

# UNSTRUNG

A magazine of,  
for and about  
poetry



Summer 2014

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Auguste



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Crowley



Dietz



Sederstrom



Gregory



A. Jones



J. Jones



Keller

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

# The Poets



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Meadows



Nixen



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# Paula Ashley

## In the Desert

Between the scattered clouds of sunlit days  
and yellow flowers  
    dripping from palo verde trees

before the sun takes over  
    before the heat rises from asphalt streets  
    and red tile roofs

I go out in cool morning hours  
or walk at dusk when the sun has lost its edge.

4  
In the dry wash:  
    rabbits scuttle under brittlebush  
    Gambel's quail call to one another.

July comes.  
Monsoons hover over time yet do not bring release of rain

while I sit in air-conditioned rooms  
    feeling the shadows of those who died  
    who left me alive in unrelenting summer.

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# Paula Ashley

Paula Ashley is a retired software engineer. 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 Blue Guitar Magazine; The Examined Life: A Literary Journal of the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine; and “Voices on the Wind.” She is the winner of the Best Poem Contest for OASIS Journal 2013 and has poems forthcoming in Four Chambers, Issue 2. Contact the poet at [p.c.ashley@ieee.org](mailto:p.c.ashley@ieee.org).

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Photo by Todd Jones

# Paula Ashley

## ‘experiences suddenly appear’

6 The poet writes: “I wrote poetry throughout high school and college. When my babies were born, life took over and poetry fell away. Then, one hot summer day in August 1991, my oldest son died in a car accident on the Beeline. He was twenty-six. I turned to writing again as the only way I had to let out the pain. I could organize it on the page and achieve some much needed distance. Ten years of elder care followed before the death of my parents. Even today, I find these experiences suddenly appear again in my poems. ‘Lavender,’ in particular, is a poem of love and longing, of death and resurrection. It mixes my love of France which I got from my father, who was born in Paris, with my love for my mother and the Sonoran desert where I live. This is the fourth version of this poem. The original version was twice as long. The heat of the desert in the stillness before a monsoon storm is, for me, always a metaphor for death as both my son and my father died at this time of the year. My mother died in the midst of a monsoon which took out the power, the streetlights, and her final breath. The window of her room open. The blinds tapping on the sill. Lightning cracking across the Hedgpath Hills.”

# Paula Ashley

## Late March in the Desert

Mars glares red  
high in the east  
Saturn not seen

orchid bauhinia  
blossoms forget  
the winter freeze

penstemons scatter  
across the rocky yard  
behind my small house

in ashes my son  
lies on distant limestone mesa  
the wind blows

wandering cat  
I peek out  
my curtained windows

brittlebush climb  
out of the dry creek  
in yellow flurries

Jupiter and Venus  
sliver of moon  
low in western sky

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# Paula Ashley

## Lavender

My neighbors shake their heads  
when they see me walking  
where my lawn should be, where  
purple flowers bend under my feet.

I tell them I saw fields of lavender  
in a book. I ran my hands over  
the pages but the lavender did not  
yield to my touch & had no scent.

8 I tell them I sailed the Mediterranean  
& stopped in ports along the shore where  
sunflowers in vases adorned café tables.  
I walked past the cafés, past all the houses

out into lavender fields but the lavender  
was not mine & the time came to go home.  
Then I bought lavender in pots: one  
for my mother, one for myself.

But my lavender died when I forgot  
to water it while I kept watch at  
my mother's side. In time I brought  
her lavender to my house but it died too.

Continued on page 9

The next spring there it was:  
lavender sprouting from the rocks,  
from the grass, between cracks in the sidewalk.  
I quit mowing the grass. I did not pull

the sprouts out of the rocks, the cracks.  
I walk in my lavender at dawn.  
Let it crush on the hem of my skirt.  
Cut it in swaths to strew in my bath.

Lavender oil seeps through my fingers,  
races to my tongue where I taste forgiveness  
for not saving my mother & know I can  
never explain this to my neighbors.

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# Ronald G. Auguste

## A Human Kind

*For Nelson Mandela*

Made into Slaves against our will,  
In freedom, we are shackled still!  
But, like the Sun, which tells our story,  
We humbled men shall rise ... in glory,  
Above that sea of causeless rage,  
To claim, with Love, our Heritage....

A Human Kind, we shall be free,  
To walk this earth with dignity!  
To live and love, like Sons of God,  
Fearing, no more, the White man's rod.

Hearts full of love ... we shall arise!  
Our joyful songs will rend the skies!  
Our carefree laughter, and our mirth,  
Will sanctify this bitter earth!

Humbled and shamed, we've suffered long.  
Denied our Rights, we are deemed wrong  
Because we strive to take our place,  
As Humans ... in the Human Race....

Continued on page 11

We are received with wrath and scorn –  
And ostracized! Were we not born,  
Like you, White man, of woman's womb?  
Like you, too, destined for the tomb?  
Formed out of clay, and given breath,  
Until we catch the cold of death?

With wicked might, you seized our land,  
Subjecting us to harsh command! –  
Since then, you gave us lowly fate;  
Denying love, you feed us Hate!  
You savage us with fang ... and claw!  
You place your Sins beside our door....

A Human Kind, your kindness ceased  
To the Black man ... but not to beast....  
You treat us second to your dogs!  
You house us in foul pens like hogs!  
You sentenced us without a trial! –  
You'll live to rue this base denial,  
For God did not give you the right  
To judge His Sons, though black as night!

Look to your souls, and mend your ways,  
For few are your remaining days  
Of rabid rule! Poor petty fools,  
When will you learn? What use are schools  
To you, if you just will not see  
You rape your own humanity,  
Because you've nurtured foolish fears  
About us ... for too many years?

Without a care, you made us slaves –  
You were less primitive in caves!  
For you assumed a hideous role,  
And laid siege to a People's soul.

12

Aren't you aware of your past deeds?  
You're still enslaved to savage creeds  
Which make you scorn a Race's blood! –  
Dragging its pride through filth and mud!

White man, you are a Human Kind,  
But one who's left pure good behind,  
Becoming vain, unjust, and blind!  
Oh look around! – It's not too late,  
To feed us love, instead of hate!

We, whom you Humble, suffer now.  
Sorrow is etched upon our brow.  
But we shall triumph through Despair,  
To be made Equal everywhere!

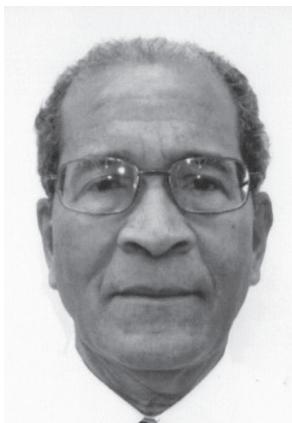
Yes! We shall rise above the flood  
Of hatred ... to redeem our blood –  
To right, with Love, each petty wrong,  
Which make us bow, yet make us strong!

You made us Slaves, against our will....  
You freed us ... but you bind us still....  
You marred our fates, and smeared our story –  
But lost! For we must rise in glory,  
A Human Kind, forever free,  
To walk this earth ... with dignity....

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# Ronald G. Auguste

The poet writes: “I was born in Saint Lucia, in the West Indies. After spending many years in London, England, I emigrated to the USA in 1970, and became a citizen in 1975. I am the father of two sons – the second one deceased – and one daughter. In my early teens, strongly influenced by traditional poets such as Shakespeare, Byron, Longfellow, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and William Cullen Bryant, I started writing poetry. I’ve written hundreds of poems – quite likely more than a thousand – a great number of which are dedicated to family, friends, and public figures whom I admire and respect. In Phoenix, I have often read in public places – libraries, bookstores, coffee shops, and, occasionally, in schools. Some years ago, after a reading at Horizon High in the Paradise Valley School District, I was informed that some of my poems had been copied for circulation there. I’ve also read my poems at venues in London; in Santa Monica, Calif.; and at several schools in St. Lucia. I can be reached at [RGAApoet@aol.com](mailto:RGAApoet@aol.com).”



# Ronald G. Auguste

‘written with tears in my eyes’

The poet writes: “I wrote ‘A Human Kind’ in 1963, during the turmoil of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, while I was living in London, England. This poem was written with tears in my eyes, and sorrow in my Soul, as were practically all the poems which I call My Civil Rights Poems. Since I seemed to be closer to the racial problems then current in South Africa, while I lived in London, where both the BBC and the newspapers seemed to lament the condition of Blacks in South Africa more regularly than they did the condition of Blacks in the USA, I dedicated ‘A Human Kind’ to Nelson Mandela. Many years ago, long after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I mailed a few of my poems to Mrs. Coretta King, with an apology that I had not done so sooner. Mrs. King’s response was warm, and heartfelt, and delightful. Some time afterwards, in 1997, I composed ‘He Still Lives!’ Owing to President Lyndon Baines Johnson’s grand and formidable action in signing The Civil Rights Act in 1964, I dedicated my Civil Rights poem, ‘Heart’s Winter,’ which I wrote in 1963, to him. Again, unfortunately, President Johnson had already passed away when I mailed ‘Heart’s Winter’ to his Texas home. Lady Bird Johnson’s response was very gracious. ‘The Freedom Marchers’: This poem just might be the very first that I wrote, of the collection of poems which I refer to as My Civil Rights Poems. Through the eyes of my mind and from the recesses of my memory, I can still see, in 1963, on BBC television, the endless, suffering lines. I wrote ‘The Freedom Marchers’ specifically for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.”

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# Ronald G. Auguste

## He Still Lives!

*In Memoriam: The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.*

*For Coretta Scott King*

There was a man who walked not long ago,  
Hated by other men who wished his soul  
Eternal deprivation, and, for show,  
Rigours of shame – But none could mar his role!

Even in death, gracious and grand, he forgives.  
Vouched for by Noble mortals, he still lives!

16

Mostly we don't observe what he'd pursue,  
Although some do assemble once a year –  
Relish his name; extol him in review;  
Take hope in all those truths that he made clear.

Instilled within our Minds – For Love and Peace –  
None of his Soulful views should know surcease.

Let us keep on towards that mountain top,  
Using his strength to guide us on the way.  
There'll come the time we'll reach it – Let's not stop!  
Heaven will help us celebrate that day!

Each forward footstep – Firm ... or otherwise –  
Really promotes our journey to God's skies....

Continued on page 17

Continued from page 16

King, among lesser men, his righteous mind  
Inspired those with open minds to see:  
*Nothing but Equal Rights – Of Every Kind! –  
Grant Truth to WHAT our Nation Claims to be.*

Just as you feel too tired to proceed,  
Remember just One Step ... Extends his Deed....

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# Ronald G. Auguste

## Heart's Winter

*For President Lyndon Baines Johnson*

Sometimes, a season in the climate of the heart,  
Quite like the Winter of Siberian zones,  
Benumbs the senses,  
Congealing to the marrow of the bone –  
And cold winds sweep across the heartscape,  
Where joy-fields,  
Shrouded in deepening snows of sorrow,  
Lie fallow in the cold glare of a dead Sun,  
Beneath the sombre balefulness  
Of a shrieking asbestos sky.

