

# The Blue Guitar



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## Co-Editors’ Note

Nothing like the arts to chase the winter blues away.

As much as we needed the rain and snow — and the water they delivered — January, February and part of March got a bit gloomy, not to mention dangerous in terms of flooding.

But just in time to usher in the spring and sunshine, arts festivals started blooming all over the state, from the Fourth Avenue Street Fair in Tucson to the Tempe Festival of the Arts to the Oak Creek Arts and Crafts Show to First Friday in Phoenix, to name just a few. Free festivals will continue around the state through summer and beyond. Then, to usher out summer and celebrate fall, our own The Arizona Consortium for the Arts will hold its annual Blue Guitar Festival of the Arts.

Because of all the rain and snow this past winter, nature put on its own spectacular arts show with the “superbloom,” which we have enjoyed in every corner of the state, from the low deserts to the high mountains. We are so fortunate that Arizona’s landscapes are so striking and so diverse. Similarly, Arizona’s geographical diversity and complexities reflect the poets, writers and artists in this Spring Issue. These contributors hail from the north, south, east, west and central parts of our state. Just as we are so lucky to enjoy different scenery and perspectives in the Arizona landscape, so too do our contributors allow us to escape the routine and enjoy a much-needed “change of scenery.”

Enjoy the issue!

Rebecca “Becca” Dyer  
and Richard H. Dyer Jr.,  
Co-Editors



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[www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org](http://www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org)

Spring 2023

# 5 Poems by Joseph Delgado

## harvest

it could be that old smell,  
soap, torn cotton, the bruise  
above the lip, above the sky  
beaten back, this taste.

I strummed his guitar over and over  
hoping that the chords would break open  
like thunderstorms.

it was here that it happened, here,  
this field of wild wheat and spinach,  
this field that I sow, bare handed  
in the new moon.

it could be that old smell,  
that old chevy vinyl seat,  
the back seat stinking of  
morning...

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Joseph Delgado is the author of two collections of poetry, "Ditch Water" (2013) and "Broken Mesas" (2021), from Korima Press. Originally from Albuquerque, NM, he now lives and works in Mohave Valley, AZ.



# memories

I watched the wild antelope pounce  
hoof, dust, dirt clods of drum struck,  
like thunder, out past the outhouse, sears catalog  
lodged, rain welted, swollen, crumpled in the stink.

I watched the wind, rise, like moths full mouthed,  
up like dirt between the teeth, this mouth heavy  
with the sunset.

I could have eaten, this full sky, thighs of cloud bank,  
this arroyo licked dry, wind, sun and crow bones, this is  
how it is, it is said...it is whispered (here)

abuelo collected the rusted hoops of barrels  
they are scattered, dust ridden in the old melon patch  
the one he abandoned after the last moon,  
when tia rosenda descended unto early morning mist.

I pick the wild mint, anise, osha. gather in my pockets  
these curas, estan milagros, huesos, polvo, azucar  
de la luna. I gather now, as the antelope watch me  
like night beetles clicking their tongues towards  
camp fire.

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# matanza

next to the shed,  
paint peeled, I stuffed  
my hand, mano, down shorts,  
stiffness, wet with sweat, filled

my palm, a braided haze, hip heavy light,  
orange, yellowed like liver spotted gums,  
like dog jowl, spit.

this slip of tongue, down, armpit,  
hairs traced over belly.

and I smelled you, like a thin  
fabric, smelled you as I  
peeled midnight from  
the corners of my eyes.

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# fuel pump

you took first to wall, this bruised abscess,  
this wound, split white, sugar-white I thought,  
sheetrock pockmarked with your  
palms, your shivering, the jaw  
you swagger tongue from.

the damn chevy broke again, clutch, fuel pump,  
some shit you mutter, as you peel the  
damp shirt from your skin, a film, a sheen  
through your haired chest, bronzed, burnt

from the spark of old engines, old tires,  
a muffler set to rust.

you shook the house, back room brawl  
with the dirt, grease, slick you scrape  
from your arms, shower steaming, the  
heat rising, as you rinse,  
scratch the black muck from your hands,

your hands that crack, that break, that tear,  
this home apart, this linoleum, that sees,  
watching you gallop, froth, kicking at  
shadows, a wind that builds, that

sparks, light, and I flinch again, soda  
can smashing against tile.

© 2023

# bar fight

he held the tomato wet rag  
close to the cleft of his lip  
busted nose  
a line of blood  
falling over the knuckles

dried. a drop slips  
down, head heavy, he wants to wretch.

leans his thin body down, slumped  
against the back shed,  
the hiss of hot wind  
in the crab grass—stink of oleander  
fills his mouth, taste, tongue.

the copper smell of blood, slit, sluiced  
from the body, at the back of the throat.

he pressed the cloth to his nose, beat  
back the horse flies with one swipe of his  
arm

that new shirt, sweated through, he tells me  
it was *arthur, that puto, arthur*

*(gonna get that sonofabitch, gonna get him good)*

i hand him cup of water, warm  
tin can, hand shaking, he wipes the foam from his lips  
fume of beer and yeast

i leave him be, to scrape the  
hot from his skin.

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# 5 Poems by David Chorlton

## Boulder at South Mountain

There is a calm inside the boulder fallen  
from another age  
into this desert moment.

The arroyo  
running past the rocks it stands on  
speaks always in its sleep  
quoting, as only a path still searching for its way  
would do, the poet Mandelstam:

*I too one day will create  
Beauty from cruel weight*

as though it knows  
what force delivered and set  
it down to be a signal to the desert slopes  
that they possess

a center and it fills  
with warmth each day before  
the darkness it is made of  
takes back the form at night. Something perhaps  
another planet didn't want, or a new  
mountain's embryo that  
never came to term. Yet it floats  
on mystery;

a landmark for coyotes  
and an itch the Rock wrens come to scratch.  
Mathematics could never  
have calculated its position.  
The stars flow dizzy overhead.

© 2023

David Chorlton is a transplanted European who has lived in Phoenix since 1978. His poems have appeared in many publications online and in print, and often reflect his affection for the natural world, as well as occasional bewilderment at aspects of human behavior. His newest collections of poems are "Unmapped Worlds" from FutureCycle, and "Poetry Mountain" from Cholla Needles Arts and Literary Library in Joshua Tree, CA.



# January Street

It's afternoon when the neighbors  
start asking who the ambulance  
was here for. It turns around  
in the cul-de-sac

and follows a fire truck  
away down the street  
past the scattering flock and  
the hawk with a thimbleful of daylight  
reflecting from his wings while

the existential  
questions stay perched along the fence:  
Is it safe to bring up politics?  
Does the light before dusk shine  
directly from the Bible?  
Does anybody know for whom  
the red light was spinning?  
The time draws close  
to Happy hour:

two beers  
for the price of one and  
pigeons under threat escaping  
the yard whose owner  
is walking Bella,  
leash in hand and looking forward  
to a break from routine.

