

# UNSTRUNG

A magazine of,  
for and about  
poetry



Summer 2019

MB

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McMillan  
Rives

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

# Abraham Aruguete

## Arizona

My *Petit California*, let me list the ways

That I love you forevermore

West of New Mexico, North of Mexico, East of California

South of Colorado, far from relevancy

and 48th in education. I suppose

You're not all bad.

You have an enormous hole in the ground

Blue skies, rugged terrain which

Elevates you slightly above the title

"Flyover Country."

Christian Communities ever bristling yet never conflicting

With the inner city atheist-students with

Plans for the future and for the unhelped immigrants

*Quien son Catolicos tambien,*

DSA chapters ever growing.

Dusty native faces find themselves reflected

In dusty white faces, rural communities among the backdrop

of the big, hellish city.

Californians who weren't good enough for California

and migrants too good for their former homes;

A melting pot filled with people who wished

It wasn't too much of a melting pot.

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Continued on page 4

Somehow, you sustain  
Millions of people in crowded cities  
Where the rubber melts on the concrete  
With another part of you getting  
Feet of snow every winter

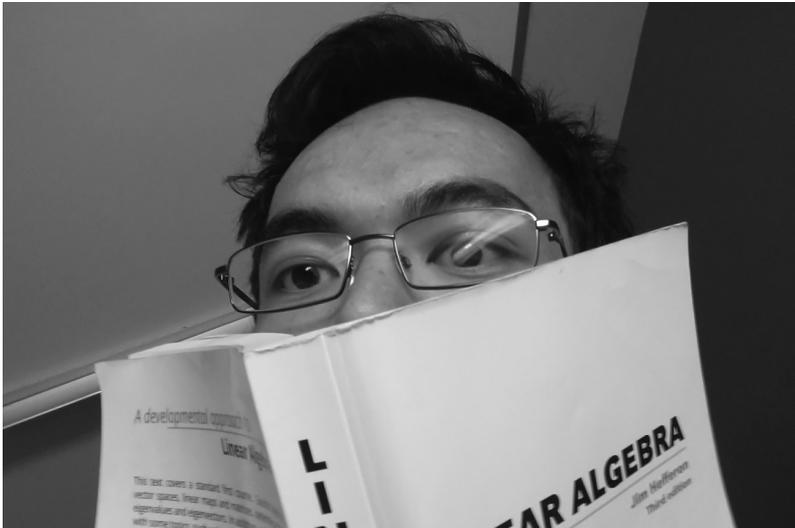
But I digress. We are spicy, like our cuisine  
And like our capital, an affront to nature  
A blending of dubious historical decisions  
and a purchase lost to time.

The Southwest of the Southwest;  
The monument of valleys;  
The grandest of canyons;  
The lizardest of rivers;  
The place I call home.

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# Abraham Aruguete



Abraham Aruguete (Ah-roo-get-tee) was born in Fort Defiance, New Mexico on January 16th, 2000. He is a math undergraduate at UofA and enjoys writing when not drowning in insufferable amounts of work. He is currently married to his studies.

# Abraham Aruguete

## Cross Country

Run, white boy, away from the reservation,  
You were never wanted here.  
Your people murdered and disgraced us  
And left us cowering in fear.

We were the original people  
Land handed to us from our forefathers  
You killed our fathers and burned our homes  
And left us here to die.

6 All we have now are our dusty hogans and  
Welfare checks given at the top of the month  
We will give them to our children  
Some of them will be cross country stars

And we will pray and hope and give them frybread  
When they will become aware of their dusty prison  
with the scars of burnt peach orchards  
and we will cheer as they too learn to run far  
Away from the dusty prison reserved for us  
The dusty place with pride we call home.