And in rare moments when remembered warmth  
Converges with icy streams of grief,  
Despair is born,  
Appearing like the pall of a billion sad tomorrows  
Over the pain-ravaged,  
Sorrow-matted meadows of the pining heart.

Death, among other things, harbingers such a season –  
But worse than death, is being hated without reason.

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# Ronald G. Auguste

## The Freedom Marchers

*For Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Wrenching their roots from the cold loam of fear,  
They march for freedom down long streets of hate.  
They march for freedom, flaunting their despair  
At faces ... rabid and dispassionate....  
Straining against harsh tentacles of fate,  
Which coil about them with a filthy slime  
Of racial wrongs – Black strangers at the gate,  
Of their own dwelling! – They shall rise in time,  
In glory, proud as Eagles ... even more sublime!

They march in bondage with their hearts aflame!,  
As all America becomes their stage....  
They strive to reach a haven free from Shame,  
While Hypocrites and Southern Demons rage!  
Their Souls will surge to Freedom from the cage  
Of Hate's Barbaric Evils ... to be Free! –  
Stronger in Pride and Rich in Suffering's Wage!  
Free! Lord, forever! – From Captivity! –  
Purged clean of Sorrows, Shame, and Misery....

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# Lollie Butler

## Cold Draft

When my brother left for foreign fields  
to insure world peace,  
I died.

My body kept vigil by the mailbox,  
flipping through bills, throwing ads  
for The Reader's Digest in the trash can.

20 I learned to walk without bringing one blade  
of grass to its knees;  
carried spiders down flights of stairs  
to freedom.

And when he returned with corpses  
in the shallows of his eyes,  
I fed him the broth of his lost years.

Now my young sons bring kindling  
for the evening's fire,  
we feed the blaze with news of foreign wars  
till headlines crackle like gunshot.

The fire never quite warms the house.

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# Lollie Butler

Lollie Butler bears the heat in Tucson, Arizona, where she earned a Master's Degree in Creative Writing while working in a rehab center for the seriously mentally ill. She has won several literary awards, including a presidential award from Texas A&M University, where her poem, "The One Free Woman in America" — dedicated to Rosa Parks — remains on view at the George H. Bush Sr. Presidential Library. Her other awards include one from The Robert Frost Foundation. Currently working as a volunteer for NAMI of Southern Arizona, she coordinates a mentoring program for the mentally ill.

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# Lollie Butler

‘inspiration is another  
kind of hunger’

The poet writes: “I sometimes think inspiration lives in the stomach. My feelings seem to rise from that center and at times overtake me. When I look up at the star-studded sky at night or when I listen—really listen—to the last measure of a melody, my stomach says, ‘Look, you’ll never have this exact feeling again, so quick! Write it down.’ I suppose I could confuse those feeling with hunger pains because they are a bit like the craving for chocolate-mint ice cream but...no, inspiration is another kind of hunger, one that requires a pencil and paper.”

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# Lollie Butler

## Battle Fatigue

I no longer blame the world  
for bad dreams. I hear a thousand screams  
from dispensable towns and awaken  
to my heart pounding on the door.

If there are guns to blame, my arms are cocked  
and loaded; fingers prepared to march  
on sleeping cities. My brutal silence floats  
like a searchlight over distant, disputed fields  
taking body count. My lips are guilty

of crimes against humanity. And so  
it has become that I am stripped of trust;

I do not trust the twitch  
behind the president's smile;  
colors his wife wears,  
groups represented by letters  
of anyone's alphabet;

heads of state, their welcoming bouquets,  
medals on military uniforms or the politics  
of neutralities and those who would cleanse, cleanse.

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Continued on page 24

I wait for headlines to turn upside down  
becoming footnotes; for armies of the world  
to go marching off the edge,  
for some smart-lipped business man to tell me  
there is profit in all this.

Taking tea in genteel company,  
I spread red and blue jam on bland, white bread  
and eat till I choke.

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# Gari Crowley

## Falling Away

1.  
His head was a  
circuit of  
jetsam and  
flotsam and  
seemingly lying  
weightless and  
drifting he  
untethered from  
the tangible  
having slipped  
from the  
weakness of  
her own  
hand then  
disappeared like  
eyesight from  
the ending  
gifts of  
their faces.

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Continued on page 26

2.

The song of the old woman  
keeps time to the  
ticking of the clock.  
She sits on the edge  
of her side  
of the bed  
and carefully puts  
her glasses on.  
She peers into  
the mirrored  
door where  
memories stay  
within her sight.  
In her heart there is  
the gift of sad red roses  
given to her  
from love's hand.  
A mortal season of  
grieving keeps  
its own time.  
The lyrics of  
three lost words  
will be  
sung until  
the end.

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# 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 wife, Linda, and their cat, Sam. He has been employed in the property management/development field as a landscaper and groundskeeper. He is now retired. Reach the poet at [arroyo\\_verde@yahoo.com](mailto:arroyo_verde@yahoo.com).

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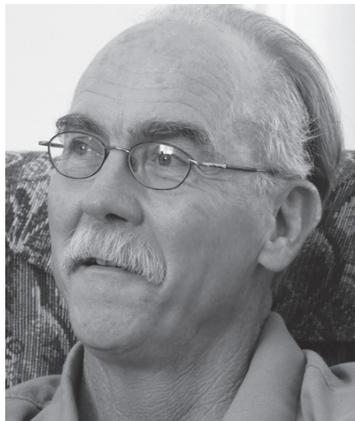


Photo by Linda Crowley

# Gari Crowley

## ‘all about words and language’

The poet writes: “I do a lot of thinking. I sit at the table, then go for a walk or work in the yard, read or listen to music. Always up and down. It is the process of an idea that comes to me through reading and research, background or what is common to my backyard, so to speak. There is nothing spectacular, academic or ‘intellectual’ about it. It is all about words and language, though I do have a preference to be succinct. Most importantly, I get involved with the challenge.”

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# Gari Crowley

## Salvage Yard

A scavenger of carcasses  
walks the labyrinths  
of time and entropy.  
He walks through the extended family  
and their convoluted histories  
oxidized in memories and stillness.  
Features have yielded  
to the elements—  
pigments and cosmetics and  
empty bodies.  
The auto-nostalgic  
pining strikes an innocent  
envy in the romantic eyes of  
dreamers.  
—of moth and rust—  
Shattered glass, amethyst in cullet  
and a strewnment of commodity—  
the viscera is scribbled about like  
graffiti in a field tagged  
with inherent dysfunction.  
So it is with the passage of age  
when measured through cars—  
the Plymouth, Willys, Corvair and on.  
In retrospect,  
never having engaged the holistic  
approach,  
there is the dubious distinction of  
having made our own way  
to the end of the road.

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# Mary Theresa Dietz

## After the Rain (Tucson July)

Standing on the earth,  
Recently wet by a pounding rain  
Of water so long held in heavy clouds,  
Taut and pregnant with promise  
Of sweet-smelling relief  
From thirst and incessant sun,

Watching distant peaks of  
Deep steely blue,  
Dappled with warm dots of pink  
And coral orange  
From the latest rays of this day's sunshine,

The distant vista of vast sky  
Stretched out wide with open arms  
And painted with gorgeous grays  
Put together of comforting rich thick reds  
Of numerous shades  
And slate blues of greatest complexity,

My spirit housed impossibly in such a small home,  
Swells like the vapor in that sky,  
Like the promise of the impossible joy.

© 2014

# Mary Theresa Dietz

Mary Theresa Dietz writes: “I am a Tucson visual artist, but I’ve always loved to write too. I regularly have bits and pieces of writing going through my head as I go about my day. I think writing is like painting – in words. I go about it in a similar way. I choose words and phrases in writing, as I do colors and textures in painting. The way the piece sounds is akin to the composition of a painting. When I write, I just look up in my head and describe what I see. I am currently honing my writing chops by writing a first of the month story every first of the month and posting them on Facebook. These are usually combinations of truth and fantasy, and so far I have a year and a quarter of them under my belt.” Reach the poet at [mtdietz@mac.com](mailto:mtdietz@mac.com).

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Photo by Jeff Panther

# Mary Theresa Dietz

## ‘filled with joy at the beauty’

The poet writes: “ ‘Schubert’ is a poem about my cat. ‘After the Rain (Tucson July)’ is a poem I composed in my head while on a walk in east Tucson after a major summer storm. I was filled with joy at the beauty of the clouds and the mountains after the rain. It was only later, someone pointed out that this poem is actually one long sentence.”

# Mary Theresa Dietz

## Schubert

His habitual garb of striped pajamas  
Speaks of his languid, carefree spirit.  
With grace and total confidence,  
A bit of humor too,  
He glides from room to room  
Seeking a bright patch of gold  
On which to unfold.  
With placid face upturned,  
Slanted eyes shut tightly,  
He dreams.  
Rising now and then  
To stretch in perfect luxury,  
He ultimately abandons this spot  
In favor of another,  
His snaky tail floating behind his disappearing form.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Climate Cha[ll]enge

The lake is green with  
probabilities of pollen.

A clam concentrates downward  
in its industry of not moving

save for so much occasion as to compact  
time into original molecules.

Halves of small shells lie concave to the sun.  
They reflect original light.

They wait for the next age of limestone  
to mold old death into new Earth.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

In his fourth book, “Eumaeus Tends,” the poet admits: “By choice and necessity, I lead an eremitic life. I have not been educated in what is called ‘creative writing.’ I do not deserve to display the credentials of the MFA, and so I cannot be regarded as a professional poet. I like it that way. It is probable that I make many mistakes. I am inclined to allow the beginnings of my poems to wander in prosy fashion and let rhythm take over when it has a mind to. Still, my mistakes are my own. But if anything I say is worth saying, the worth is my own too. I’d like to think that those who look at the poems may gain from my mistakes and venture their own. We may learn together and enjoy together the adventure of making language and sharing it.” Contact the poet at [richard\\_sederstrom1221@q.com](mailto:richard_sederstrom1221@q.com).

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## ‘You will detect a barb or two’

The poet writes: “I have attached what I think of as an introduction to a collection of poems about climate change. The climate I am thinking of is not that which we normally think of, but the climate of our culture, which will have to be changed if we are to control change for any other climate. The longer poems may be regarded as dedicated to some of the young people whose lives I have observed, and maybe sometimes altered, maybe sometimes for the better—theirs as well as mine. You will detect a barb or two, but these are not aimed in the direction of the people whose natures resound, I hope, in the poems, but toward those who, knowingly or not, would denature those people, as well as themselves.”

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## “It Might Be Nice If We Brought Flowers”

*For Sophia*

Can it be true about any life in any species  
that the only good one is a dead one?

The “nice” scorpion from the terrarium, as you say, Sophia,

though dead by all reports, has not become nice  
by virtue of death but by the nature of its relation  
in re:

its un-lonely surviving partner in their glassed-in world.

The nice scorpion-who-has-been survives just enough to continue  
as recorded *nice* in the primordial milieu of arthropod un-niceness.

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But these comparisons dissolve with your expression of grief.