The sun lays a cheek  
against the mountain.  
Apocalypse or resurrection?  
Who is walking deep in thought  
unable to stop the dark side

flying high  
with a claw caught  
in the sky.

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# Good Morning Arizona

Pigeons flocking to the pale  
and dark sides of the sky; red-tail waiting  
on the leafless bough that has  
outgrown its tree; chilly sun  
and bad news rising.

A headline flashes  
over the horizon: roadblocks and winter  
storms, no shadows on the desert floor, just a tiny  
drop of last week's thunder  
trapped in a hummingbird's wings.

The forecast is  
for intermittent doubt  
with rainfall to rouse the soul.  
The street's an eye half open  
and the mountain yawns.

Another day  
of tabloid politics and accident attorneys  
smiling down from freeway billboards.  
Last night's coyotes  
have carried off some darkness.

The owl  
who was a switchblade  
in the wash where rodents  
run has softened and returned  
to secrecy, then comes the light climbing  
on its way to being sky.

It's time  
for morning news: traffic  
stalled on the Interstate, black angels  
in smoke above the accidents  
and meditating on the wing.

© 2023

# Sunday's Desert

One desert trail slides left after rain, one  
to the right  
and one lifts from  
the ground to turn into  
a Cactus Wren's call as it crosses  
an arroyo before  
disappearing in misty mesquite.

The coyotes

have soaked back into  
the rocks. The rocks have soaked back  
into the mountain  
and the mountain shuffles  
on its feet where it stands  
facing north, south  
and inward. Clouds nuzzle down  
along the ridgeline  
with their cold breath and soft hearts  
beating  
while last year's honeycombs  
sleep in a shaded hollow. And one  
who walks past them  
stops briefly  
to watch a winged speck of life  
fly in and out like a memory  
of something sweet  
that returns  
out of season with a sting.

© 2023

# A Dry Cold

The last chariots have passed  
to the far side of the mountain with their banners  
streaming. So ends

a quiet afternoon,

the roseate glow  
challenging dark clouds to leave  
and take their bad moods with them.

A chill rolls down  
the mountain slope, joins hands with the wind  
and runs from Warner

to Forty-eighth Street

without remembering whose door  
it intended to stop at;  
a lost traveler hoping  
someone would open

their heart. These

desert winters shift from hawks  
to hummingbirds; they are weather  
looking for a home. And for the woman  
who beds down

after closing time

beneath the cleaner's window  
the sky she pulls across herself  
is a blanket filled with stars.

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# A Poem by Renée Guillory

## Dream Toss'd

(after the Philip C. Curtis "Landscapes of Arizona" exhibition)

A carnival sidles along the inner folds of your temple  
hugger-mugger, silent, sliding over the desert crust  
slipping through the derelict forest  
of spine-bearers, nature's secret-keepers  
An absurdist carnival draws up and never leaves  
stop and drop: erect the labyrinth of doors! a festival cometh!  
take these empty chairs and listen to that lonely wind  
not even a song-blind bird to hammer the point home  
A carnival suspended here and yonder  
as you wrestle with drying paint, smudging that haunted zoo  
tents rooted, siren-calling  
gnawing at the future and just as desolate  
A sly carnival, vivid in your dream factory  
where nothing else finds purchase  
surely not a surfeit of singing and joy and starlight  
or wonder

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Renée Guillory (she/her) is a writer, musician, filmmaker, and visual artist whose poetry has been published in The Blue Guitar Magazine, Smith Magazine, TRIVIA Journal and the Museum of Northwest Art digital magazine. Early writing (essays, reviews) appeared in many Southwestern publications, including High Country News, Ahwatukee Foothills News, and Arizona Daily Sun.



# A Poem by Melissa Schleuger

## Where's Jim?

I strut past the commoners wearing black with red-backed laser cut vintage Corrals Boots and proclaim with purpose, "I'm on the List." A malodorous man slaps my wrist with a Tyvek band, bejeweled with spiral glyphs and the words "All Access." I cut in through black velveteen Curtains; Dude hugs. Air kisses. Obligatory shots of Mexican Moonshine. Styling the pretentious smile of an asp I slither my way through the beggarly. The baritone of an aromatic cloud catches my ear. With a Les Paul on his back, he welcomes be benevolent as his negro Stetson taps my cheek blushed by the scene.

A low fog forms over the gallery, absorbing the humidity of sweat and spilled beer as paying fans hail wantonly. The lights dim and a silhouette of mi amigo appears. Echoes of validation and divinity erupt. As he enters the stage I wish him a broken leg. "You're the only person who still says that!" In my seat, Stage Left, the spotlight halos my head and the band sings to me every word I know.

We après with apertifs of Modelo on Tanya Tucker's old coach. *Hot Tub Time Machine* plays on a fusty DVD secured in place with un-elastic bungee cords while in the back, a performance seasoned shirt on guitar line drip-dries onto a bottle capped floor. A glimpse of Old Bay in the cupboard. I sit with Jim. Without the force of words he knows I'm keen to his faux pas in the third song. "ON THE ROAD IN 15 MINUTES." Glasses clink with final cheer and I leave the touring. The air brakes hiss as my foot hits the ground and the door closes behind. I relive the night's events with a smile cresting my lips. I turn to wave final farewells to my friend but the bus has already gone.

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The poet writes: "As an abstract artist, I can sometimes transfer a color or shape into a story of what I am seeing. Other times, a word or phrase will catch my ear and inspire me to write it down, later surrounding it with details and experiences into what I hope to be a poem others will enjoy." Reach the poet at [MelissaSchleuger.com](http://MelissaSchleuger.com).

# MaryHope W. Lee

Phoenix Artist

**“Aerial”**  
Analog paper collage  
6” x 6.875”  
2019



Mural by Jeff Slim, Photo by Ryan Greene

MaryHope W. Lee, an artist and cultural worker, lives in Phoenix, Arizona. She is a self-taught, old school, multidisciplinary analog collagist. Creating collage is a mystical adventure. There’s something about handling paper and tools and adhesives that suspends time and transports her elsewhere. There’s a kind of alchemy, as well. An initial inspiration may change direction or content or intention on the way to completion. She welcomes this unpredictability and finds this practice invigorating and deeply satisfying. Her work has appeared in Kolaj Magazine, Harpy Hybrid Review #3, Superstition Review Issue 26, on the cover of decomp journal #4, and she has completed residencies and workshops with Kolaj Institute exploring Politics in Collage, PoetryXCollage and Collage in Practice. Her work has been exhibited at Raíz Gallery at Nurture House in Phoenix, at the Arizona State University Downtown Campus, and is currently showing at Songbird Coffee and Tea House through the end of April 2023. She is also an active member of the Cardboard House Press Phoenix Cartonera Collective. You can find her work on Instagram @mhwlee\_collage.

