sinner outlast the sin?

### Reflection

Another way the poet can reveal his inner life and arouse emotion in the reader is by the use of reflection on the scene of the poem. The poet can use inner dialogue to reveal his emotions. We have already seen this used in Rilke’s poem, “Archaic Torso of Apollo,” with the last line *You must change your life*. And in James Wright’s poem “Lying in a Hammock...” with the last line echoing Rilke’s, *I have wasted my life*. Peggy Schumaker starts her poem “Deliverance” with the question, *What kind of Moses...*

W.D. Snodgrass in “The Mouse” narrates the story about finding a mouse when he was small and outside playing with other children. He shows the children crying, then shifts his tone and tells us in his adult

persona that *We live with some things after all*. He continues reflecting on how life teases us just like the cat teases the mouse.

Or look at introspection in “Littlefoot 19” in which Charles Wright is moved by the birds he watches one day in late May evening. Then suddenly we read that the narrator is mulling the question *Is love stronger than unlove?/ Only the unloved know*. He continues to watch a tiny bird, then notices that *it sounds a lot like you, hermane./It sounds like me*. Charles has communicated his feelings and his inner life while observing what is around him.

Frequently poets project their own attitudes and feelings onto objects in nature and/or other things. Mark Doty in *The Art of Description* [111] states that “The insights of modern physics – that the observer changes the observed, the measurer influences what is measured – makes what used to be called the ‘pathetic fallacy’ seem a negative term for the inevitable perceptual work of the human. If you are miserable then the trees around you look miserable too...” This is exhibited in “Aquarium” by Kim Addonizio: *as if they [the platys] can’t quite let/ alone a possibility – of wings,/maybe, once they reach the air?*

Finally, we have what Mark Doty [Doty, 133] calls the X-Ray: what lies beneath. The poet has the ability to reflect on what is present beneath the surface of the object she is focusing on. The example Doty gives is in the “Fish” when Bishop’s narrator peers beneath its surface to its entrails.

© 2013

135

Continued on page 136

## REFERENCES:

Cohen, Sage. *Writing the Life Poetic: An Invitation to Read & Write Poetry*. Writer's Digest Books, 2009.

Doty, Mark. *The Art of Description*. Graywolf Press, 2010.

Hugo, Richard. *The Triggering Town*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1979.

Koozer, Ted. *The Poetry Home Repair Manual: Practical Advice for Beginning Poets*. University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

Kowit, Steve. "A Poet's Anti-Rule Book." *The Writer's Chronicle*, May/Summer 2011.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *Steering the Craft: Exercises and Discussions on Story Writing for the Lone Navigator or the Multinous Crew*. The Eight Mountain Press, 1998.

Muske, Carol. "What is a Poem?" *The Eye of the Poet: Six Views of the Art and Craft of Poetry*, edited by David Citano. Oxford University Press, 2002.

Oliver, Mary. *A Poetry Handbook*. Harcourt Brace & Co., 1994.



# Paula Ashley

Paula Ashley is a retired software engineer who earned her MFA from Queens University of Charlotte in May 2012. She lives in Arizona with her husband and an abundance of birds that hang out on the solar fountains in their backyard. Paula has had poems published in *Arizona: 100 Years, 100 Poems*, *100 Poets*; *Avocet*; *Merge*; *New Fraktur Arts Journal*; *The Road Not Taken: A Journal of Formal Poetry*; *The Blue Guitar Magazine*; *The Examined Life: A Literary Journal of the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine*; and *Voices on the Wind*.

137



# Editor's Note

This issue offers a wide and diverse range of styles and life perspectives as it should. Poetry must reflect every aspect of existence. As poets, we must allow ourselves every tool necessary to accomplish this. We must use what will give us the most direct route from our hearts to our heads. Being a poet is a solitary occupation. A part of us will always be standing off to one side, observing, analyzing, sifting, taking notes. But we can't turn away without peril. Like light shining through the slats of a blind, poetry brings us back from the abyss.

**Rebecca "Becca" Dyer**

**Editor in chief**

138

## Editorial Staff

**Editor in chief:** *Rebecca Dyer*

**Publisher:** *Elena Thornton*

**Production Editor:** *Richard H. Dyer Jr.*

**Artwork for front cover:** *Marjory Boyer*

# Meet the staff of Unstrung magazine



**Elena Thornton, publisher:** Founder of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, Elena is an educator, artist and poet and lives in Phoenix. Reach her at [info@artizona.org](mailto:info@artizona.org).

**Rebecca Dyer, editor:** A Tucson native, Rebecca is a poet, journalist and teacher now residing in Mesa with her husband, Richard, production editor for Unstrung and The Blue Guitar. Reach her at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org).



139



**Richard H. Dyer Jr., production editor:** Richard is the managing editor for a monthly and three weekly newspapers in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor.

**Marjory Boyer, cover design artist for Unstrung and The Blue Guitar:** Marjory, of Scottsdale, is an award-winning artist, muralist and an acrylic painting instructor. Her biography and contact information are available at [mboyerart.com](http://mboyerart.com).



# Open Mic: A celebration of the arts

Join us at our Monthly Open Mic Arts, Letters and Culture Events. They are a great opportunity for artists, writers and performers in all genres, spanning all disciplines and cultural representations, to get together, meet one another, read, present, share, learn and enjoy.

**Where:** Dog-Eared Pages Books, 16428 N. 32nd St., Suite 111 (just south of Bell Road), Phoenix, AZ 85032; (602) 283-5423.

**When:** Every last Sunday of each month, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

We also address key issues in contemporary art and culture, exchange ideas, learn new things through rigorous talks, conversations, debates and readings in an informal setting. Join us! Everyone is invited to bring a friend(s) and enjoy exciting conversations in the beautiful surroundings of the neighborhood bookstore. Meet new and old friends and enjoy. All programs are free and open to the public.

For more information, contact Elena Thornton — (602) 263-5373 or [info@artizona.org](mailto:info@artizona.org).

140

## Coming Oct. 27: Save the date! The Arizona Consortium for the Arts' Annual Fall Festival of the Arts

Noon to 4 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 27

In the beautiful, huge courtyard of the  
Arizona Historical Society Museum at Papago Park,  
1300 N. College Ave., Tempe.

Admission is free!

For more details, visit The Arizona Consortium for the Arts website,  
[www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org)

# A Call to Poets

## For Summer 2014

Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, will seek poetry submissions for its Summer 2014 Issue from June 1 through July 4, 2014. Poets must submit original work and must have a tie to Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the poet must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and multiple poems may be submitted. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your e-mail submission. Please include in the e-mail subject line: Attn. Unstrung — Poetry submission, and send to Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org).

141

For more information, e-mail Rebecca at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org) or visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

*Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, is a nonprofit project of The Blue Guitar magazine and the nonprofit The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about Unstrung magazine, The Blue Guitar magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites: [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) and [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org)*

# UNSTRUNG

A magazine  
for and about  
people



Unstrung will  
return in  
Summer 2014