“It might be nice if we brought flowers.” Even slyly,  
you care to regard the departed in your gentle mind

an impulse toward fragile memorial beauty  
in deference to a perceived Ordovician decorum  
offered this lonely survivor,

who, a scorpion after all, has never been lonely  
in its non-company with its once-and-ever-nice companion,  
nor now, in company no more or less tender or

nice than any company, save what your young soul endows,  
than it had enjoyed by way of its primordial nature,  
*never noticed* before your blossoming moment of grace.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## An Experiment in Chemistry

### 1. The Problem

I hope you can understand, not having  
the forming moments of my day at hand,  
or I hope that, not understanding my morning  
you may be willing to extrapolate the forming moments  
of your own day so far and lend your benefit of doubt  
and the benefit of your own experience, so much  
vaster and so much more responsible than my own.

38 Or, I hope you will pretend to understand what fun,  
sardonic as it may seem, I have been having today.  
It's not so sardonic as the poem I drafted while  
I was watching the innocents at work. It started  
out as the humorous story about the chemistry teacher  
who, fifty years ago at this very school, gathered  
together too much of the constituents of black gun-powder  
before he touched a lit match to it. Brimstone is  
a wonderful evacuator of a chemistry lab. But:

then, and remember, I was watching the innocents  
(but a capital *I* seems suddenly appropriate), and  
somehow the story led to thoughts of what  
those constituents and their descendants have done  
to Innocents down these several bleeding centuries:

Continued on page 39

## 2. Action

A chemistry teacher demonstrates how to make that good old-fashioned black gun-powder. He is like the man in “To Build a Fire,” attentive to the details, but not to the repercussions.

And he’s going to build a fire.  
He’s going to build a small second of fire with just a little bit of black gun-powder.

So he gathers the ingredients:

- a. The charcoal that burned in braziers to heat the Middle Ages, to warm the hands of inquisitors, the backs of heretics.
- b. The sulfur that heated the eschatological adventures in Genesis, or the parts that invented sardonic irony and whose yellow stench helped make the darkest spots of Milton’s darkness visible.
- c. The saltpeter that cooled the loins of boys at war (which we all know was a only gentling little lie, to focus the patriotic spirit and gestures of death).

Now he pours a little heap of heretics into a dish.  
He adds a similar amount of cooled soldier  
(He's done this often. Doesn't need to measure).  
He covers the pile with those lively parts of Genesis.  
But too much Genesis for the modern sensibility.  
So he adds another soldier or two.  
Too much, of course.  
He adds more ancient scripture, a pinch of Sodom,  
and some more heretics, a lingering Arian maybe. A Huguenot.

You know how this is going to continue.  
You who know the difference  
between the scientist and the technician,  
know that the technician will follow the process  
like the man in London's arctic forest.  
You know what will happen  
when he touches the mixture with a lit match.  
But do you foresee the repercussion?

### 3. Reaction

A sharp flash and great gray *whoosh!* entertains  
for almost a second. Part of the first awed *oooh*.  
Then the smoke and the sewer stench.  
All that rotting death in the meadow.

The students, blinded, gagging, gasp  
like fallen cherubs in the darkness visible.  
They grope (it's the only word: *grobe*)  
for the door, the closed door in the hacking dark.

In the brimstone: the sewer, that rotting death,  
in their blindness they grope for the door.  
Someone gropes for the door handle.  
Black panic slaps the hand away, back into the cloud.

Then, at last, the door is opened. But the students linger,  
trapped in the narrow doorway by their own numbers.  
Smoke sloughs out before them.  
A film of old skin yellowing the day.

#### **4. Resolution**

At last one surviving Innocent emerges  
into that demi-realm of Milton's cosmos  
that we learn to know as ours.

41

They all grope through the expanding drift of sulfur and smoke  
that lingers with the languorous grace  
of history bleeding into the yellow air.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## A Visit to the Music Studio

1

Young sounds in naive blues, disharmonious  
to my visiting ears, unharmonious to the players,  
each in an ear-phoned world of isolate sound and isolate ears.  
Sounds of an electric guitar in the next practice room  
anti-chordant alto hum and twang.  
I try to listen to a cacophony half-created, half-computerized  
in the echoing nasal thrum of country chords.

2

42 A lone voice in a corner complains to her guitar  
at a sound in its benign acoustics  
the lament that she can't play this without a capo!  
The blues are the blues wherever they come from  
and I share the heavy joy of her grief.  
I long now in my own half-created blues  
for the mechanical relief of a piano,  
the mediation smooth to my ear that can never quite produce  
the chastening pain of the exquisite false note.

3

A group of young women in another practice room—  
but how many do I hear?—  
produces a long *yoooooooo-oooo*  
that can only precede a taunting chaste ideal of sex.  
Plea for love and love abandoned.  
*Yoooooooo-oooo* slips right by the longing,  
slides through any grief for  
a whom and a where they don't know,  
are only preparing for.

Continued on page 43

4

“They rejected my blood.”

A bland pain of finality in plain speech  
that we turn into the eschatological  
last ditch of all of us whose blood will,  
and it will for all of us someday, be rejected.

Electric guitar and drum  
strum and drum and dullness of practice.

Do you hear though the clarity of sound  
that will precede someday its own graceful finality?

5

I hear and don't hear too  
and I know how selective even the silent poet must be  
trying to mirror sounds out of paper—

to prepare a wraith of promised noises  
that will leave the paper and the poet,  
become sound for the seconds of making sound

and return with the luck of lost children  
to the original silence of  
paper

once

more.

43

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Real Notes

*For Jollene Murphy*

“They’re real notes. Swear.”

This from the girl with the blue clarinet.

Real blue. “Swear.”

Her notes are blue.

No metaphor. Swear.

What sound it is cannot be written out and out

and out as real notes, no more than whale song,

the real and ecstatic whale,

not the human’s wishful echo of her ghost,

or a wolf in the night.

The soul searching owl. The soul tearing rapacious owl.

The osprey’s hard starving grief having missed the perch,

the death cry. The victory burble of the diving fish.

All notes. Swear.

Like the warning sound of a loon after midnight,

perfect sanity translated into madness by the wakened tourist,

the echo note of the nightmare shriek of the lunatic

who sings on the dreamed-limned rack

Continued on page 45

in the orchestra pit of refining flames, the song of flames.  
The real note (Swear) that marches in perfect, perfect nothingness  
before the first note of Beethoven's paeon to the final silence.

Real notes. Swear.

The exhausted lover pleading,  
so so so far suspended beyond the demeaning notes of language.

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45

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Duet in Soft Shoe

My old pen-emy Heracleitus  
claimed that you can't get there  
from here

but that's neither here  
nor there

since we're almost always  
either in one place  
or another

46 almost always in one time  
or another

or always all ways  
and any where.

© 2014

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## We're Behind

*Another visit to another classroom*

“We’re behind,” the teacher reminds you  
almost every five minutes, sliding  
farther behind by the length of behinding  
she gains by saying it again.

It is another bland reminder to you  
of the infelicitous mind of the professionalized teacher.  
“I don’t do poetry. I’m into literature.”

The desperately regimented un-curiosity.  
Raw expertise shoved breathlessly beyond wonder.  
Pre-lesson, lesson-lesson, post-lesson, door.

47

Out there beyond the transparent opacity of picture  
windows, out in the sun is no freedom either,  
but light at least and eyes to lead me—

and while my eyes walk away  
they will scale what they can of that  
eucalyptus just off the limits of your campus,

or at least I will take into my willing old lungs  
a little of its healing fragrance—  
leads me back to the comfortable old shrine  
of my father’s 1938 Underwood portable and a pencil.

Continued on page 48

and sentences which just now I am beginning to lack

We are expendable, children, you and I,  
orphans in the electrical miasma,  
and I admit that I feel reduced to the echo  
of your collective whine, a poem of whining

left in mere pencil, threatened as we are  
when we try to breathe gently on our words  
just ahead of the pink eraser that creeps pacelessly  
closer to the yellow boneyard of paper.

© 2014

48

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## A Deceit of Old Weather

Is déjà vu false déjà vu  
when the flight of near memory  
leads me back to the exact place  
and the exact time of the incident vu?

Or is the vue of that time  
and place out of the extraordinary  
number of times and places deja?  
Does inexactitude make

from false memory true vue?

49

© 2014

# Michael Gregory

## Norse and Gothic

Norse and Gothic, Slavonic, Basque and Greek,  
Church and pig Latin, Occitan,  
Arabic, Saxon, Erse, Franconian . . .  
the tongues they spoke at Aachen were twisted  
into Celtic knots tied and untied  
like Chinese puzzles by the red-haired monks  
the new emperor invited in  
to teach his court how to read and write

so  
strings of words laced into dispute  
about the nature of reality  
and worse the reality of nature  
(how *did* that Universal Cat bear  
so many and such particular kittens and how *were*  
they all to be fed?) as less articulate brothers  
more physical than metaphysical  
were laced into plate and mail to defend the faith  
or more often to settle property  
disagreements and that vague thing honor  
(pawning their castles first if they were smart)

Continued on page 51

joining the legal decrees chronicles  
accounts and legends quickly filling the shelves  
*sententiae* becoming *compendia*  
*compendia* becoming *summae*  
cloistered logical equivalents  
to flying buttresses and soaring arches  
populated with lifelike figures arranged  
in perspective and tiered to illustrate  
in stone both unity in diversity  
and the strength of character manifest  
in the proportions of divine reason

as it appears in the utmost human scale  
not to prove true what the faithful knew  
needed no rational demonstration  
but to bring to light brick by brick  
article by article the questions  
raised in constructing monuments the options  
available and choices made in order  
to achieve concord among the elements  
put in the lists by conflicting authorities.

51

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From "Pound Laundry"

# Michael Gregory

Michael Gregory's "Mr. America Drives His Car," selected poems from roughly the last quarter of the last century and the first decade of this one, was published last year by Post-Soviet Depression Press. Since 1971, he has lived off-grid ten miles from the U.S.-Mexico border in the high desert grassland of southeast Arizona, the location of his 1975 book, "The Valley Floor."

52

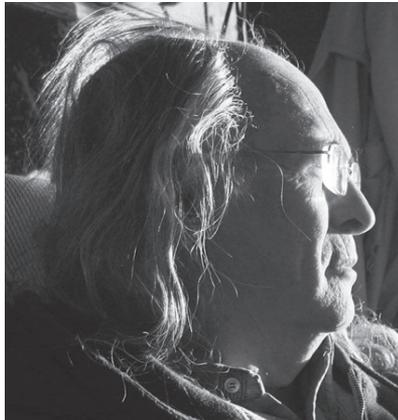


Photo by Heidi Dehncke-Fisher

# Michael Gregory

## ‘Recurrent themes and images’

The poet writes: “ ‘Pound Laundry’ (forthcoming from Post-Soviet Depression Press) is a book-length poem based on the life and work of Ezra Pound, considered by many to be the point person for the invention of ‘high modernism’ in literature, and in recent years, considered to be in many ways a postmodernist. The poem consists of voices on a variety of topics that were or were likely to have been going through Pound’s head, voices from his wide and deep reading and from contemporary discourses, in the air at the time, an inter-discursive cross-fertilization—tales of the tribe, blab of the pave, etc. Recurrent themes and images play upon each other throughout the book, often in Pound’s words, or those of others being specifically referenced; involving, for example, concerns with medieval culture (he held a master’s degree in Romance Languages, specializing in troubadour poetry and its relation to medieval philosophers—Johannes Scotus Eriugena, in particular—to Dante, and to poetics in general). The four pieces included here touch on some of these themes—the Carolingian world of Eriugena and the high Middle Ages he influenced; Pound’s formative years in the progressive transcendentalist climate of the eastern seaboard; and Confucianism (here invoked in a near-transcription of a famous Taoist put-down of Confucius).”