# MaryHope W. Lee

Phoenix Artist



**"In the Desert"**  
**Analog paper collage**  
**5.75" x 6.75"**  
**2019**

"Those familiar with my collage art know that my work addresses the consequences of institutionalized, policy-driven, legally sanctioned violence; homelessness; the criminalization of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers; the militarization of borders; and gun violence. My goal is to find ways to speak to the guilty bystander in us and to challenge our systemically induced complicity with a system that dehumanizes everyone. As a poet, I often have trouble finding ways to express these feelings. Collage is my go-to when words fail. Hummingbirds bring me great joy. They introduced themselves to me when I was pulling weeds in a neighbor's garden. Hummingbirds take great delight in saying 'Good Morning' by ascending high into the sky and then swooping down to spread blessings over our heads. Hummingbirds are my go-to when the world becomes too much. Whether writing a poem, creating a collage, designing a zine, assembling a handmade book, stitching a pañuelo or beading a canvas, it is my desire to create arresting and compelling images, both aesthetically and emotionally."

- MaryHope W. Lee

# MaryHope W. Lee

Phoenix Artist



**"In the Garden"**  
Analog paper collage  
5.75" x 6.875"  
2019

# MaryHope W. Lee

Phoenix Artist



**“Journey”**  
Analog paper collage  
5.75” x 6.75”  
2019

# MaryHope W. Lee

Phoenix Artist



**“Oviparous in Blue”**  
Analog paper collage  
5.75” x 6.75”  
2019

# 4 poems by Alfred Fournier

## Mourning Dove

She built her nest on a slim ledge  
above our garage, in a nook  
under the eaves, barely out of reach.  
Her gaze when I spotted her a wary,  
blameless plea, aimed to evoke  
a merciful response. She knew  
she'd be exposed here, not to rain  
nor wind so much as human whim.

The former owners claimed  
they had controlled the bird problem,  
rigging the roof with spikes and chicken wire.  
The larger white-winged doves a blight  
in the neighborhood, they said.

But caught in the vivid mirror  
of her eye, her dainty head  
and tender curve of neck extended  
with unyielding resolve, who was I  
to evict her family from life's steep incline?

Maybe later, when her young had fledged,  
I would tramp to the hardware store,  
install wire mesh to deter future nesters.  
But today, standing eye-to-eye,  
neck crooked in the driveway,  
I was no match for this mother's will.

© 2023



Alfred Fournier is a writer and community volunteer in Phoenix, Arizona. He coordinates poetry workshops for Connect and Heal, a Chandler-based nonprofit. His poems have appeared in *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Welter*, *Gyroscope Review*, *The Main Street Rag*, *The Indianapolis Review* and elsewhere. He is a 2022 Pushcart nominee. His chapbook, "A Summons on the Wind," is forthcoming from Kelsay Books.

# Ode to Coffee

The first time you kissed my lips  
I was fourteen and eager to begin.  
I let you have your way with me. Rushed  
into homeroom with a new sense of purpose,  
hair tingling, pen poised like a tiger pre-pounce.

The next day I swallowed you warm and brown,  
sugar-sweet and savored each ounce.  
Well-met, the way you swirled in my cup,  
addictive dance—your taste, my tongue,  
and me so young, the world's every breath  
a precipice. I loved the way you nudged me  
closer to its edge and lit a blaze behind.

I've kept you ever by my side, ceramic cup  
to warm my hands cold winter days.  
When did I start taking you for granted?  
Push the button on my automatic drip.  
Forget to savor saturation in your robust  
earthen scent. Sip and swallow mindlessly  
the habit you became, until you disappeared  
in me as I grew old, teeth stained, gums  
receding. Your kiss reduced to its effect:  
an old heart racing, only now the world's glow  
gone dim, past become a blur.

Though you still urge me toward its edge,  
I steer away from late life's cliff, try to cut  
my caffeine intake. Since when did love surrender  
to good sense? The comet of our passion  
fizzled down to one last cup. A toast  
to everything we were, anticipating  
heart's last thump, recalling  
all the urgency of youth.

© 2023

# When We Were Twirling

Shouldering you  
under Southern California sun  
between the kiddie cars and the teacups  
not letting on  
about my herniated disc  
clenching my way  
through midlife fatherhood

Anything  
to watch your face  
lit by an inner moon  
twirl amid giggles and squeals  
festooning the otherwise  
tacky and overpriced  
American theme park experience

I set you down  
in the cushioned enclosure  
of Elmo Town to check my phone  
You sprinted toward mom  
through an obstacle course  
of other five & unders  
When I looked up

your childhood was gone  
But I remember  
forgetting my pain  
waving from the pavement  
as your cup spun around and how  
you made me ride with you  
again and again and again

© 2023

# The Overview Effect

I might believe it possible,  
stepping from the lunar lander  
onto the powdery surface of the moon,  
that humans can achieve  
anything they deem important.

Peering from this lookout,  
half-lucent, half blind,  
through the cold distance traveled  
to where Earth bejewels the sky—

too high to discern  
borders, strip mines, tanks.  
Ocean home of tree and man,  
eagle, dolphin, snake.

Singular arc of life  
sailing through endless dark.  
The only gem worth gazing at  
for a hundred billion miles.

© 2023

*Poet's note: Astronauts returning from space often report a transcendent experience, a shift in perspective and values after viewing the Earth from afar. This is known as "the overview effect."*

# 2 Poems by Mary Knapp

## Arrival

Languid eyes  
Wanton sighs  
Glamorous silken avarice  
Minimize the cost of the prize  
In the backseat of the Mercedes Benz

The heart of the dark  
The emptiness the cruel remark  
Elevators whisper and  
Reverberate in stark  
Regrets for all to know

Slow throb playlist  
Towers like Petronas  
The night the same - incomplete  
The morning returns replete as it must  
In pity and heroin dust

Glass walls obscure what they intend  
But this is how the journey ends  
In the gardens down below  
In the gardens down below

© 2023



After a career as a biologist, Mary turned her attention to traveling and writing — literary nonfiction mostly with a dash of poetry — and has plans to see what tomorrow may bring. You can reach Mary at [marymknapp@gmail.com](mailto:marymknapp@gmail.com).

# Of a Certain Age

Body held with the slight gilding of grace

Eyes aimed into the sunset of a million days

And hand on the tiller

Proceeding much further from the familiar shore  
than she had planned

she has long since ceased looking 'round  
to mark her progress

But instead  
she forges ahead

And like the magnificent adventurers of old  
seeking the poles

buoyed with nothing  
but the currents of desire and the slender reeds of hope

She journeys onward, always onward

© 2023

# A Poem by Skylar Zannini

## I Am From

I am from the lands of pasta and hockey, the towns that nobody knows.

I am from the big, obnoxiously loud family at the graduation ceremony and the house that always had the best snacks.

I am from love, strength, courage, and wisdom.

I'm from Sunday family dinners and overwhelming hand motions while talking, because how else is anyone supposed to get their point across?

I'm from 2 A.M. Taco Bell runs and scary movie marathons.

I am from the teachers who taught me more than just English and choir, who taught me how important it is to be an authentic person and to do what makes me happy.