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# Lysa Cohen

## The Garden Beckons

the garden beckons. a riot of  
color bursting forth. perfume to  
sweeten and scent the air, as petals  
opening to strain upward in a delicate reach

the garden beckons. the hum of  
bees droning as they move from  
bloom to bloom. golden flecks of pollen  
coating their legs. an offering for their Queen

the garden beckons. from the  
canopy of a willow tree, a  
bluebird sings—her voice  
muted by a cage of branch and leaf

the garden beckons. the soft  
soil against my soles as my  
feet sink into the earth and green tendrils  
sprout from underneath to twine about my feet

the garden beckons. a siren's  
song sung so sweet as  
vines skim my legs like shackles they climb,  
binding me to the earth—pulling me deep

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Continued on page 8

the garden beckons. in willing  
restraint, I submit to the earth as  
my eyes slide closed and lashes  
lay like webs against my cheek

the garden beckons. a fading  
sound lost in the gloaming. to  
replace the dream as the first snake  
wraps around the willow tree  
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# Lysa Cohen



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Lysa Cohen holds an M.Ed. in Higher Education Leadership from Northern Arizona University and an M.A. in English and Creative Writing from Southern New Hampshire University. She has traveled extensively, but currently makes her home in Phoenix, Arizona. Her short stories and poems can be found in Page & Spine, The Penman Review, Unstrung and The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine.

# Lysa Cohen

## In the Morning

I find hope in the morning light as it  
breaks across the water scattered diamonds  
an emanation of the day to come

I find peace in the stillness  
closed eyes focused inward, in a liturgy  
of breath and memory of silent meditation

I find love in the quiet rustle of birds  
leaving their nests  
in a daily ritual performed in harmony

There are things to be done  
expectations and obligations waiting behind the glass  
waiting for me. Waiting to pick apart piece by piece  
but in this moment, I am whole

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# Lysa Cohen

## Child of Light

I am a daughter of Eve  
    Child of light  
I wade through the glass  
    Of broken mirrors  
I hear the song now lost  
    So sadly sung  
I walk the path  
    Of the women who have come before  
I taste their words  
    So sweet on my tongue  
I leave the darkness  
    To live in the light

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# Lysa Cohen

## Polaris

A chalice of death resting on an altar  
Bits of ceramic and glass  
Polaris' prison painted so prettily

Grief surrounds and ripples forth  
Like rings in a lake  
Reaching ever outward

Like heat from an oven  
That used to bake her cookies  
Rich, and sweet, and hot

Memories slide and skip  
From one to the next  
Then mesh together like a kaleidoscope

Words blur on the page  
A century of life  
Reduced to a few lines of black and white

Death as love's enemy  
Goddess of mourning  
Fixed center in the tempest

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# Gari Crowley

## A Father's Aspirations

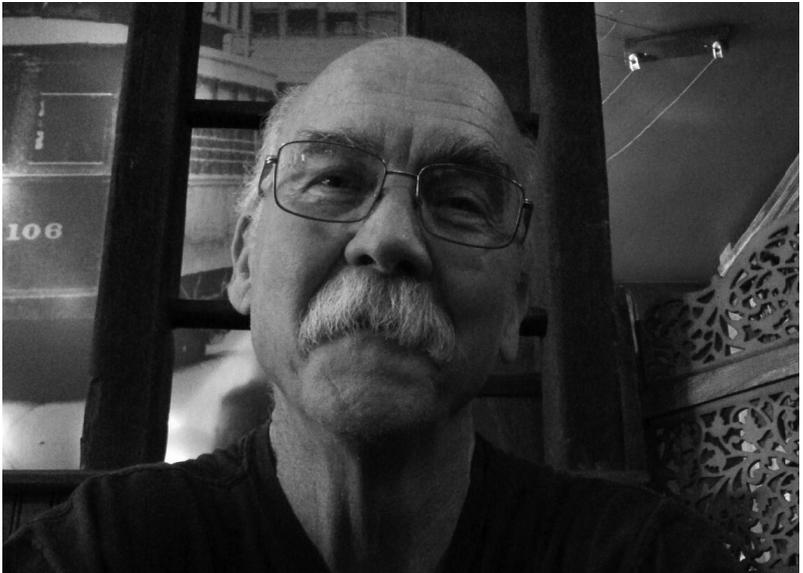
Clenching  
his animosities and failures as he would  
a knife,  
he disfigures the embodiment of aesthetic significance.  
Himself,  
an uninspiring portrait of acrimony.

As he sits in the dark, a slow seething smoke is dissipating.  
With his  
face hanging as a crucifixion, he calculates the defacing of the  
next day's  
art with a red heat at the tip of his long virulent drag.