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# Michael Gregory

## Skirt faunteroy curls and velvet

Skirt faunteroy curls and velvet  
to suit the polite conceit of the day  
affected by presbyterian friends

next door to the city of brotherly love  
where truth was assumed to be not merely  
a gleam through opacities

but simple and obvious if not  
obscured by human malevolence  
corruptibility or chance

from schoolyard puns to honorifics  
rabbinical and academic  
identities public and personal

compounded annually  
someone always taking his names  
given and patronymic in vain

On the academy fencing team  
in adolescence an art to be practiced  
forever after with broomsticks

Continued on page 55

if necessary when for instance  
locked up in Monte Cristo scenes  
with green knights for Christmas presents

Siegfrieds and Fafnirs from Greece to Iceland  
Camelot to Baghdad  
dressed in high romantic attire

Terror Son of Fear  
Balor of the Evil Eye  
Grendel's dam and Perilous Beast

the manly art of self-defense  
including as a matter of course  
tactics for taking the offensive

SS

Self-reliance a second nature—  
*nothing at the last sacred but  
the integrity of one's own mind*

becoming what one is to others  
an ethical production and what  
one is to oneself a melding

through creed or inner light good works  
or contemplation the *mens sana*  
realized as living world

replete with imaginary friends  
    recognized by their signatures  
in otherwise natural objects

within the original harmony  
    beneficence diversity  
of visionary pastoral states

Idealistic agrarianism  
    romantic nationalism mystic  
personalism one's self

56

surely not to be confused  
    with what used to be called the soul  
yet of that selfsame energy

having within itself the prolific  
    seminal infinitude  
of the private self possessed

as private property is possessed  
    not to be sure as transferable stock  
but as inalienable goods

genteel proprietorship  
    transfiguring materialism  
spiritualizing the sensuous

Rousseau's contract a writ of bondage  
to keep one from finding oneself in command  
of one's own aptitude

the personal will given up  
to the general will, private concerns  
to the common interest, life

conceived as a problem to be solved  
or self-improvement regimen,  
said self a ragbag of throwaways

as if collective articulations  
weren't merely provisional arrangements  
for the single separate person

57

the individual weren't moved first  
by individual conscience  
only later by social concerns

© 2014

From "Pound Laundry"

# Michael Gregory

## That *conscience* and *consciousness*

That *conscience* and *consciousness* two words  
in English are simply *conscience* in romance tongues,

that on the other hand *thinking* and *knowing*  
—*meaning* and *knowledge*—aren't synonymous

intellect to collect sort and compile  
reason to try to make sense of it all,

that metaphysics poetics and aesthetics  
what makes sense to the mind at its best

are moral matters whereby the *mot juste*  
is often enough a matter of life and death

wherein authority proceeds from reason  
never the reverse—philosophy

approaching the godhead with reason, the godhead  
philosophy with love, as tongue in cheek

with piety and humor Eriugena  
instructed Charles the Bald beginning with

the nature of Nature defined at some length  
by the Byzantine Greeks he'd been reading

58

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(one of the few in those days of *Graeca*  
*est non potest legi* who still could)

— Gregory Nazianzen Gregory  
of Nyssa Pseudo-Dionysios

for all their devotion to personalities  
neoplatonist pagans to a man—

beginning *All that is and all that is not*  
and then the *symbolon / mysterium*

*We may know not what but that God is*  
but coming to the belief as Grosseteste

59

half a millennium later put it rhyming  
light and love *All that are are light*

skating thereby a little too close  
to the pantheistic heresy

for which insight said Scot twice while alive  
was condemned then for good measure

again four centuries after his untimely death  
(stabbed to death so the metonymy goes

by the pens of some of his brightest students)  
his *confrères*' bones dug up and scattered

for wagging the golden tongue of the troubadours  
putting words in Albigensian mouths

seeing the dark alight with love's intention  
en route to the final solution on Montségur.

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From "Pound Laundry"

60

# Michael Gregory

## The Six Classics

The Six Classics: *The Book of Poetry.*

*The Book of History. The Book of Rites.*

*The Book of Music. The Philosophy*

*of Mutations. The Spring and Autumn Annals.*

I've studied them all said Ch'iu and tried to teach

world leaders what I have learned

but no one wants to listen to my lessons.

Lucky for you said old Long Ears you met no ruler

who wanted to put the world in order.

The white hawks reproduce their kind

by not turning their eyes from one another.

Without losing oneself in humanity

how can one teach humanity?

Without the way one is lost wherever one goes.

61

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From "Pound Laundry"

# Andrew R. Jones

## Sad House

A white picket fence edged  
The front yard of a gorgeous two-story home.

Colored with earth tones  
A few steps leading to the front porch.

On a stone bench, a man sat and stared  
The slide and swing occupied in the tall green grass.

Only the breeze moved the swings enough  
To hear the creaking metal chains

Scattered leaves were the only things  
Enjoying the tall slide.

The man wiped tears from his cheeks as a woman  
Stood in the 2nd story window.

Holding a sweater close to her face  
Catching the flood from her eyes.

The upper windows seemed to droop at the edges and the roof  
Leaned forward as if bowing its head to pray.

This home of two, previously of three  
Will never be the same.

© 2014

# Andrew R. Jones

Andrew R. Jones is a Marine Corps combat Veteran of the Iraq War and is currently pursuing an English (Creative Writing) degree through ASU. He has been published in numerous journals and magazines, including *Outrageous Fortune*, *The Traveler*, *The Veteran's Writing Project* and *The Gila River Review*. He has also authored a collection of poetry and short stories titled "Healing the Warrior Heart" and recently published a Crown of Sonnets titled "A Warrior's Crown." When not competing in poetry slams, Andrew can be found at church and spending time with his beautiful wife and two children in Phoenix.

63



# Andrew R. Jones

## ‘bring my readers into my world’

64 The poet writes: “After 9 years of battling Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, brought on by combat operations in Iraq 2003, I decided to transfer the thoughts and nightmares from my mind onto a sheet of paper. It began as journaling, then slowly became short non-fiction stories and eventually developed into poetry. My combat experiences and military service are the primary inspiration behind most of my work. My vision is to bring my readers into my world where they can experience and understand where I have been and what

I have been through. This has also developed into a way for other combat veterans to relate and to understand they are not alone in their struggles. Some of my work comes from challenging myself to relay certain emotions through describing a scene, as in ‘Sad House.’ The goal was to evoke certain emotions through the description of a house. Other pieces are influenced greatly by my strong faith in God and my relationship with Jesus. My faith has been monumental in my healing process, and I am sure to give praise to God every chance I have.”

# Andrew R. Jones

## Secret Hopes

He pushed a little red motorcycle  
With secret hopes—  
It would one day, take him away.

Chaos in the other room, he was confused.  
How was he given blame for missing money  
Which filled big brother's guitar case with  
Marlboro Reds?

He pushed a little red motorcycle  
With secret hopes—  
It would one day, take him away.

65

Daddy comes home, yelling at Mommy.  
She yelled back and things are broken,  
Brother and Sister say,  
“Let's go for a walk.”

All I want to do is  
Push my little red motorcycle  
With secret hopes—  
It would one day, take me away.

© 2014

# Andrew R. Jones

## Pennies

After a penny for each of my thoughts, you're going to have to finance the two cents needed to give your opinion. My thoughts are like silver nickels, they're a dime a dozen and only a quarter of them make any kind of sense. Like a rolled-up dollar bill connecting a nose to a fine line of blow, we're all just a tool. If only Lincoln were alive today to see us fools, he would lead the strong until 10 became 20 and 20 became a century's worth of rebellion.

66 But like a child beaten by a stumbling father we just don't understand. Like a man with a python rope coiled around his neck we are just too tired. Like the mouse dropped in a bucket of water we're struggling to hold on to hope. We're ankle deep in shit and standing upside down.

But those rare moments when hope reaches in and saves us, we discover we are dogs in an alley. Hungry. Wrinkling noses and baring teeth to anything which opposes us. We discover the patience of a racing turtle. We take on the endurance and perseverance of an ant battling a beetle.

We discover a passion to inspire and the inspirational gift of passion which has belonged to the greatest minds of time. But will we use it appropriately? Like Martin Luther King Jr., who preached for black men to be treated equally and for all men to love one another? Or maybe like Mother Teresa who inspired a passion for pro-peace rallies instead of anti-war?

Continued on page 67

A passion to inspire is a gift and like any gift it can be misused. Like the child who tears apart his remote control race car in order to extract the engine so he can connect it to a battery and make a helicopter with the scrap pieces of the strobe light he was gifted the previous year which will then inspire him to attend a top ranked engineering school where he will use his passion to design a new age of attack helicopters...which destroy a village...where a child is gifted a paper airplane and inspired to open the folds to write a story...which will never be told.

So keep your pennies—'cus like our souls after Jesus died—my thoughts are free.

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67

# Jennifer Jones

## Lady

I looked in the mirror and I realized I am not the Maiden!  
My eyes are older, they see more now than they used to.  
My body is not as firm, it dances to the change of the seasons.  
My spirit is vibrant and full with a deeper color than the spring.  
Like my voice, it has changed and grown to encompass me.

I looked in the mirror and I realized I am not the Mother!  
My heart breaks a little as each thought cascades over me...  
I am not the Mother... I hear the whisper on the wind "this life..."  
My soul is full with the knowledge I am meant to walk another path.  
I am not the Mother, but I am not alone.

68  
I looked in the mirror and I realized ...  
I am the Warrior! I am full of life and vigor!  
Battle scarred and shadowed with experience on my heavy brow!  
The primal screams of battle on the very edge of my tongue...  
I am the war goddess Morrigan! From my lips scores of souls will perish!  
And yet, I hold them within, for they are not my words to speak.

I looked in the mirror and I realized I am not the Crone!  
She is my Grandmother. She is my future!  
Love and respect is what I feel for her... what I owe her!  
She is the old woman on the bus waiting to get her groceries who smiles at me.  
The eyes of the world contained in a small frail form.  
She is the beginning and the end at the same moment in time.

I looked in the mirror and I saw the Goddess.

© 2014

# Jennifer Jones

Jennifer Jones is a native of Arizona and lives in Phoenix with her husband and five cats who are worshiped like the miniature deities they truly are. She works in the field of Information Technology and holds a Master of Music in Opera Performance from Arizona State University. In addition to her day job, she sings with Arizona Opera and will be performing with them in the coming season. She has always been a fan of the written word and is an avid reader of sci-fi and fantasy. Poetry has always held a special place in her heart.