I'm from road trips to random ice cream places, blaring music with the windows down the whole way there.

I am from Friday night football in the town where nobody knows you, but they know all of your business; where you don't matter unless you have those 6 zeros at the end of your bank account.

I am from the music that shaped me, the music that taught me how to crimp my hair and to always "Treat People With Kindness."

I am from the house with endless laundry cycles due to sports and laziness, the house that would smell of Target cleaning products every other Sunday, the house that was always abundantly filled with love.

I'm from the hysterical laughter and pure bliss of being with friends, for they are the reason life is so wonderful.

I'm from the weekly trips to Trader Joe's and Petco, and everything in between.

I am from the family vacations and the friends who tagged along.

I'm from the matching tattoo with my dad and the meaning that it holds to us.

I'm from the weekend trips away with friends, always full of laughter and the food our moms made us bring.

I'm from the high school that had lunchtime fistfights almost weekly, as if it was on some sort of schedule.

I'm from traveling around the world, immersing into different cultures and trying new things at every given opportunity.

I'm from the sunshine that casts down from my family, because without them everything would be dark and gloomy.

© 2023



Skylar Zannini is a student at the University of Arizona, currently in her last semester earning a bachelor's degree in Journalism. She writes about the things that are important to her, whether that be family and friends, or the study abroad trip that changed her life. She enjoys baking, finding new music to listen to, and, of course, meeting new dogs. Skylar has big dreams of being a travel journalist, ideally with a home base somewhere in Italy.

# 2 Poems by Kerry Bennett

## Preservation

They stand among us here  
in the quiet museum at dusk.  
The ancient potters, weavers, basket makers  
brown hands aching  
with the memory of wet clay, fine Churro fleece, stalks of golden yucca.  
For thousands of years, lives plaited and coiled into earthen vessels,  
sweat and tears woven into baskets and rugs.  
Time passes as the shards of prehistory scatter like seeds, are collected, then hidden.  
But now even the climate-controlled, hermetically sealed cases  
can no longer stop the passage of time.  
Another eruption covers the museum with volcanic ash  
as lava flows through the broken windows.  
Life on the Colorado Plateau  
preserved for eternity.

© 2023



Kerry Bennett lives in Flagstaff, Arizona, where she writes poetry inspired by the people and landscape of the Colorado Plateau. Kerry is also writing a memoir about growing up in Michigan. She is a freelance science writer and is currently working on a book, “Girls Just Like You Who Grew Up to Become ... Scientists” (Flagstaff edition).

# The Wild Heart

The wild heart loves without boundaries,  
Beats too hard, bruises too easily.

The wild heart runs free,  
Willful, wayward, defiant.

The wild heart stumbles on the jagged stones,

Bleeds on the barbed wire fences,

Stays true and pure,

Scarred but never defeated.

Wild, wild heart.

© 2023

# 4 Poems by Rex Lambert

## In Dark Mountain Night

*for Dick Aleith—mountaineer, mentor, friend*

There is no room so dark as mountain night  
nor light so bright as mountain sky  
that spills its stars like salt into an iron skillet!

In dark mountain night our huge world  
crowds us like a prison.  
Trees become the bars we cannot see through.  
Stars tantalize us with their distant freedom.

In dark mountain night we are alone it seems  
for the first time in memory.  
Silence settles on us like a million stars.

In dark mountain night we cannot ease  
the panic blindness brings  
nor keep our balance long  
without the stars to focus on.

There is no room so dark as mountain night  
nor hope so bright as mountain sky  
that spills its stars like salt into an iron skillet!

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Rex Lambert is a mountaineer and writer living in Goodyear, AZ who has been occasionally publishing poetry for over five decades. In 1973, he was chosen to be the first poet in the Arizona Commission on the Arts' new "Poets on the Road" program (Alberto Rios was the second). His early poetry is anthologized in "Poetry of the Desert Southwest" (Baleen Press, 1973) and "Southwest: A Contemporary Anthology" (Red Earth Press, 1977), which can be found in the library of the University of Arizona Poetry Center.

# Desert Rain

In the desert, rain can deceive you.

When it comes, it quenches all ambition.  
Nothing moves.  
All struggle ceases.

You lie exhausted on the wet sand  
like a shipwrecked sailor,  
your breathing labored and grateful.

Yet death's familiar name is whispered everywhere.  
You hear it, but do not understand  
the tribute it exacts for such reprieves.

In the desert, rain can deceive you.

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# Christmas Day

*for Larry Sanders*

This morning we leave the warm tent early,  
long before dawn and the sun that melts  
these mountain slopes to avalanche,

pull on boots and heavy clothing,  
brew tea, sort the climbing gear equally,  
then shoulder our packs and run

the snow-packed trail to San Gorgonio's base  
in the cold, starlit darkness.

We climb extremely fast all morning,  
not speaking or stopping to rest, our bodies fit,  
our instincts and our better judgment

keen to put the tree line and the fragile snow  
behind us. The rope we rig between us  
means friendship more than safety.

By noon the summit ice field steepens,  
hard and clear, above us like a mirror.

But we are not the first to calculate this line  
or gaze into the ice field's crystal depths  
to see ourselves reflected there —

another's crampon tracks have marked the way  
and all we need to do is follow.

Suddenly there is nowhere else to go but down,  
the summit catching us by surprise,  
the wind whipping our clothing like flags.

We smile, shake hands, and look on California.

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# Sierra Sextet

1

## *Night on Weaver's Needle*

Our sixteenth summer  
we were bold, though  
not especially foolish.  
Accomplished climbers  
even then, we anchored  
down the night atop  
our dream, watched  
the rise and fall of stars,  
and felt that higher places  
could not now elude  
imagination's reach.

2

## *Honeymoon*

All night long the stars  
seem nervous,  
jumping and snapping  
like angry fireflies.  
I watch you wane,  
new moon, curling  
at last to crescent  
in the low west corner  
of our brightening tent.  
Outside, crickets' chivaree  
concludes with the sun.

3

## *Silence*

What could possibly  
deceive me here?  
What, except my own voice,  
would dare disturb  
the deafening silence  
of mountains?  
Today I've come  
ready to listen,  
leaving behind my  
compass of words  
at the trailhead  
like dirty shoes  
on a doorstep.

**Continued on page 33**

4

*First Light, November 1st*

A sleepless night  
argues for change.  
The blanching blue moon  
pillows my head,  
nimbus to the rising day.  
Morning in our desert  
dawns this way  
as cool white  
snow-blinding light.  
And I am summer weary  
and ready for winter.

5

*Superstition Snow*

On open desert ground  
I lay me down cocooned,  
but not prepared for snow,  
and sleep through falling  
sky and barometric pressure,  
much too tired to care.  
In REM-deep dreams  
flurries turn to blizzard,  
the morning light to shroud.