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# Gari Crowley



Gari lives in Sierra Vista with his wife, Linda, and their two cats, Tony and Baxter. He can be reached at [gvinnc51@gmail.com](mailto:gvinnc51@gmail.com).

# Gari Crowley

## Barrel Burning

Burning in the dark.

A sedentary solitary glow,  
self-contained

of a quivering hazy light from flames  
hoisting and dancing above the rim of a  
rusty drum.

A swirling dissipating consumption  
of things past.

A seething abscess of random loss,  
burning remnants of a tiny fraction  
of atoms within the earth's flesh.

A eulogy of vulnerable dreams,  
hissing and spitting—  
the morbid  
incineration of things having gone well.

© 2019

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# Gari Crowley

## Eight Minutes Forty One Seconds

A sightless end is  
pushing the edge toward  
oblivion

as these inviolate tones,  
like soft words,  
passively lie.

Words and angst are lecturing  
through my  
thin blood seizing  
the neck of my comfort.

This sin is unbearably able and  
animate;  
contemplating alcohol poisoning  
or a gun,

while rummaging through gray matter  
for resources to exist.

Listening to Mozart  
K467, andante,  
wanting for a modicum of peace.

© 2019

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# Gari Crowley

## By the Grace of Mrs. Woods

a crime of moral turpitude.  
a third year pilgrimage of  
pre-pubescent biological immaturity.

a number two pencil,  
on coarse notebook paper,  
a genetically altered  
unflattering palette  
down to her waist.  
a big double-u  
upon her chest.

17

snickering into my sleeve  
thinking I was unseen.  
chortling with Russell  
across the aisle.

no warning,  
(an angelic host hovering  
above the room?)  
she slid the dirty thing away,  
turned it toward her presence  
without a smile from ear to ear.  
in heavy lead was printed:

**Mrs. Woods**

Continued on page 18

there was nothing said or done.  
only the ostracism coming  
with the breathless fear  
of a bad dream happening.  
in my eyes,  
my mental disfiguration,  
the anguish in my countenance.

I must have known something  
of such reproaches.  
perhaps an aberration  
born of a burgeoning adult volition  
caught up in the innocence of a boy  
who through graceful intervention, nonetheless, repented.

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# Gari Crowley

## Remember Me By This Place

*A coming of age poem*

Born in Kingman in '51 on Route 66, the mother road,  
the real life, Chicago to Santa Monica and back.  
Fitting into ourselves, a natural progression,  
pre-natal to the cradle to a crawl  
to the identity of walking on lubberly legs.  
Balanced with maternal touches, guided by inflection  
then crossing the bridge to language  
and all that is invested in coming to become.  
From spastic maneuvers and frustrations of earthen obstacles,  
Breaking barriers on a red and white trike,  
to the doddering anfractuious advance upon the apex of a  
bicycle's seat, a verge of always pedaling toward self-sufficiency.

19

Continued on page 20

A '56 Oldsmobile three toned  
red, white and chrome cloud built coupe.  
A mirror for street lights and neon, floating down the boulevard,  
a nimbus over the myth of Route 66,  
the improvisation of life notwithstanding.  
An immortal felicity of youth in '68 at seventeen.  
The surge of the rumbling curs of dual exhaust  
Pulling me forcefully from the angst of my age.  
The sweet flesh of freedom, the big eight syndrome  
engulfing a skinny kid with a dreamy attribution of a  
chick magnet, blacktop euphoriant  
leveling the playing field. My mirrored image notwithstanding.

20

Planned obsolescence transitioned me into adulthood  
while life has born me towards the geriatric  
as the old is shunted for the new.  
And who unleashed the barking dogs, the treacherous who lose no sleep.  
The nimbus over the myth of the journey, old has always been the end result.  
From the brevity of adolescence, an itinerary naive, and  
into the making of many bricks of which there was no end.  
Impediments to purpose, the punitive success  
and there is more to life than survival, making a run at sense and character.  
Born in Kingman in '51, off Interstate 40, in real life.  
It seems so long a journey, so short in time,  
though never having made it to Chicago.  
Never having made it to Santa Monica.

We have become disciples of old age, learning its character,  
following its authority;

The improvisation of self-awareness, the first of thoughts  
from which the last were made.