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Photo by Nancy Hall/Still in Motion

# Jennifer Jones

## ‘life and the journey’

The poet writes: “ ‘Self’ came about one night when I was sitting at the computer thinking about life and the journey we all take. I was reading some headlines on CNN and I remember thinking how ridiculous we are to each other and how repressed we can be. It made me think of a perfect butterfly in a glass case. Lovely to look at and ageless but without life — no magic to it. ‘Lady’ was inspired by the way we expect life to turn out. As women, we have predefined roles, and sometimes when we don’t fit into the notion of what we should be, it can cause a great deal of pain. I didn’t want to be lost in those feelings, so I started writing about the many stages of life and endeavored to celebrate where I was on this amazing journey.”

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# Jennifer Jones

## Self

Imprisoned by society  
Another faceless victim of conformity.

I sit in a sea of people...  
Completely alone.

Drifting like a lost piece of cargo  
No longer belonging to a certain place, or time.

My soul more faceted than the rarest jewel...  
I look to uncover each surface and revel in the journey.

71

How often we are denied the adventure and discovery?  
Told how we must act, believe, and even LOVE in a certain way.

Left with no chance to discover our true self...  
Kept like butterflies under glass.

We sit...  
So lovely... pristine...  
and lifeless.

© 2014

# Tracy Keller

## Central

Downtown sleeps,  
while the moon  
peeks between  
rising concrete and glass.  
The expansiveness calms me –  
long and lean,  
binding around  
like mother's arms.  
The rounding streets,  
with their emerald lights  
and sapphire illuminations  
dance in darkened sky.  
Their golden light,  
buttery,  
coaxing me to follow.  
Around me I see  
the blackboards of daytime activity  
empty with want,  
calling on the summer heat  
to warm the avenue's solitude,  
to rise up,  
kiss the air  
where clips of lightning  
expose like snapshots  
the grandeur of this silent surrounding.  
Its infinite space a place to rest  
momentarily  
until moving on  
towards growing numbers  
and budding life.

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Unstrung • Summer 2014

# Tracy Keller

Tracy Keller is a political nerd by day and a poet by night. She earned a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in English from Northern Arizona University. She has worked for Arizona News Service – a political news service that covers state politics and government – as a coordinator of various political publications and online services since 2002. She's an aficionado of words and a passionate bibliophile, and enjoys finding ways to inspire and energize her creative side through writing, music and photography. She was born and raised in Phoenix, and has come to appreciate – if not worship – the perfect taco, vibrant sunsets, and tumultuous monsoons. To learn more about Tracy, visit her website at [tracyjkeller.com](http://tracyjkeller.com) or contact her at [tracyjkeller@q.com](mailto:tracyjkeller@q.com).

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# Tracy Keller

## ‘unpredictable flashes of inspiration’

74

The poet writes: “My poetic craft usually begins with some kind of ‘ah-ha’ moment – a moment that sneaks up on me from an unforeseen corner in my life. It can be a word, a phrase, an image, or an eavesdropped conversation that pops up out of nowhere and taps me on the shoulder with a wonderful gift of a sound, a rhythmic line or a nugget of an idea. These unpredictable flashes of inspiration are what light up my mind and get me excited about where I can take a turn of a phrase, an alliterative sentence or a persistent feeling and construct something meaningful and melodic out of it. Those creative sparks come from all sorts of places: childhood memories, sensory experiences, visually stunning scenery, beautifully mundane objects or simply a stubborn thought that I can’t shake. Specifically, for the poems included in this issue – ‘Central,’ ‘Little Oaxaca,’ and ‘Summer Storm’ – Phoenix is at the heart of them all. It’s where I am most at home and where I am invigorated by images that capture the comforts of this city’s milieu, the vibrancy of its neighborhoods and the awe-inspiring visuals of its sky and land. Ultimately, my poetic craft – my desire to express these visions that arouse me – is best summed up by Ernest Hemingway: ‘All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know.’ Simple, straightforward and true – that is my challenge and my purpose when writing poetry.”

# Tracy Keller

## Little Oaxaca

The day's flavors hang in the nighttime air.  
Frying oil and toasted chili peppers  
waft across chain-linked fences.  
The scents mingle with red-green-white celebrations  
sprayed, splashed on decaying brick walls.  
Liquor store lights glimmer on the gangs  
of short men loitering for an evening snack,  
strolling across the barrio streets,  
dancing to distant trumpets  
and high-pitched barks of sandy Chihuahuas.

And there I am – blonde with red tint,  
freckles of angel kisses speckling my milky white skin,  
green-golden eyes lighting up like sparklers  
as I drive slowly through this little paradise,  
absorbing the harmony of family sounds vibrating at the surface.  
The young and old sprouting from the desert soil  
revealed to me like the saints they revere.  
But I am merely a loose root at the surface,  
trying to soak up this good Earth, these rich layers of life,  
the sustenance of community and the plentiful joy  
flourishing in this communion of culture.

75

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# Tracy Keller

## Summer Storm

Rolling dust dredges the late summer skies.  
It stomps the earth as wild horses do  
escaping the chase mighty men pursue  
and pouring forth a bounty to baptize  
land hungry with want – its thirst a surprise.  
It climbs canyon walls and plunges through  
conquering cautiously its point-of-view  
until the wind shifts askew its goodbye.

76  
Fear not the looming blues of this twilight –  
the mire, the moans, the mystery of you.  
Built up grand to make us shutter tonight,  
you're purely a puzzle of God's delight.  
And that which we wonder is ever true  
will be laid to rest when we bid adieu.

© 2014

# Eva Louis

## The Reflection

I've been led to this land of burning soil and dry winds to find  
the paintings in the canvas directed towards my soul and my creation.  
With open eyes and open heart, the whispers that dance around  
in my thoughts and in my dreams are true and deep  
as they touch the energy that beckons me.  
Intricate yet simple is the message that bleeds all around me.  
We cannot change those who don't understand,  
we can only live our true calling from the sand.  
Our being is depicted in the solace and cool breezes  
that come infrequent and from afar, not knowing  
where they will end or where they will fall.

77

Reflecting on this journey to the sun and the boldness  
that exists in the core directs us to know that there is more  
and the universe is looking down to hold on to the purity that once was.  
Waste not the opportunities that lay before you from the mountains to  
the forests to the deserts to the sands of beaches,  
for these windows are your liberty to transverse to the other side.  
Commitments to be strong, and to wield that power  
that belongs to no other is to have a love so deep  
that it cannot be contained and must be set free.  
As we rise from the ashes, the Phoenix is the new beginning and rebirth,  
let us envelop ourselves and those around us with these gifts  
as we are like no other and must reach beyond the border.

© 2014

# Eva Louie

Eva Louie, originally from Texas and the Midwest, transplanted to Arizona in 2006 and found her home. From the earliest age, Eva has had a love for words and writing and literature. She is known for being involved with many aspects of art and works with artists on a regular basis. She has formed her career around her love for writing, edification of others, and promoting positively in everything she does. She is an inspired writer and produces articles and inspirational writings on a regular basis as part of her work every day. Eva Louie currently is president and founder of her own company, Chronic Behavior, and writes under her division of Film & Fashion Futures. She is a writer for Runway and Runway Teen magazines, as well as several other organizations covering a wide range of industries. In addition, she is a model, actress, and host for a talk show called “Talking the Five,” covering Film, Fashion, Arts, Music and Entertainment.



Photo by Stella Crowl / Style Image Studios

# Eva Louis

## ‘a platform of inspiration’

The poet writes: “In my daily life, I am inspired by words and look to writers every day to find emotions and feelings that move me through their messaging. As a writer, I am affected by words and have made a conscious choice daily to never waste a word. I have learned the power in words, and as such poetry has been a selected format and way to create a platform of inspiration to others daily. I feel that you are oftentimes called to a craft by the nature of your journey and mission in life. For me this is true, as part of the work I pursue, the opportunity to present words and messages through writing and more specifically poetry has become an active part of what I do. Being an inspired writer is different from just being a writer as moments, situations, words, feelings, music, pictures, and so many things can move me to write. It is a very personal experience and one that comes from within and from the soul. I see this as actually one of my gifts that I am obligated to share with others to help and make a difference in others’ lives. There is no better feeling in the world than to know you have positively touched someone by the words you have written.”

79

# Bridget Magee

## Tapping Our Twigs

That school year I was pudgy.  
Chubby.  
Chunky.  
Husky.

I lived inside my fat armor.  
People stared at me.  
Studied me.  
Avoided me.

80 That school year there was a girl my size.  
Every morning she had to squeeze to get through the opening.  
The opening where the bushes ended and the fence began.  
The opening that the other kids could scamper through.

When she arrived at school, jump ropes went limp.  
Balls dribbled away from their dribblers.  
Whoops and whistles quieted.

Everyone watched to see if she would make it through.  
I stopped my lonely pastime.  
I stopped tapping my willow twig against the chain link fence.  
I watched, too.

Continued on page 81

She never looked up from the grass  
to see our stares,  
to see our glares.  
She never looked up.

Once, when I was trying to squeeze through the opening  
I heard her panting behind me.

“Wait up,” she said.

I pretended I didn’t hear.  
I pretended the playground eyes weren’t watching her.  
Weren’t watching me.

That school year I drifted in solitude.  
Separate from everyone around me.  
Except her.

81

When I turn the corner to go into my classroom,  
we’d almost collide.

When I’d leave the bathroom,  
she’d be there,  
slurping at the drinking fountain.

When I’d go to the school nurse with my latest stomach ache,  
there she’d be,  
gazing at the floor,  
panting on the cot next to mine.

I had a lot of stomach aches that year.  
She had a lot of breathing problems.  
When the school nurse left us alone,  
that girl would try to catch my eye.  
Try to communicate, *You know how it feels, don't you?*  
I'd look away.

After fifteen minutes the nurse would say,  
“If you're feeling worse after lunch, come back.”

I knew I'd be back.  
Maybe, she did, too.  
The nurse's office gave us a place to escape  
the stares,  
the glares.  
For fifteen minutes, at least.

After a while, we did look at each other.  
Glance.  
Look away.  
Peek.  
Over and over.  
Eventually, we held each other's gaze.  
We both knew how it felt.

82



By the end of that school year  
we looked the jump ropers,  
the basketball players,  
and the whistlers  
straight in the eye  
as we tapped on by.

No more stomach aches.  
No more panting and wheezing.  
No more stares.  
No more glares.

We did our thing.  
Everyone else did theirs.

84

That school year,  
after the last bell,  
on the last day,  
she and I walked to the opening.  
The opening where the bushes ended and the fence began.  
The opening that the other kids could scamper through.

We looked at each other.  
We smiled.  
And we scampered through, too.  
One after the other.

© 2014

# Bridget Magee

creative, optimistic, goofy  
who wonders why time passes faster the older she gets  
who loves her Joe, Co, and Mo  
who fears never being enough  
who wants a quiet mind  
Writer. Poet. Speaker. Teacher. Mom.  
Website: [www.bridgetmagee.com](http://www.bridgetmagee.com)  
Blog: [www.weewordsforweeones.blogspot.com](http://www.weewordsforweeones.blogspot.com)

85



Photo by Nick Henry

# Bridget Magee

## ‘a personal poetry narrative’

The poet writes: “Using the universal feelings of loneliness and isolation, I created a personal poetry narrative about two overweight children finding friendship despite their ‘fat armor.’ ‘Tapping Our Twigs’ is not autobiographical, though I have felt profound loneliness and isolation at various points in my life.”