6

*Follow Me*

On the Praying Monk,  
body stretched  
in a quick succession  
of 3-point suspensions,  
I climb more gracefully  
than any circus acrobat.  
Roped in tight, my fingers  
map a variety of holds,  
etch past cracks,  
then leave them for you.

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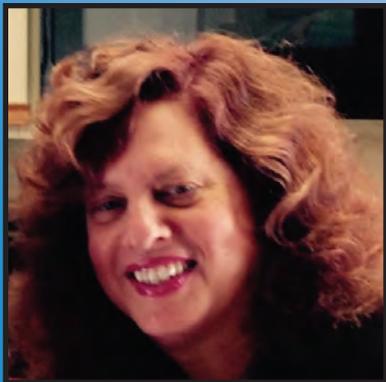
# 3 Poems by Audrey Sher-Walton

## If I Stayed

Who would I be now if I hadn't left then?  
Shrouded in gray

Accent thick  
Insulated  
Living on concrete and Carvel

© 2023



Audrey Sher-Walton established and facilitates Wordslingers Writing Group. She is a member of Berkeley Poetry Circle. Audrey is the associate editor of Awakenings Literary Review and serves on the Board of Directors for The Awakenings Project — both support and promote creative outlets for those living with mental illness. She is the three-time recipient of the Joanna Lowry Prize for Literary Arts. Audrey Sher-Walton is the founder of Write ON! Eastside Writing Group and has been involved with Tucson Poetry Writers, Quiet Writing, and Writers Lunch. Two of her poems won Pima's Family Heritage Project Contest. She has been a guest reader on KXCI's Poet's Moment and at the University of Arizona. She penned monthly columns in two Tucson newspapers. Her poems have been published in Zocolo, Unstrung, Aurora, Write ON! Anthology, Blue Guitar, Heron Clan, and in her own collection: "All the Colors of My Life Are Red," which is part of the University of Arizona's Poetry Center's Archival Collection. Her book is used as part of the curriculum in AP English classes in TUSD. Audrey owns Mrs. Audrey's Academic Achievement, a tutoring service. Audrey can be reached at: [Redwavepress@yahoo.com](mailto:Redwavepress@yahoo.com).

# Sand and Glue

Critics say that Dylan's voice  
sounds like sand and glue  
But I remember him spinning on  
Your turntable with messages  
we thought  
critical and expansive

You  
Knew  
It wouldn't be a crooner  
Who would help coax me to your bed

I believed everything  
I thought was real

And Now  
I know

That you are so much more than  
Books you haven't read

You are my world  
My love  
My life  
My everything

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# Word Machine

Word machine churns on  
Through gray matter  
the butterfly-shaped portion of the central spinal cord

Processing Processing  
Skilled at crafting rivers of whispers and  
Echoing threats at demons  
Taking up residence in the psyche

“You are not your thoughts  
Thank your thoughts and don’t buy into them  
Accept your thoughts  
Separate yourself from your thoughts  
Commit to your thoughts  
Distract yourself from your thoughts”

Those youtube pundits ought to have a meeting of the minds  
And coalesce their directives

An anxious mind cannot sift through the missives  
“Choose the right tool for the job”  
For God’s sake I learned that at 14 when I worked at a hardware store

The tool belt is too heavy, cumbersome,  
weighted with wear  
choosing the right tool for the emotional meltdown  
we are aiming to avoid  
Seems a task monumental

Embrace your anxiety  
Control it, ignore it, distract it

Word machine churns on  
You are not your thoughts  
Your thoughts don’t control you  
Hell, toss that tool belt over to the carpenters

Surely they can call their friend the sculptor  
Carve and mold and reshape  
Maybe it’s the white matter they need to address  
Make it realign how it interprets sensory information  
From various parts of the body

But the word machine churns on  
The mind with no shut-off valve

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# 3 Poems by Jon Tang

## Hospice

It has not hit me yet  
The moment I least expect it, I bet.  
At least she is not suffering  
Hoping she would be recovering  
“Wake up grandma!”  
“Wake up!”  
She never did recover from her stroke.  
Her last moments I overlooked.  
I should’ve visited her more  
All it took was her in the Hospice ward.  
I’m sorry grandma,  
I promise I do care  
I know it’s too late now  
But I am here...

Goodbye grandma

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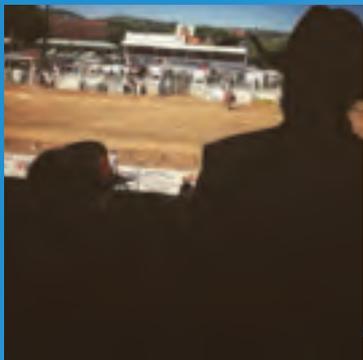


The poet writes: “My name is Jon Tang and I was born in Prescott, Arizona, but raised in Phoenix most of my life. I hope to have my poems published someday, but for now I am an amateur Instagram poet (TheJonTangPoetry). Every poem I have written is during a raw state of emotions that I was going through at the time and, rather than bottling my feelings, I put them in words.”

# One Last Rodeo

5 years ago, I once met a soldier in a manual wheelchair  
Struggling to breathe in that fresh outdoor air  
Excited to see the horses, the bulls, and the atmosphere  
You could tell his joy and happiness were real, crystal clear!  
“One last rodeo...” he said  
As he smiled and held up his head  
Left and right, he looked  
All the “thank you’s” and the hands he shook.  
“You know, I didn’t expect any gratitude for what I have done.”  
“I was just happy to be alive after the war we had won.”  
I put on his brakes and held onto his wheelchair  
While he was facing the American flag in the middle of the fair  
He began to stand unsteadily  
The National Anthem started and he was ready  
He raised his hand slowly just beneath the right brow  
He stood and saluted amongst his fellow Veteran crowd  
Refusing to back down or winded  
He stood up straight until the song ended  
“As long as I can defend and tell my story”  
“I will always stand and salute to that Old Glory.”  
I will never forget that show  
It was really his one last rodeo.

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Jon Tang

Prescott Rodeo Fairgrounds.

# Smile

Please smile for me one last time?  
A glimpse of happiness that was so divine.  
Please tell me its okay to smile back.  
A sense of security and being on track.  
I smile and smile all over again.  
I just want it to be genuine.  
“You can do this! I believe in you!”  
Easier said than what I can do.  
“C’mon dammit! Be Happy!”  
Why do I feel so crappy?  
[Deep breath in]  
Here it goes, I smile once more.  
This time with tears galore.  
I wish I was a better person.  
Maybe, just a better version.  
Grasping for air and trembling  
Thinking to myself and rambling.  
Trying to see through the tears  
And staring in the mirrors.  
Please, smile for me one last time?  
Tell me everything is going to be fine.

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# Potato Taco Shop

By Duann Black

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Jordan carefully inserted the mind plug into his ear, tuning it so he could read the thoughts of whoever he directly looked at. His first experience with the plug was unpleasant. He had identified the wrong person as a criminal, allowing the actual culprit to escape. After that, he vowed to always read the directions carefully and run test drives before using new investigative technology.