The moonlight gray of your hair and the dusty feet of my recollections,  
a sum of the processes of memory and the journey.

Fitting into ourselves, rudiments of our own singularities  
shaped by the children we once were, relishing eternity in our hearts.

Despite the positive affirmation of senescence  
there is nothing in words to redress the coming of age,  
a natural progression, a biological improvisation of having lived.

The last of life for which the first was created.

Mingling in retrospection, a hand grasping about self-sufficiency,  
while pondering entropy and the inhabited earth to come.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Failing Wings

*near Nevada, Iowa*

Puddle from the storm just past.  
Fecund mud quivering into clover,  
young tender thistles learning to grasp.

Dim clinging memory avoids the inevitable spreading heat,  
drought from fearsome altered skies, drought  
from a gilded cradle of leadership in dotage

\*\*\*

22 and also losers, like  
a redwing blackbird we see  
perched for the brief moment of his flute solo.

The bird sits on a barbed wire fence,  
enforced separation – a wall of strands –  
at the dry edge of a green sward,

bucolic interlude between West Indian Creek  
and the soybean farm plowed under this summer,  
for sale to some underbidding conglomerate next year.

Continued on page 23

Blackbird pays its hungry attention,  
such attention as he allows  
to human pretension –

to a plowed crop of new debt  
instantly forgotten by the great one who nevertheless loves his farmers  
momently from and between his Federal mental lapses,

practiced, unpracticed, practiced, dispracticed –  
the tutored praxis of a senile megalomaniac and

\*\*\*

clown.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom



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Richard Fenton Sederstrom is the writer of six books, including “Eumaeus Tends” and “Selenity Book Four.” His new book, “Sorgmantel,” follows a view of Lucretius, but employs time, the predicate of physics, into a search for what can be imagined out of the possible and impossible. It can be read, perhaps, as an elegy for futures whose existence humankind is threatening, including humankind’s. The poet was raised and lives in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and the North Woods of Minnesota.

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Some Truth of It All

*for Archie Ammons: his ancient memory:  
the humors*

1  
Can it be true that, in the blur of ancient  
experience, the original flick of life,  
the very initial light of the almost-bacterium:

is it true that the eve-adamic microbe  
has been, so far, immortal?  
or is it only true that I, idle container of multitudes,

25

shouldn't have chanced to insult microbial autonomy?  
for if what followed is not true  
it is demonstrable, an exploratory *passe-temps*

2  
because offence would seem to have been taken,  
for a couple of days after I said it  
I began to burp, and I burped sulfur –

rotten eggs – microbial brimstone effluence  
and then a few days of subtle nausea,  
an existential evocation of contagion

Continued on page 26

just enough to keep me down and focused  
enough that I might distract discomfort  
contemplating the truth of truth

3

and I sank into the anaerobic fen of my being.  
I tormented my feeble chemistry of soul with  
the Morality of Truth. And

I have suffered  
the guilt of failing to protect my center of being  
from the enveloping threat of the mere angst

I have suffered, enjoyed the failure  
of delving into the mysteries of the abstract distant  
before I dared touch the mysteries in front of –

in me

4

conscious of being in the way at a time  
when I also have no particular reason not  
to stick around, being one specimen in –

in what?

7,000,000,000 plus plus plus  
dust-driven futile migrations of bodies.

26

My participation in the ravages  
of the obesist invasive species available to starvation  
these drifting epochs past

matters only to the extent that I can contribute  
to its – the species, that is, the gluttoned remainder  
of the genus – its further inflation –

5  
explosion:  
eruptive eruption:  
an heroic burp of hopeward extinction:

Paradise Foreclosed

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Living the Subjunctive

How many sallow poems  
will I have twitched out  
in clinic waiting rooms,  
in examination rooms  
where, pre-examination,

I examine fatal possibilities,  
in which written words wear  
probabilities of peace  
wreaked out of anxiety, or  
what used to be anxiety

28 before my visits to this  
new world of words  
were still as rare in my life  
as metaphors for shadows  
of whatever may be to come

or to pass beyond notice,  
where the peace that grows  
in the fluorescent tubes above  
is born again on the un-examined  
white page and glows softly,

pale candles at the end  
of the incandescent anxiety  
they fail to illuminate. Coherent  
illumination is a graphitic  
fluorescence at my pencil-tip.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Note on a Condition of Generation

A moth making love  
to the dire sublime

of lightning strike  
or candle flame

or impotent light bulb  
traversing the eons

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Relicts of the Ages of Reason

*Notes Toward the Litany*

### 1 - The Early Enlightenment

White pine and oak—  
mast and keel of Earth  
    harvested *en masse*  
    to rot in sunken ships.