86

# Deborah Mayaan

## road grader

the road grader outside  
bringing new dirt and stones  
replacing  
what erosion takes downhill

imagining many trucks  
hauling loads of soil and sand  
from the Sea of Cortez  
to the top of our mountain

desperately trying  
to not only correct  
our erosion-creating ways  
but to hold back  
time itself  
to keep these mountains  
sharp  
as the day they formed

87

© 2014

# Deborah Mayaan

Deborah Mayaan is an energy work and flower essence practitioner who appreciates the healing power of words. Her articles on complementary medicine have appeared in a wide range of publications, from the Arizona Daily Star to Spirituality & Health Magazine. She loves teaching Write to Heal workshops and earned an MA in Educational Psychology. Contact her at [www.deborahmayaan.com](http://www.deborahmayaan.com).

88



Photo by Amy Haskell

# Deborah Mayaan

## let the rains come

speaking with a dowser  
I ask if fear  
can hold back  
the rain  
if my fear of erosion  
can stop the flow  
I am told, that can be

I have attended  
to this hillside  
the water  
will not take out  
my little trailer

and my neighbors  
who seem  
more precariously balanced  
I have been told  
not to push  
suggest gently only  
let them learn  
as they must

and I must think  
of the greatest good  
for all concerned  
this area  
so desperately  
needs water  
so those of us  
who moved here for dryness  
for our sinuses  
who have roofs that leak  
unprotected wood  
that would warp  
bare soil that  
goes unplanted  
who have placed  
our trailers  
too close to washes  
must prepare

and I must  
release fear  
and sing  
as best I can—

89

Continued on page 90

let the rains come  
let the washes run  
let the waters heal  
heal me

let the rains come  
let the washes run  
let the waters heal  
heal you

let the rains come  
let the washes run  
let the waters heal  
heal our earth

let the rains come  
let the washes run  
let the waters heal  
heal us all

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**Poet's note:** We have droughts here, but part of climate change is that other places have too much rain, so use discretion in praying for rain.

# Deborah Mayaan

## marranitos

this Cinco de Mayo  
I learn a new word:  
“They’re also called marranitos,”  
the woman at the grocery says,  
when I ask when there will be more cochitos  
my mother really likes them, I say

little pigs, these cookies  
perhaps sweetening  
old taunts  
marranos, they called the Jews who hid who they were  
as a strategy to survive  
like seeds buried deep in the earth  
protected from the fierce heat of sun and fire  
dormant, but not dead  
storing the memories of how to sprout and grow  
emerging when the time is right

91

Continued on page 92

maybe I'll call them  
conversos, the softer word  
those who converted

my mother needs to believe that I am a convert  
to Judaism  
it is the only truth she can accept  
my own memories of her mother speaking Yiddish to me  
and grumbling over how she dare not hang out the wash on Sunday  
are not to be acknowledged  
Achtung! Aviso! watch out!  
to risk being the target  
again  
is too scary

92

tomorrow is Shabbat  
and I will make no purchases  
will only travel out past the city limits  
to visit an old friend  
and enjoy the desert in bloom  
but on Sunday before starting work  
and before hanging out laundry in the intense spring sun  
I will again  
ride my bike down to the grocery  
and stand there like today in my traveler's gear  
my helmet on, water bottle in hand  
and my backpack to carry my purchases  
whether it is this 10-minute ride in the early morning  
or the tens of generations of wandering

picking up the languages and customs  
of our neighbors  
I now know I am safe  
to blossom  
into who  
I am

and I only hope  
that in this lifetime  
my mother  
may learn this as well

© 2014

93

# Deborah Mayaan

## bird who? (a found poem)

the bird who  
goes  
eeeeeee!

great-tailed  
grackle  
gregarious  
makes a lotta noise

94  
moves around  
(not migratory)  
neighborhood → hood

omnivore  
bigger range  
in summer

goes  
where  
the  
food  
is

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**Poet's note:** Found poem, from notes taken while talking to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum help line to identify this bird.

Unstrung • Summer 2014

# Kaitlin Meadows

## She: A Poem in Praise

1.

She is all metaphor,  
No pained syntax studded with semicolons,  
No exclamations uttered in surprise.  
She is not neatly ledgered handwriting  
Or the culmination of a list of sums.  
She is an ampersand,  
A tilde.  
The accent is the sauce  
She applies like a poultice  
To your fevered limbs,  
Mending the breaks with the adhesive  
Of her resolve,  
Binding the rents with the  
Torn negligee of her longing.  
Her heart is the bellows  
That pumps low embers  
Back into a flame that warms  
Even as it consumes you.

95

Continued on page 96

2.

Her name is Rane  
And she knows the names and temperaments  
Of a hundred kinds of roses,  
The history and idiosyncrasies of Corgi's  
In an adoration of Tasha Tudor.  
She loves her hens and calls them by name,  
Identifying each by their eggs.  
She lifts her glistening scarlet tomatoes  
Like goblets of fine wine,  
Marveling that from seed  
Came this succulence  
And from the barbed canes  
That etch her arms like stigmata  
Come blackberries so sweet.

96

Continued on page 97

3.

She is made of dust and bonfires,  
The smell of orange blossoms  
On hot summer nights.  
She is made of grief and heart shatter  
But her alliance is pledged every day  
To the sacrament of happiness  
Like a seizure  
That grips her  
And binds her to the day,  
Exultant, expectant,  
And full of gratitude.  
Her face is like an almanac  
Of weather and star travel,  
Seasons and their tasks  
Born onto a map  
That is not geography.

97

Continued on page 98

4.

Her eyes are the color of copper  
Gone verdigris,  
Her imagination is capable,  
Sturdy and well used,  
There is an elegance in her  
That roughens with drink,  
Her heart is  
Whetted and stropped  
On a rough stone  
Used for building an edge  
On steel.  
She lives in the thicket,  
The hedgerow, the bramble,  
The place of entanglements  
And entwinings,  
In the complexities  
Of convolutions  
Where safety lives  
And she can observe the world of perils,  
Rearing her  
Hairless dreams  
Without fear of hawks.

98

Continued on page 99

5.

Her life is a small creek  
That occasionally spills  
Its banks  
Carrying away barns  
Before it trickles to a damp spot  
Guarded by dragonflies.  
She speaks of the Carpathians  
As though her homeland  
But knows all the currents of the Vulgar River  
And where it eddies,  
Catching the scarlet leaves of autumn.  
She is infinitely at home  
Inside herself,  
Only venturing out when  
The moon has firmly  
Sunk itself in a cleft  
Between the thighs  
Of two mountains  
That she calls by their archaic name.

99

Continued on page 100

6.

She claims dawn as her own  
Slipping up from whatever bed she's shared,  
With whomever, wherever  
In the world she is  
To greet the moment  
When the dark night opens its husk  
To receive light like an eager lover  
Stretching up to receive  
The radiance of the Beloved.  
She has known trouble  
But not made it,  
Been wounded  
But refused to injure in kind,  
Her blessings have been lavish,  
Her sorrows lush.  
She is saying at last  
All that cannot be said,  
Finally yielding to the  
Darwinian urge to evolve  
In the face of knowledge  
That not to do so  
Is to perish.

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# Kaitlin Meadows

Kaitlin Meadows is the Mistress of Merriment at Kaitlin's Creative Cottage, an oasis of art and creativity where she also gathers a circle of women who love to write and share.

Word Weavers meets twice a month and offers a safe, nurturing place for women to share their writing and use interesting prompts to create new stories. Contact Kaitlin at [paloma@dakotacom.net](mailto:paloma@dakotacom.net) for more information, and check out her blog at [www.thundermoonstudios.wordpress.com](http://www.thundermoonstudios.wordpress.com).

101



# Kaitlin Meadows

## ‘I am driven to see and feel’

The poet writes: “ ‘She: A Poem in Praise’ was born from the deep frustration that stirs in me when someone casually asks at a party, ‘So, what do *you* do?’ and the inevitable next question they ask (if I have the courage to reply, ‘I am a poet,’ instead of ‘I’m a hospice nurse who practices archaeology as an avocation, runs a teaching art studio, and mentors ‘at risk’ young women from 7 to 12 years of age,’ which is equally true) – invariably, their next question is some variation of, ‘What makes someone want to be a *poet*?’ My answer *should be* ‘Because I have to, because I am called to, because I am driven to see and feel and communicate at a level of intensity that would burn you to the ground and scatter your ashes otherwise,’ but I fantasize the shorter reply could be, ‘Here, read this, I am Rane,’ as I hand them (and you) a copy of ‘She: A Poem in Praise.’ ”

102

# Nicole Nixen

## Skimming Through the '90s Garage Sale

I had not planned to go to the '90s garage sale.  
After all, I'd spent the last 10 years or so de-cluttering possessions  
I treasured as a teenager.  
Holding the heavily copied handwritten flyer in hand,  
I felt a slight lump in my throat as I remembered  
A time that wasn't necessarily simpler  
But seemed so as nostalgia trumped facts.  
With better memories in mind, I skated on down to the '90s garage sale.

First thing I spotted at the '90s garage sale  
Amidst slap bracelets, chokers and mood rings  
Was a heart-shaped box, perfect for storing valuables.  
Before I could buy it, it was snatched away by a wily wide-eyed blond  
Who wasn't sure if she had the rights to sell it.

Instead I moved onto a fiery red rocking chair.  
As I sat in it, an onlooker cautioned – “careful,  
The rocking motion will make your stomach hurt.”  
Miffed by such nosiness, I waved off the onlooker and said I didn't care.  
But I did. This was only the second item I admired  
And the previous owners were both deceased.  
It was my cue to move on to another aisle at the '90s garage sale.

103

Continued on page 104

I got up and kept walking around until I came across  
A “sonic” powered washing machine.  
It held my curiosity for a minute,  
Then I decided it was too experimental for my tastes.  
I was then approached by a polite fellow  
Who tried to sell me an “okay” computer.  
He’d outgrown it, though he’d never forget it.  
I said I remembered this model clearly; it was a one of a kind,  
Though there had been many attempts to duplicate it.  
Maybe he better hang onto it instead.

With that, I declared my exit from the ’90s garage sale.  
“Oh my you can’t do that,” exclaimed the nosy onlooker.  
“You’ve barely scratched the surface here.”  
Oh but I can. Had I stayed any longer  
It would be overwhelming to my senses.  
I wanted to keep my original memories of the time intact.

© 2014

# Nicole Nixen

Nicole Nixen is an Arizona native and ASU graduate. By day, Nicole is a business analyst who uses data and numbers to weave together information. However, storytelling through the written word has always been a passion for Nicole. One of her biggest accomplishments was using her writing skills for San Jose State University's Steinbeck in the Schools project, launched in 2011, <http://sits.sjsu.edu>. Nicole's poetry has also appeared in Zouch Magazine. Nicole can be reached at [nnixen@gmail.com](mailto:nnixen@gmail.com).

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# Nicole Nixen

‘inspired by her  
everyday observations’

Nicole’s poems are inspired by her everyday observations, especially of life in Phoenix. “Rail Tales” is based on actual events while waiting at the Central Station light-rail stop.