He arrived at the Potato Taco Shop and jumped down from the running board of his sleek new sky bike. Recently, the precinct received multiple complaints against the business. It was Jordon's job to investigate. Were the complaints just folks upset with their food or service, or was something more happening?

A perky young girl approached Jordon before he was five steps away from his wheels.

"May I help you, sir? Today's specials are listed on our app and I can give you details about any you are interested in. My name is Estraya."

"Thank you, Estraya. It's my first time here. I'll look over your menu and let you know if I need any help."

The girl returned to a table close to the front door. Jordon did not pick up any suspicious thoughts from her. She appeared to be a normal restaurant server.

He downloaded the shop's app to his communications device and read through the menu. Ignoring the young server and the order window at the rear of the outside seating area, he approached the front door. Business appeared to be slow, though it was lunch hour. No one was sitting outside or standing in line at the order window. Using a mind plug to

investigate when no people were present was difficult.

The moment he stepped inside the door, he scanned the dining room. It was empty. There was a serving area behind a counter to his right where one man worked. Dark thoughts bombarded Jordon flowing from the mind of the man behind the counter as soon as they made eye contact. He walked over to him and noticed his shirt said, owner. The thoughts came too rapidly for Jordon to decipher. That was the normal function of the mind plug. It required him to return to the office to download the recording and sort out the thoughts.

"Afternoon, sir. Looks like business is slow today. What's the lunch special?" Jordon smiled.

The man continued chopping onions with a butcher's knife.

The mind plug continuously gathered the man's thoughts while Jordon waited for a response, giving the tool time to do its job.

"Look at the shop app, that's what it's for. Unless you're here to gossip, not eat. In which case, get lost pipsqueak, ain't got time for your kind."

"If that's what you want, I'll go. Have a good afternoon, sir." Jordon casually walked out.

The server got to her feet as Jordon neared. He waved her back down. "Nothing looks interesting to me today, miss. Maybe I'll return later this week. Have a good afternoon."

After firing up his sky bike, he requested the direct route back to the precinct. He would arrive in eleven minutes. Barely fast enough for him. He wanted to know what the shop owner was thinking. Was the man considering killing Jordon with the butcher knife or having a bad day suffering from a migraine headache?



Duann Black is a writer, author, and poet with stories to tell and things to say. During a multiyear break from emptying ink pens onto paper, she strived diligently to spell "grammar" as chief editor for Alan Black, author of 20 books, including "Metal Boxes" and "A Planet with No Name." The author currently is working on finalizing "Stories to Tell and Things to Say," a short story anthology that will include her work and the only two short stories that her husband, Alan, wrote, to publish in May of this year. She is a well-traveled military retiree always ready with a story to share.

# Left Behind

## By Duann Black

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“What’s in this box? It’s much heavier than its size suggests. I grabbed it off the back of the truck because it is small and I wanted a break from carrying your book boxes,” Margaret said. Margaret was one of several folks helping the Butlers move into their new home in Phoenix, Arizona, on the hottest day of the year.

Danielle stopped what she was doing and moved to Margaret’s side. Relieving her of the box, she said, “Rocks.”

Margaret threw her hands up. “Rocks!”

Danielle smiled and took the box outside next to the front door. Margaret followed her, not looking too happy to learn she had been carrying a box of rocks.

Placing the box on the sidewalk next to the door, Danielle cut the tape sealing the box.

“What are you doing now?” Margaret asked.

Danielle carefully lifted a carved stone from the protective cushioning. Tenderly, she set it below the living room window, where anyone walking up to the front door would see it.

Margaret looked over Danielle’s shoulder to read the inscription.

“Damn it!” Danielle jumped up, almost hitting Margaret’s chin, before racing past her into the house. She found her husband unpacking boxes in the front office. Tearfully, she told him she had left her Ft. Irwin rock at the bottom of the front steps of their old home.

“Dear, we are never returning to that old house, certainly not for one odd-shaped rock.” Warren wrapped his wife in a comforting hug and kissed her forehead.

# Valentine's Day

By Duann Black

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“Valentine's Day will be here before we know it,” Vern said. Scratching his head with the pencil normally parked behind his left ear, he gave Bonnie a sour face.

“So what cha gonna do about it, Vern? I wanna go to that fancy new restaurant they opened a couple of weeks ago. You gonna take me?” Bonnie batted her eyes, doing her best impersonation of a beauty queen.

“I will if you give me a sweet kiss right here and now. In fact, I'll take you there tonight if you'll kiss me now.” Vern licked his lips, anticipating the meet-up with her sweet lips. He had been practicing French kissing for weeks and wanted a test

drive with Bonnie.

“Now, I don't rightly know if I want to do that just now. I'm not dressed fancy like I should be for that restaurant, anyway.”

“Oh, come on. You look just fine. We can hitch up the buggy to Buster and be there inside of an hour. All it'll cost you is one polite little kiss. We can call it our Valentine's Day prequel. Please?” He reached out to take her hand. She didn't look like she was going to agree. Then, before he realized what he was doing, he took her hand in his, raised it to his lips, and kissed the back of her hand.

Bonnie responded by grabbing him by the ears to raise his head for a lip-to-lip smooch exchange.

# Stampeding Cows

By Duann Black

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“Martha, what do you see off to the left, over there on that flat plain?” Henry asked. “A whole lot of dust,” Martha said. “Must be windy to kick up that much dust and a few dirnadoes, as well. Why, dear? Are you wanting to go over that way to find a campsite for the night? I thought we were headed to the sheep bridge to camp.”

“We were headed to the bridge, but that dust doesn’t look right to me. The right side is all calm, but that cloud hovering over that one section of the sky to the left looks out of place to me.” Henry kept looking out of the driver’s side window.

“Dear, watch where you’re driving. You’re about to go off-road.”

“Hmm?” Henry turned the steering wheel to bring the Jeep back onto the dirt trail. He never took his eyes off the dust cloud.

“Look out!” Martha yelled as she punched Henry’s arm and braced her right hand on the dashboard.

Henry turned in time to see a cow rushing across the road in front of the Jeep, narrowly missing the front grill. He swerved to the right before noticing more cows stampeding toward them. He stomped on the brake pedal with both feet and reached across to protect Martha from hitting the dashboard head-first. “What the hell? Where did this cattle traffic come from?”

Henry noticed a look of sheer terror on Martha’s face. She was focused on the left side of the Jeep. Henry looked again at the dust-filled meadow to the left. The cows were running

toward—no, not running, rising—rising upward like they were racing up a ramp.

The Jeep sat in its own rising dust cloud, obscuring the unbelievable scene Henry thought he saw off to his left. Unconsciously, he put the Jeep into park and turned off the ignition. Martha had fainted. Henry propped her head back onto the headrest. He couldn’t reach her seat controls from the driver’s seat so he exited the vehicle. Walking around the front of the Jeep cautiously to avoid additional incoming cattle traffic, he kept looking to the left until he reached the passenger door. Opening it, he reached down and activated the seat recliner for Martha. Once he was sure she was comfortable, he backed away to close the door.