30 Treasures and tastes of Asia—  
adornments of cultures  
    harvested *en masse*  
    to rot in sunken ships.

Whole populations of Africa,  
broken soul of a continent—  
    harvested *en masse*  
    to rot in sunken ships.

The peoples of the Americas  
harvested *en masse*—  
    Glory, God and Gold  
    sunk in rotten ships.

Continued on page 31

## 2 - The Late Enlightenment

Polyester yachts, all the poisonous  
detritus of chemical discoveries  
harvested *en masse*  
by the innocent oceans—

the unsinkable rot  
of a sinking species.

© 2019

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## The DTs\*

*[pretending to be 1965 again, the blackout; pretending to be stuck in the elevator at Charles Scribner's Sons publishing house: dreaming]*

Isolate I,  
becalmed in an elevator,  
dangling in peace and trepidation

above a gentle netherworld,  
the nether-basement below me,  
immune to up and down but yo-

yo-ing now dreamwise sideways,  
timeward, fated against  
an evening of literate companionship,

of wit, and one, two or,  
well,  
maybe just one more—

No. Scotch, rocks,  
a little water,  
not so much . . .

\*\*\*

Continued on page 33

Desires juggled in an elevator between the sanctity of and the professional  
word-board where I had planned carefully not to get off.  
My righteous thirst for the then unsullied Plaza Hotel—

blessed years before the thumping and harrumphing and garrumphing,  
years hungry now for-all-and-nothing, fuming, fumbling, fee-fie-foe-fumming,  
trumpety-trum-trum-Trumpeting.

Trumpetless of fanfare in the days of peace and the light blanket of darkness  
birthed and blessed by no more than  
a gentle ephemeral blackout that threatened then no more than a silly moment  
of fortunate eternity—  
in the days before the newest exile of the Black, of Brown, of Women, of Poor,  
of Sane, of Educated, of *etc, etc, etc*,

33

all the many faceless *etceteras*,  
the *et alii*,  
the you and the me and each anonymous pronoun.

Our ninety-nine per cent dreary off-the-rack otherness—  
All, All!  
“Out!”

\*\*\*

In the time-free elevator is peace still,  
gliding nohow in gentle protection,  
locked and boxed in, free from the intoxicated empyrean.

\*\*\*

Continued on page 34

Soft air, gentle *lai* descends from a fairy tower.

\*\*\*

But all time is juggled together now, while . . .

Outside? . . . .

Oh, our delirious endtime

\*No. No, not those DTs: the elected and  
its minions. Pretty much the same, though.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Garter Snake Dies for Your

*I want to be in what is . . .*

*also in what is luminous, resonant oblivion*

*Göran Sonnevi*

What it needs is a good set of wings.  
Or maybe only feathers here and there.

Not for flight but for plumage.  
Panache.

It may become in spectacle as God.  
Not God, not deadly, but death merely

35

to small matters of appetite and  
its own death; no more than yours or mine.

\*\*\*

Bright-striped Lucifer, O my match,  
show what we do not remember—

the first birth—microbe or soul forgetting  
its dimensions and its self into life.

For any re-birth is death and unremembered  
as well, so far as we remember. Don't we?

Continued on page 36

So far as we know, no difference exists  
in existence. Life as imagined

is only memory, building between  
and toward each possible discrete exit.

Be discrete, you say, of my democratic impatience.  
Discretion spreads some light on the issue.

Some light on the implicit discretion  
of the moral tension designed in “for.”

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# Peter Martori

## St. John's Memoir

This light! It breaks things down, frays edges.  
Everything blends together, flows, becomes  
liquid. Even the boundary of my body is  
pocked with bursts of luminescence,  
through fingers, along the line of my hand  
held up to the sun.