“Skimming Through the ’90s Garage Sale” was inspired by the surge of ’90s nostalgia found in current pop culture and is littered with references to songs and bands who rose to fame in the ’90s.

106

# Nicole Nixen

## Rail Tales

July 2011, and the MLB All-Star Game  
has downtown Phoenix putty in its hands.  
Traffic, pedestrians and gridlock appear a welcome sight to business.  
Not so much to commuters.  
I wait at the light rail platform.  
I know this is the best way home.

A booming electronic voice announces  
“The next train is arriving in 5 minutes.”  
I take notice of another passenger farther down the platform.  
A man maybe pushing 50 dressed like it’s 1945.  
The attire is foreign for the season, the location and the year.

107

Old-timey news reporter  
Is the best descriptor I can muster.  
Fedora with a piece of paper stuck in the band—  
Complete with overcoat, lanyard, khaki slacks and tie.

I wasn’t the only passenger who took notice.  
On my other side was a sports fan, with a bag of chips in hand.  
“I know that guy,” he said to me.  
“It’s Bert Sugar, it has to be.”

Continued on page 108

I looked back at the sports fan, cradling his bag of chips.  
As sure as his hands were covered in yellow bits of salt and potato,  
He was certain the man at the end of the platform  
was none other than Bert Sugar.

“Who?” I questioned.  
This incited sports fan laughter.  
“You don’t know Bert Sugar?”  
As a sports fan myself,  
I felt smaller than the ant crawling in front of my shoe.  
Should I know this man?

Sports fan would never believe  
That I spend Sundays from August through January  
Rooting for my football team.  
All because I don’t know Bert Sugar.

Sports fan schools me on the spot.  
Between chewing chips the way a cow chews cud—  
He informs me that Bert Sugar  
Was the greatest boxing commentator around.

The more he described Bert, the more sure he was  
That Bert Sugar was within reach.  
A fact he celebrated by slapping his knee.

I was never more grateful to see the train coming.  
I stepped onto the light rail.  
Bert, the sports fan and myself,  
Forever separated by different cars.

Once home I was determined,  
To prove sports fan wrong.  
A quick search online  
Made my case against sports fan strong.

At that time, Bert was 74 (or 75, depending on the source).  
Now deceased but the months before his demise,  
There was no way he had been waiting for light rail  
In the heat of Phoenix's July.

109

The sports fan, I was convinced  
Was having a spot of fun at my expense.  
I never for a minute believed his claims.  
But hey, it made a great story.

© 2014

# Holly Parsons

## Am I for Her Journey

My water and I fell in love with an island stream  
We met her in placid grassy folds while bathing  
And surrendered to her joyous invitation  
Cutting through tundra to the place of her birth  
Deep in the valley below Joshky's Thumb  
On a mid-summer day in Fiji four decades past  
Nude and captivated we dove into her being  
We did not hang near her edge to grip escape  
in fear of leech or water snake  
We floated dead center where the channel flows  
deep and swift and decisive  
Flowers sprinkled succulent shoreline, waving us on  
Above we faced a skyscape of wise wispy clouds telling our story  
In unison with a clean, cool, totally alive spirit  
Always fallin, talkin, gigglin and prayin  
She spoke  
When the moon beckons  
All waters rise  
Twice every day we rock the world  
Perhaps...I am for Her journey...

© 2014

# Holly Parsons

From the poet:

“To the writer: ‘Each Soul cries out to express,  
yet perhaps no artist is as free as the Poet.

Poetry offers boundless creative expression.

Language arts simultaneously express metaphorically,  
personally, universally, archetypically and allegorically.

Simply write the truth of life from your heart.’”

“When we lay words together like lovers, they become real  
and live together forever as song.”

Contact the poet at [www.HollyParsons.com](http://www.HollyParsons.com).

111



This photo was  
taken at 4 a.m.  
after a night of  
writing...

# Holly Parsons

## ‘life’s endless dance’

The poet writes: “For me, poetry reflects the meter and cadence of life’s endless dance. Lyrical passion lays words as vibrant stones on a multiplicity of paths, reflecting an expressive mosaic. When asked about my experience writing, I describe ‘A sensual, musical flow of images that invite me to capture their spirit. It has been my great privilege to comply.’”

# Holly Parsons

## Eulogy for a Rhyme

The chandelier was barren  
Less the jewels that make light sing  
Now the glitter, garish, garnish  
Vanquished the ceiling of its bling

It hung in stark remembrance  
Of the late and breaking news  
The old fella has expired  
Kicked his bucket, caught the cruise

He never really knew me  
I beyond his wildest thought  
A child born of conquest raised  
A child lost in thought

My life a stark reminder  
That his power could not tame  
Sheer and present essence  
Despite attempts to shame

Finally, he weakened  
Fissures and cracks began to form  
Brutal reprehensives dissolved  
As confusion became the norm

113

Continued on page 114

I let him clean the mess he made  
Clear karma's certain fate  
Left him with his dignity  
Even though I shake

The sadness lingers elsewhere  
Under foot and under mind  
Searching for a resting place  
Hidden in a rhyme

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114

# Holly Parsons

## Freedom

Creates vestibules of harmony  
Rests on pages of purpose  
Flies through caverns of consciousness  
Answers only to truth

Transcends punitive postures  
Protects perilous peace  
Messaged in smoke from the outback  
Design its rhythmic release

Stands within every nomad  
Cries out within every heart  
Wanders tween walls and wonders  
What is fear all about

It spawns in ice on the mantle  
Melts off dew in the breeze  
Rains over cities of slavery  
Drips into caverns of need

Sparkle its twinkling message  
Power its ultimate fate  
Music surrounds is enchanting  
Beckons us into its wake

115

© 2014

# Howard Russell

## Julianne

Julianne, I saw the sunrise today, and I thought of you.  
The monsoons are here. Their tear-drenched thunderheads  
refract the sky into silky red strands,  
the kind I loved to run my fingers through.

We liked to watch the lollipop palms explode  
like cannon fire above a crystal lake.  
I wondered if words could catch your vision.

To me, you were the sunrise; no syllables could bless my tongue  
the way your seething eyes could penetrate my essence.  
The sterile lights haunting distant clouds were no match  
for the intense combustion of your embrace.

Now, my heart is still as the moon.  
Colors drift past like corneal filaments,  
and I am no longer moved by the subtle sounds of thunder.

You were real, so real!  
I thought you heard me even when I was unable to speak;  
saw me though I was lost in your unfathomable shadows.  
How is it that you could choose indifference over me?

We spent that summer searching for the sugar, savoring  
the salt. Then I learned there was another.  
Soon the laughter evaporated on your desert winds, and died  
the day I realized you lied to me in darkness.

Julianne, I saw the dawn appear again today,  
and I thought of you.

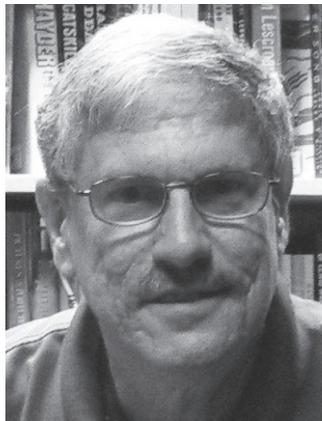
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Unstrung • Summer 2014

# Howard Russell

Howard Russell (a pseudonym) is 58, married (35 years) with one child (age 27) and has lived in Arizona since 1981. Maintaining a journal for most of his life, he's accumulated a significant amount of material about which to write. Whether from personal experience or observations of the human condition (particularly of family, friends, and co-workers who won't mind seeing themselves in print so long as the names are changed to protect the potentially embarrassed), his goal is to write and publish poetry and fiction that points out human folly through friction. To his credit thus far are two short stories and seven poems that have appeared in print. In addition, he has two novels in manuscript form, and is currently working on a book of short stories titled "The P.O. Box Mysteries." Reach the writer at [rusel0630@gmail.com](mailto:rusel0630@gmail.com).

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# Howard Russell

## ‘direct observation or personal experience’

The poet writes: “Most of my poetry comes from direct observation or personal experience. I’ll sometimes pick something I see at the park, or at home and simply free write until something emerges. An example of that is ‘The Cleansing,’ which I literally created in the shower one morning (prompted by an assignment for class to write a limerick). ‘Julianne’ was similarly an assignment for a poetry class, but it was inspired by a monsoon I observed at Kiwanis Park one morning. ‘My Ching’ came about one day while studying the ‘I, Ching’ after reviewing some journal entries. The result was a poem, using 3 hexagrams, to describe my journey as a writer (youthful folly, stagnation, and finally balance).”

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# Howard Russell

## Escape to Arizona

The gates of New York disappear in the distance.  
Pennsylvania, Ohio, and a rust belt  
full of factory smog that fades in the rear view;  
cities deteriorating at the speed of blight.

The Arizona trail runs through Oklahoma City.  
Before that, old St. Louis, and before that  
a mid-west filled with wheat and boredom.

The desert presents with arid terrain;  
surrounded by pine and snow,  
mountain peak and artificial lake.

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A numbing adherence to tradition  
and tried and trite competition  
dictated a change of scene.

A growing city, a phoenix, new and vibrant;  
the chance to be someone  
with no recounting of the past.

Tire tread deposits on post marked freeways  
measure the distance from state to state to state,  
the restrictive grip of custom finally abates.

Continued on page 120

Freedom is a stucco wall and orange tiled roof,  
a sameness so different it emancipates the spirit  
from red-bricked skyscraper silos.

A wall's a wall's a wall;  
but redemption is a desert sunrise  
at the end of this Arizona tale.

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# Howard Russell

## My Ching

### 1) Meng Youthful Folly

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Choosing silver, choosing gold,  
auctioned to the highest

bidder. Nirvana sacrificed in favor  
of twelve hour days

whoring.

Forgotten writings never ring.  
Unfinished chapters, open to the wind, lose their

carbonation.

Put them in a box; put them on a shelf.

Close the lid.

Close the door.

Say good-bye.

Say good-bye.

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Continued on page 122

2) P'I  
Stagnation

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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Standing on the corner,  
Bethany and Central,  
watching the parade pass by.  
Tears flow like stripes down the sides of wrinkled uniforms.  
Twenty years of accumulation

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while the music stayed silent.

A drum's stretched fabric  
stoked rhythmically  
by stinging wooden stakes.

Through a 7-year-old's wide eyes;  
awaken.

Papers in a box.  
Ink in a pen, begging for release.

Remember.

3) T'ai  
Balance

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When choosing, all choices are equal.  
Gold is a word,  
and words are gold.

Writing transforms loneliness;  
memories transcribed.  
A new

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sharing.

To give is to own; to teach is to learn;  
a lesson for a father,  
a lesson for a son.

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# Howard Russell

## The Cleansing

A hot steamy fog  
fills a four by eight ceramic cocoon.  
Old skin and hair and attitudes  
swirl in a vortex  
draining away.  
Chrysalis doors obscure the calcified image  
on the mirror outside.  
I think today I'll fly away, free.

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# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## Pruning

Constantly confronted  
with howling winds of dissent.