A strange odor caught his attention. He looked at his boots to ensure he hadn’t stepped in cow manure. A puff of sweetness wafted past his nose, and a gentle tingle tickled his right ear. It surprised him. Turning to his right he caught a glimmer at the corner of his vision. He turned around to ensure he was alone with Martha and the cows still rising upward into the sky toward the odd cloud hovering above the dust-filled meadow.

The glimmer. There it was again, just at the edge of his sight. He turned again toward it. Nothing was there. Behind him, Martha stirred. Turning back toward her, a tingle swept along his arm and Martha screamed.

Henry came out of his stupor slowly, like rising from a deep sleep, the type of sleep that keeps you under the covers for want of more.

# The Second Hand

By Duann Black

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Staring at the clock while brushing her teeth, Sally thought about reversing time. The second hand marched clockwise around the clock face like nothing in the world mattered. She rinsed her mouth. Why can't we travel forward or back in time? Why is humanity framed by time from the moment of their birth to their final synapse firing at death?

Her aim failed when spitting out the toothpasty rinse water. The faucet took the frothy mess at point-blank range.

After putting her toiletries away, she cleaned the sink to a gleaming shine.

"That's a job well done," she told the sink. "Time to get to work. I don't want to be late. Expect there will be plenty of questions to answer today—the day after my disappearance."

Shortly afterward, the opening school bell announced the start of the first class period. The children were loud. Sally noticed several side glances in her direction as she prepared her desk. It was to be expected. She did make a grand entrance yesterday, just before the end of the school day.

What an amazing twenty-four hours it had been. Sally had gone to the other side of the hedge and survived the journey. Now everyone would expect her to give them all the tasty details, but she couldn't remember anything from the moment she entered the hedge. She spent half of the night trying to come up with a story to tell the children, or a hypothesis about her experience. The result was half a night's sleep wasted.

"All right everyone. Please take your seats and settle down."

Boys and girls moved to their seats and before long, there were twenty-one pairs of eyes focused on Sally, waiting for her to speak, to tell them the story everyone was waiting to hear.

Staring at the clock while brushing her teeth, Sally's thoughts turned to the impossibility of making time reverse. She stopped brushing and addressed the faucet, "Wait a minute. Is this déjà vu? I feel like it is."

She finished her morning routine, put her toiletries away, and cleaned the sink. Checking the time again, the second hand was marching counterclockwise around the clock face like it had nothing better to do with its time.

# 6 Poems by Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## So Ahab

*For the dying poet and Norman Dubie*

The words I sometimes understand  
sometimes only might

or only understand in the words' passing  
sharing a syntax disentangled  
from the meaning of the day

and that  
some inspiration charged  
I am like the poet I hope

led to choose among my betters  
and go live

being quiet  
among them

us . . . ?

*In other words, persist, but rather  
a dense shadow fanned out.\**  
\*\*\*

Perhaps we share the good notion  
to go out as we were written

the vision-voice of rhythmic  
ambiguity knapped

Ignore the do not and  
good night in favor of  
\*\*\*

Uh  
in favor of what  
\*\*\*

Ah Very likely So  
where

well  
else

So

*Reel in the scenery.  
It's unlike us to reel in the difference.\**

*\*John Ashbery, handwritten, August 25, 2017: his last poem*

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Richard Fenton Sederstrom's family moved to the Sonoran Desert of Arizona in 1954. They brought Richard along, for which he is still both appreciative and bewildered. The Sonoran Desert, for all of humanity's wounds and insults, remains a gift. Sederstrom's seventh book of poems, "Icarus Rising: Misadventures in Ascension," which occupies that desert from Tempe to Guaymas, appeared in 2020. A new book, "The Dun Box," which regards "The American Century" as a total of minus 21 days in 1945, is finished and in the hands of the editor, being gently disciplined, probably to be available next fall.

# Which Horizon?

The poet's calling is to keep dimensions of horizon in  
and out of sight, to move behind a lens bouncing  
from rut to rut toward a focus of bleeding touch

from thorn to spine: share the human zeal for going  
nowhere, to discover in the ultimate note, another tangent,  
*Us* again, la Sonora, still to invoke chase-and-recover.

But slow. We are learning, as the ancestors knew  
from the neutral cosmos of their cockcrow senses  
before the very first wheel-rut was pressed—

before all Earth be rutted and ransacked?—  
how to journey in space in compassed place, deep and,  
without leaving another rut or even footprint,

to learn not only how to journey in this place or no-place,  
but to idle—like perch gently fanning calm lake water,  
feeling the fin-made current against my swaying

source-starved body, limbs resisting the cool push  
of water in treasured place and measured time,  
time permitting—or time remaining . . . but again,

from any spot on a spheroid, where are true horizons?  
True horizons are also internal, hallucinatory effects  
from a draught of mirage—deep deep blue, obsidian cold,

breathless depths where we dare not drown—nor  
will we drown even if we dare, now in dun-dry sand,  
welter and waste of our sacred first delusions.

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# Moods

## 1. Indicative, the now

Charles Wu and I were talking.  
Charles was a scholar and translator of Laozi.  
I offered my preference for Zhuangzi.

Diane Ma asked me in some shock, “Zhuangzi?  
Not Laozi? How can that be? But why?”  
“Because he reminds me of my grandfather.”  
She had no response. Charles smiled.  
Charles and Zhuangzi require no more to say.  
I failed to ask for Laozi’s comment.

It’s an ancient smile, that response  
from out the pictured cave into the sun.  
In that primatial sun I have four grandfathers now.  
Maybe five, one of whom may be myself at long last.  
We try to speak through one another.

Eumaeus, Zhuang Zhou, Du Fu, Hugh Fenton,  
me; dynamos of passivity, companions of the dao  
of necessary occasions—as they arise.  
It takes all four, or five sometimes,  
but who is the other?

## 2. Subjunctive, the forever

Time is the subjunctive predicate, perhaps  
immaterial, that may propose the connections,

justify the eons, should vouchsafe gravity  
to what seems outside discovery:

and so we may summon and weigh the gods,  
our self-arrayed, self-arraigned deities—we

approach our ordinary arts sniffing the air.  
It’s fair, so long as we digest only one another.

I could believe in a god or two who can’t bite,  
some gods’ self-created grace of inner control. But

what do I see in the created dark but scavenged truth?  
And may be comforted if we agree to absorb each other

**Continued on page 48**

**Continued from page 47**

quietly—trussed in gold thread among the Moirai—  
unless we agree to the only authentic prayer,

the prey's inquisitive expression of devout doubt.  
It is self-refractive reverence born of long reflection,

wide, because the gods deserve such Janus-attention  
as befits the human exempla their human creators

instilled or distilled in the colors of their—  
or their makers' crafty perversions. After any and all,

humans have evolved as the only optative species.  
We reckon reality in the wreck of the real.