In the woods the wind guides me and, unaware,  
I follow a bird-song moving just out of reach.  
Is this the best path for me to take? I wouldn't  
know. I don't have anything that resembles a plan,  
no less one wiser than that of the wind or of a robin.

37

I read often that we are bound by place,  
tied to the arrow of time. Yet I feel untethered,  
without a past, a future, no cathedral on a hill  
or shore to return to. Each morning I rise from  
sleep marbled with wakefulness, my thoughts  
infected by dreams. It seems natural not to  
have an idea of the day – only a cup of coffee,  
an unscheduled presence in the world.

Continued on page 38

I talk with others and witness the catalogue  
of existence – its complex, demanding nature  
unfolding as they speak of their lives. I am  
usually quiet. I wonder if words themselves  
create the illusions we are so often burdened  
with – I, We, Them, Can, Can't Won't,  
the litany of differences that populates  
the nations of our minds.

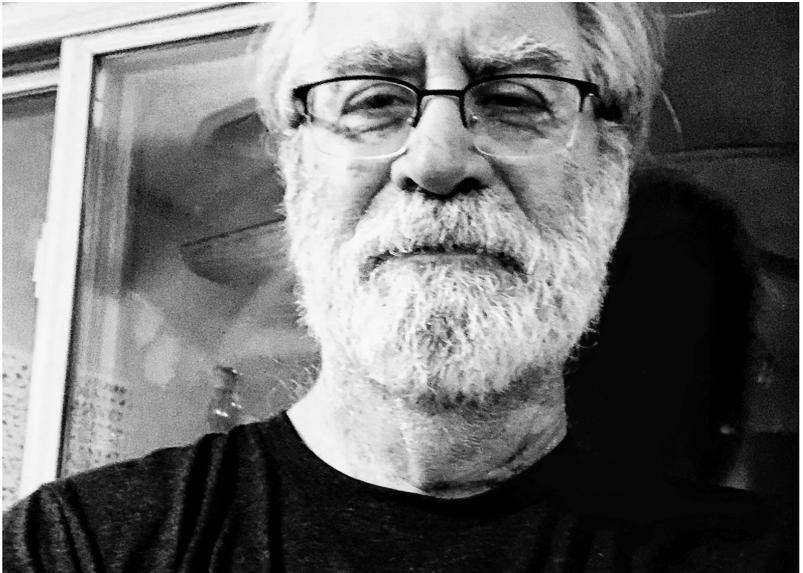
38 I suspect an infant has a rich experience of life,  
without words, but eventually and willingly  
submits to the laws of grammar for cheers and  
sweets and shiny things, as I do. Lately,  
though, my reasoning has much less to say,  
having already drawn so many conclusions –  
less is more, Nature bests any diversion, I am  
mortal, my children will be fine.

And others that have weakened my grip on  
words, torn away the idea that beauty must be  
wrapped in language, that choice must obey  
logic. It's age and aging and life's unavoidable  
events that breaks down the sinew, loosens  
the joints not only of flesh, but of thought,  
its content – perception itself.

Enough of this for now. I will have to blame being well fed and chore-less for these particular musings, as well as the bare forests, the morning snow, and the quiet streets of St. John's, Clinton County, Michigan.

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# Peter Martori



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The poet writes: “I don’t consider myself a poet, just someone who has written poetry off and on throughout my life. As I have aged I’ve drifted away from style and word play towards prose poetry and the wish to record more of the substance of myself, my thoughts, state of mind, the emotional content of my daily life. It is a wish to leave a legacy of who I am to my children. I’m honored to be able to share these efforts with a wider audience and hope you find something of yourself in them.”

# Peter Martori

## Cancer Stories #2

It's a beautiful thing to be loved.  
To have someone fly across the country  
to sit with you in the morning  
drink coffee and share a conversation.  
For your son to stop by not for the afternoon,  
for the weekend, but for the winter.  
Your other son at the door every lunch hour  
just to be with you while you are being treated  
for cancer.

And daughters calling, always calling,  
unable to hide the child-like desperation  
about their father leaving them, loving him as  
they always have, reminding him of how they clung  
to his legs, sitting on his feet, as he plodded out the door,  
down the walk into the world, eventually leaving them  
behind, pajama-ed, waving goodbye.