Simple thoughts get trapped  
in an outpour of sludge  
while bloviated jargon  
runs on into infinity.

In a state of flux  
clever lines are heisted from  
fashion ads and cereal boxes.

Trying to squish sense into  
sentences

I'm left with a page of scattered  
clichés  
in need of pruning.

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# 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." Esther also appears in "Desert Voices," 2nd anthology, just published by the Poetry Corner in Sun City. E-mail her at [lberlot@q.com](mailto:lberlot@q.com).

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Photo by Christa Lubatkin

# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## ‘past and present voices’

The poet writes: “I try to articulate the past and present voices  
meandering through my sleep and waking moments, hoping  
they will enlighten me.”

The poet wrote the triolet “Words” about this subject:

### Words

Words invade thoughts to hold and to keep  
Meander in dreams till they are yours  
A metaphor arrives to jar you from sleep  
Words invade thoughts to hold and to keep  
Send instrument of language to loving few  
To explain an uncommon point of view  
Words invade thoughts to hold and to keep  
Meander in dreams till they are yours

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# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## Seeing Red

My morning groggy self  
pulls open the fridge door  
to find the last plump  
blood orange.  
Usually I slice the fruit  
he measures coffee teaspoons.  
My serrated knife punctures  
the tawny magenta skin  
tart red juice squirts onto my lips  
sliver by sliver the succulent  
blood orange overwhelms  
my taste buds  
as it slowly drips down  
my throat and on to my chin.  
Waiting for his share  
he turns and sees  
naked orange skin  
disposed in the disposal.  
Caught red faced  
my juicy wet kisses  
could not suppress  
his seeing red.

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# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## The Committee

You thought  
You'd have your say  
You thought  
You'd have your way  
In the shadow  
Big Dog's ego  
Lies in wait  
Waiting to pounce  
To claw your say  
To gnaw your way  
In the end  
You will sway –  
Your say  
Will fall  
By the wayside

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# Esther Schnur-Berlot

## Valentine's Day

Tricky hot flashes  
interrupt my odyssey  
on Sinner's Row  
where I thought  
lust would last forever

Knowing yesterday's  
passions are passing –  
I relax  
with chocolates  
                    a greeting card  
                            and a man  
who still thinks  
                    I'm fun to be with

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# Carol Sletten

## The Stern-Faced Rock

formed  
before imagination  
evolving endlessly  
unfathomed  
the silent seer  
looking hard sees  
nothing

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# Carol Sletten

Carol Sletten is a writer and illustrator who lives in a cabin in Arizona's White Mountains. She is the author of "Story of the American West – Legends of Arizona"; "New York Freedom Trail"; and "Three Strong Western Women," a play and book by the same name. The inspiration for Carol's work comes mainly from her fascination with the history, people and landscapes of the American West. She is currently writing a novel based on the life of a powerful Apache religious leader. Carol may be reached through her website: [www.CarolSletten.com](http://www.CarolSletten.com).

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Photo by Heather Flanders

# Carol Sletten

## ‘a peek into the essence of things’

The poet writes: “Poetry is an important part of my life. I read at least one poem every day — not only for pleasure, but also because I think it helps me improve my skills as a storyteller, wordsmith and mood-shifter. Picasso said, ‘Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth.’ He was probably referring to the visual arts, but his words could also have been written about poetry. To me, the most powerful poems are the ones that give us a peek into the essence of things, or come close to saying things that can’t be said. They are the ones that stick with me and whirl around in my mind while I’m walking in the woods, or doing dishes or nodding off to sleep. They inspire me to work harder on becoming a better writer. Though I spend most of my time writing plays and books about other people, I sometimes stop that work long enough to write a short poem about my own life and experiences. The most recent ones have been about my relationship with the natural world.”

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# Carol Sletten

## The Pull

Have you felt the pull of each  
    season's transient beauty gripping  
your life and spinning you  
    faster and faster toward infinity?  
A death chant is the echo of my heart song—  
    felt—but not heard as it  
follows me through the seasons  
    like an invisible shadow  
looming and immense against the bright  
    abundance of life.

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# Carol Sletten

## Midnight in the Canyon

The stars are too remote.

Mortal minds can't reach that far.

I'm surrounded by cliffs and rock formations  
ancient enough to put me in my place if  
my mind could delve that deep.

It can't...and yet, I'm no longer  
the star of my own daydreams.

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# Elisabeth F. Venetiou

## Unbidden

Poems used to come to me  
an image  
a line  
a word  
like a flash,  
lightning I had to catch.

Riding in the backseat of my mom's red VW beetle,  
searching for a pen, piece of paper, napkin, back of a book.  
Quick Quick Quick Quick Quick  
before it fades and I am left behind,  
another passenger hurtling down the turnpike.

Now I come to poetry,  
a hopeful lover,  
willing to court,  
striking in a world I no longer understand.

Lightning passing through me  
threw me,  
and only I can describe  
the colors behind my eyes  
that come  
with the jolt.

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# Elisabeth F. Venetiou

Elisabeth F. Venetiou avidly pursues the writing life, producing short stories, essays, poems, plays and a novella. She graduated with distinction from Northern Arizona University with her Master's Degree in English and Creative Writing. A contributor to the Arizona Daily Sun and Northern Arizona's Mountain Living Magazine as well as a former English Instructor at NAU, she recently moved from Flagstaff to New England where she is at work on her second novel.

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Photo by Greg Glau

# Elisabeth F. Venetiou

## ‘untangle the evolution of my writing process’

The poet writes: “While my two children were under the age of six, I earned my graduate degree in Creative Writing at NAU. One of my favorite courses was a poetry workshop with Dr. Nicole Walker. It had been years since I had written poetry regularly and wasn’t sure where to start. One afternoon in my research carrel, a room no bigger than a closet in Cline Library, I attempted to untangle the evolution of my writing process. ‘Unbidden’ is the result of that quiet moment.”

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# Eva Willis

## A Computer Legacy

In college, I was told by a visionary professor that computers would be the wave of the future and I should learn them. I enrolled in Fortran and found that keypunch cards were not my friend.

In the next decade, I walked into a store and was told there would be a computer in every home. “Yeah, right!” I said, laughed and walked out, without getting in on the ground floor as the salesman said I should.

Shortly thereafter I was introduced to Frogger on a two-person game console. I purchased an Atari so I could play Frogger at home, which was cumbersome and became boring when PAC-MAN and Dungeons and Dragons came out.

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Continued on page 140

I was working for a semiconductor firm  
and, after awhile, did my work with giant  
multi-paged computer reports.

Then I was provided individual training  
to learn to use a desk-top computer.  
Soon those large reports were history.

By the 1990's, home computers  
were obsolete shortly after you bought them.  
We learned DOS, but DOS is history.  
There were word programs and spreadsheet  
programs for quite awhile and then  
the list and type of programs expanded.

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Now I tweet my thoughts since  
brevity is the soul of wit.  
I send e-mails to replace much snail mail.  
I can stream movies, create playlists,  
and play all manner of games.  
I can Skype, IM, use a webcam.  
I don't, but I can. It's a strange  
new world with an app-app  
here, and an app-app there,  
here an app, there an app,  
everywhere an app, app!

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# Eva Willis

Eva Marie Willis (B.A. from ASU) is retired and lives in Ahwatukee (Phoenix), Arizona. Since retiring, she finds personal expression in her numerous poems, in dancing, and in her oil paintings. She is the author of “With All My Heart,” a collection of short stories and poems about relationships. It is available online from Lulu.com, Amazon, and Barnes and Noble. She is interested in politics, spirituality, dancing and living life to the fullest. You can follow her on Twitter under EvaTwits or contact her via e-mail at [ejwillis42@cox.net](mailto:ejwillis42@cox.net).

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# Eva Willis

## ‘the spiritual and my joy’

The poet writes: “I am a sixty-something woman who is mildly computer literate, but who did not grow up with computers. I learned to use computers in the workplace and find some humor in how people would rather connect through computers, texting, pads, etc. than in person. I also find it interesting that people can be phone contract and app poor. I’ve been retired for some years and this point in my life allows time to be more creative. Until recently I was my father’s caregiver. Thus, many of my poems are touched by the spiritual and my joy in just ‘being.’”

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# Eva Willis

## N O W

Man's mind rarely occupies  
the space where he is.

It is either behind or ahead,  
hurtling him on to next.  
Now might be difficult or glorious  
but he is often not present there.

Is he thinking about what to say  
or saying?

Is he thinking about what to wear  
or wearing?

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Is he planning what to do  
or doing and being?

Let us savor empty time.  
We needn't pile activity onto activity  
to fill the void.

With discretionary time,  
let us embrace the quiet and  
relish the freedom of empty ness.

Continued on page 144

Are we so afraid of learning our true selves?  
How could we be bored  
when life is so rich and full?  
Prepare if there is something  
to prepare for, acting on the step needed now,  
but don't live in suspended emotional animation.

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# Eva Willis

## Suspension

I stand exposed  
on the precipice of life  
daily with nary a thought  
to creating the future I want.

Existence is crammed  
with scheduled and discretionary  
activities that move me through  
my days as if suspended.

My employer or liege,  
my loved ones and  
my adversaries all  
have demands on my days.

I am not angered.  
I accept it in stride,  
but comes the day when  
my time will be my own.

Or will that just be  
the result of loneliness?

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# Eva Willis

5:30 A.M.

It's 5:30 A.M. and  
I'm not ready to let go of the night  
Soon enough it will be daylight  
and I will have to start my chores

Time to turn the coffee pot on  
and enjoy the aroma and taste  
Could it drip, drip in haste  
Got to get to those tile floors

146 Need to brush my teeth  
and don my work clothes  
Yogurt and granola I chose  
to scare away the snores

Life is a series of acts  
starring this single character  
who is both amateur and poseur  
opening and closing the doors

I look forward to the future  
but hopefully live in the moment  
which is artfully heaven sent  
and I want many encores

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# Editor's Note

This issue offers an eclectic mix of poetry, reflecting among the featured poets and their work a wide range of life experiences, subject matter, themes and, equally importantly, each poet's unique style. That's how it should be. To confine poetry, to attempt to constrict it or narrowly define it, would be its antithesis. Poetry is the right of all to follow the impulses of the heart, soul and mind.

**Rebecca "Becca" Dyer**  
**Editor**

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## Editorial Staff

**Editor:** *Rebecca Dyer*

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

**Publisher:** *Elena Thornton*

**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).



**Richard H. Dyer Jr., 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 Thursday of each month, from 5 p.m. to 7 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).

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## Coming Oct. 26: Save the date!

# The Arizona Consortium for the Arts' Annual Fall Festival of the Arts

Noon to 4 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 26

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 Writers for the Fall 2014 Blue Guitar

150 The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine seeks literary submissions for the Fall 2014 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 3. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work and must live part- or full-time in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For more information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

*The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr. are nonprofit projects of the nonprofit start-up The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information, visit our websites: [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) and [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org).*

# A Call to Poets For Summer 2015

Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, will seek poetry submissions for its Summer 2015 Issue from June 1 through July 3, 2015. 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).

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

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*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 of  
for and about  
poetry



Unstrung will  
return in  
Summer 2015