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# Peter Martori

## I Like Reading Novels About Old Men,

people without romance, absent adventure  
Men who use tools, live beside meadows,  
near rivers, who drink alone and talk out loud  
to themselves

I live with bugs, spiders in corners  
webs invisible, appearing in lamplight, mosquitos  
hunting up my arms, crawly things, tiny lives  
traversing my great Saharan floors

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Old men in novels review their lives  
studying poorly for final exams  
they smooth the steering wheels  
of each car they owned, recall the smell  
of their father's tobacco, their mother wiping  
her hands across an apron printed with  
strawberries

Out front, beneath the bougainvillea  
parrots invade the bird feeder, a troop of five  
peach-faced, acrobatic, crawling about  
the wired mesh, pulling seeds from a sparse  
line along the base, moving up, allowing  
another to feed

Continued on page 43

In the desert old men are written in thin lines  
cowboys or criminals, only dogs dream  
They are men of action, character, failures, dangerous  
They build railroads, rob banks, dominate, drive cattle  
They are sad drunks, tolerated, escorted home by  
their daughters

Here the heat piles up, hour by hour, wool upon wool  
I watch a cat out the window, scratching in the grass  
It owns this neighborhood, respects no boundaries  
Lays beneath cars in the summer, on warm hoods  
in winter

In the books I read old men catalogue their regrets  
tease out forgiveness from half-dreams, dozing without  
caution, wake smoldering, unstartled, pinching out  
disaster

43

They favor whiskey and wood over wine and iron, dusk over  
daylight, a day's walk to nowhere and back

I watch the cat, stoic and still on the edge of the sidewalk  
It strolls across the yard, quietly slips into the bushes  
while doves peck at fallen seed

© 2019

# Peter Martori

## Our Mayfly Days

I used to wonder about things  
as a young man and learned  
of Mayflies. I struggled to make  
sense of their brief lives, how they  
compared to the ancient Redwood  
trees and mine

If time was any measure of worth  
what is the worth of a Mayfly's life  
or mine compared to the Redwood  
trees

44

A baby dies in her crib  
an old man rolls a cigarette  
and tells stories of a time  
before time began

What a waste, an overdose  
a suicide, a car full of kids  
on their last ride, a starlet  
a man who had it all, a life  
cut short, before his time  
cut down in her prime

Continued on page 45

They say time feels like  
it goes by so quickly the older  
we become because things  
we have done are redone  
and redone

We hardly notice the rinsing  
of a cup, drinking the coffee

I look for sanctuary from  
the crimes time commits  
by switching bedrooms  
waking into a different day  
upsetting the order of things  
throwing it all away

A Mayfly's life is a party  
an orgy, a Festival of Flies  
I have lived tens of thousands  
of Mayfly lives, few a celebration  
of birth and death such as theirs

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Today, this day, you are coming by  
We will talk, laugh, argue  
make love, watch the branches  
shift in the wind, the shadows  
pattern the wall

We will have our day  
not a day of Mayflies, but  
we will have our day and  
time will be stayed  
while I memorize the openings  
and closings of your eyes

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# Janet McMillan Rives

## For Tomorrow

*"... it was only the dust in one sunbeam"*

*W.S. Merwin, "Child Light"*

So much about memory.  
So much about what was.  
So little about today.

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My words are for tomorrow  
for the faint rose glow  
climbing above peaks  
for the gold green  
of a willow leaf  
for a glance, a nod  
for the familiar  
unfolding.

We turn our heads  
to catch a glimpse of someone  
we know, reach out a hand  
for a remembered touch  
then turn back  
walk on.

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# Janet McMillan Rives



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Janet McMillan Rives resides in Oro Valley, Arizona. She grew up in Connecticut and Tucson and is a graduate of the University of Arizona. She spent thirty-five years as a professor of economics and is retired from the University of Northern Iowa. Her interests in retirement include flower gardening, golfing, reading, and writing. She is a member of the Arizona State Poetry Society and the Tucson Poetry Society. Her poems have appeared in *Lyrical Iowa*, *Sandcutters*, *The Avocet*, *Unstrung*, *The Blue Guitar*, and *Voices from the Plains*.

# Janet McMillan Rives

## Dapper

Always a fedora  
grosgrain ribbon  
on a cold day or warm  
rainy or clear.

Always an overcoat  
even to the grocery store,  
shirts from the cleaners  
folded with cardboard  
behind the buttons  
under the collar.

Some mornings he unfolds  
a white button down  
to find the shirt board missing  
taken by a daughter  
for coloring with bright sticks  
from a box of twenty-four.

Who is he trying to impress  
by dressing this way?  
Not his family  
not the students  
but maybe guests on campus  
businessmen there to recruit.

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Or perhaps he just wants  
to show himself  
how far he has journeyed  
from where he began  
a housepainter's son  
refashioned into a man  
of gentle dignity.

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# Janet McMillan Rives

## Hibernal Dawn

We gather to mark this longest night,  
lie awake to welcome an earlier sun  
pinking clouds in the eastern sky.  
We begin our season of sacred narratives  
by opening boxes of old stories.

With Zunis we celebrate the sun's reawakening.  
With Hopis we become sungazers.  
With Persians we witness the sun  
triumph over darkness.

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# Janet McMillan Rives

## Technique

*“She taught me Turn, and Counter-turn, and Stand;  
She taught me Touch ...”*

*Theodore Roethke, “I Knew a Woman”*

At eleven I agreed to take over the family ironing  
not even knowing how to begin.

After my mother’s accident, her mother came by train  
to help us out. I knew Grandma Little couldn’t see  
but never once doubted she would teach me to iron.

She started by smoothing the yoke,  
feeling the seams, pressing lightly.

Next the collar, back side first.

Then she took the left sleeve, ironed the cuff,  
laid the sleeve down with the placket side up, pressed,  
flipped the sleeve over, pressed again,  
repeated for the right sleeve.

On the front, button side came first.

She placed her thumb and index finger  
on the top two buttons, sliding the iron over the placket.

She repeated, touching pairs of buttons top to bottom.

On the button-hole side, hold the fabric gently,

I can hear her say.

Guide the iron, avoid your fingers.

Finish with the back, everything below the yoke.

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Continued from page 51

I could stand here and admire the wrinkle-free shirt  
that hangs before my eyes. Instead I close them,  
run my hand from collar to tail,  
feel the touch of smooth cotton.

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# Editor's Note

What came first: Did we create poetry as a vessel for our inventions or over millennia did we co-opt poetry as a willing and able vessel for our inventions? However it happened, poetry is the singularly perfect vehicle for invention and inventive language. You will find in this issue a variety of poetic styles and a variety of different backgrounds among the poets. Running as a motif throughout the issue is the poet's willingness to take risks and experiment to get as close as possible to the experience that the poet is trying to share. What a pity if in this world all poetry sounded the same. Experimentation is the oxygen that fuels the flame in our quest to convey as truthfully and honestly as we can the human experience.

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

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## Editorial Staff

**Editor:** *Rebecca Dyer*

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

**Publisher:** *Elena Thornton*

**Artwork for front and back covers:** *Marjory Boyer*

# Open Mic: A celebration of the arts

Join us at our quarterly 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:** The last Thursday of March, June, September and December, 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).

## Coming in autumn!

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

Join us for an amazing showcase of the arts, with music, dance, cultural presentations, art activities for children and literary readings!

Admission is free!

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

# A Call to Poets

## For Summer 2020

Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, will seek poetry submissions for its Summer 2020 Issue from June 1 through July 4, 2020. 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).

*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)*

# A Call to Writers for the Fall 2019 Blue Guitar

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The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine seeks literary submissions for the Fall 2019 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 4. 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, The Blue Guitar Jr. and Unstrung 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).*

# 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 residing in Mesa with her husband, Richard, her co-editor for Unstrung, The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr. Reach her at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org).**



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**Richard H. Dyer Jr., editor: Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is the news editor of two monthly newspapers with websites in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor.**

**Marjory Boyer, cover design artist for Unstrung, The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr.: 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).**



# UNSTRINGING

A magazine of  
for and about  
poetry



Unstringing will  
return in  
Summer 2020