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# Whose Extinctions?

notes on the condition of cognition

I

The elephant finds itself  
on what it doesn't know is a railroad track.

Hearing the sudden noise  
and feeling the vibration in its feet,  
intelligent in its ignorance,  
the elephant moves toward safety.

\*

The human finds itself  
on what it knows to be a railroad track.

Because of its intelligence,  
and knowing that this is a dangerous  
place to be, the human thinks, not  
“I think I'll step over where it's safe,”

but of the possibilities  
of engaging in anthro-cleverness,  
the *danger!*—*Thunder Road*:  
“I wonder how far I can walk backward on this rail?

Facing away from the train?  
Awwwriiiiight!!”

II

*Different witnesses opine*

1. “Here's an idea!

If we can't get lithium from Earth,  
how about the moon?  
I mean, you could build, like,  
a sky train with bendy tracks, and . . .  
uh . . . what's lithium?”

\*

2. “Hey! Anybody here see *Interstellar*?

It's got these wormholes.  
Couldn't we get water from that planet  
with the big waves?

Continued on page 50

And use a wormhole and build maybe  
a real big like sewer-pipe thing?—

and . . . uh . . . like . . . you know, that . . .”

III

Intelligence is useful  
for teaching the elephant  
the foresight to survive.

Cognition is useful  
for teaching the human  
the negation of intelligence,

self-delusion being the best way  
out of a situation rendered,  
like black ice greased, impossible

because of the delusionary  
inventiveness that gleams,  
dazzling the human mind.

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# *Den tredje hjärna*

för Göran Sonnevi

The third brain, the scholar-critic, *vox civilis*  
probing labyrinthine echoes of lost last lore, tronic  
eye assessing the shade of the moving finger  
in the dark. The bent finger, beyond ancient,  
a signature we invent in tutored retrospect.

The scholar's work is to construe our mysteries  
into discrete chapters, currents, tributaries  
for observation and analysis, following after,  
explicating and deconstructing into  
dis-worded lyrics left bare-bottomed,

un-suckled and dumb—though by Nature  
graced with reason—meaning. But still,  
but still, those Mysteries left orphaned  
and naked are to be tended, nourished,  
and given to new language in fresh voices,

engorged silences washed almost clear.  
The crafted rest  
preludes consummate symphonics.  
It is the promise of awe eternal for  
a fulsome earful of virtual sublime.

Ask of Creation in the long and holier rest  
after the dark and prayerless silence  
after the symphony's funereal resignation:  
What is more immense than the First Quark  
blinking on the sunny side of nothing at all?

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# For the Company

*“All right, then, I’ll go to Hell!”—*

Predicament 1: Finn

If you are Huck you are damned.  
You know this.

Miss Watson said so:  
implied with corrective zeal.

You are Huck.  
You have not lived with authority.

But Miss Watson? No?  
*Your* unlettered integrity. So—

*You* said so.  
And saying is believing.

Believing, like remembering saying,  
*Is!*

\*

Predicament 2: Twain/Clemens/Twain

A protean character may be  
roundish among the twists and curves, or  
pinched into the flint-shard crevasses of angles.

But who’s to choose?

\*

Predicament 3: Dante

The holy damned  
have long forsaken the gift of lying.  
But the gift of humor?

Does truth in laughter tend toward freedom?  
Damned freedom?

The greater the nudge of Holy Paradox,  
*Sanctus et Quantum*, how much  
better the surprise of irredemption—

**Continued on page 53**

your, our, their unseeled agony  
of vision all through the talk and laughter:  
“*For the company*”

\*

Predicament 4: Estragon

“*Nothing to be done.*”

...

“*True. . . . Yes, let’s go*”—  
[*They do not move.*]

\*

Predicament 5: A poet’s dilemma:

“I’ve long longed to write a short piece,  
its core in some famous play, like maybe  
The *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Or,  
Well ‘*There’s no lack of void . . . unfinished . . .*’”

The shadow-hall of art is chthonic still,  
its corridors narrow, bound, and blind.  
Do most poems have some poet to blame?  
Then a true poem has its silence to praise.

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and literary readings!**

**Free admission!**

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

# Who we are

## All about The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a nonprofit organization approved by the Arizona Corporation Commission in February 2008. We hold a 501c3 tax-exempt status.

We are all-volunteer. We are educators, artists, performers, writers and supporters of all artistic endeavors, and are proponents and supporters of the rich, vibrant and diverse community of the Greater Phoenix area as well as the entire state.

The Arizona Consortium seeks to create a multicultural, multidisciplinary arts center that will provide a home for our activities and foster artistic growth for people of



all ages in conjunction with exhibiting artists, writers, actors, dancers and musicians who will share their expertise in a gallery, theater setting.

Please visit [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org) or [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) for more information about

becoming a member, networking, donating, advertising, volunteering or submitting work to The Blue Guitar arts and literary magazine, Unstrung poetry magazine and The Blue Guitar Jr. literary and arts magazine for youth.

You can become a part of the Arizona Consortium and make a difference. There are countless ways to contribute, and the consortium is grateful for any donation in any form.

For us to grow as an organization, provide various services to artists, and support inspiring projects, your financial support is needed.

Every dollar received will support our website, the publication of our magazines, and the establishment of our future center.

Please visit our donations page, <http://www.artizona.org/donate.html>, and donate today!

Thank you for your support!



A rendering of the consortium's dream multicultural arts center by Effie Bouras, building designer, Mechanik Design Office, LLC.

# The consortium's vision for a multicultural arts center

The rendering of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts' dream multicultural arts center by Effie Bouras, Building Designer, Mechanik Design Office, LLC.

The Center will be a source and a destination for creativity and inspiration. It will be a home for many wonderful community organizations, creative and innovative multicultural and multidisciplinary activities, classes and projects representing and celebrating our diverse community.

The Center will be a cultural icon in the Phoenix area.

The Center will be an inimitable foundation for a unique experience, one that you'll want to share with family, friends and community.

Designed by Effie Bouras, the Center will feature numerous spaces for the arts in all genres, performances and presentations. A flexible and variable seating performance theater for rehearsals, concerts, theatrical presentations, video art and films, lectures, meetings and recordings will be available free-of-charge or at a minimum cost.

# Meet the staff of The Blue Guitar magazine



**Elena Thornton, publisher:** Founder and president 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, co-editor:** A Tucson native, Rebecca is a poet, journalist and teacher residing in Mesa with her husband, Rick, her Blue Guitar co-editor. Reach her at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org).



**Richard H. Dyer Jr., co-editor:** Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is the news editor of two monthly newspapers and two websites in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor. Reach him at [richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org).

**Marjory Boyer, cover design artist for 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).



## Check our websites for news on the arts



The Blue Guitar Magazine's website is [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).  
Like us on Facebook.  
Follow @BlueGuitarMagAZ on Twitter.

Check out The Arizona Consortium for the Arts website, [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org). There, you can sign up for an e-mailed newsletter. Also follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

[www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org](http://www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org)

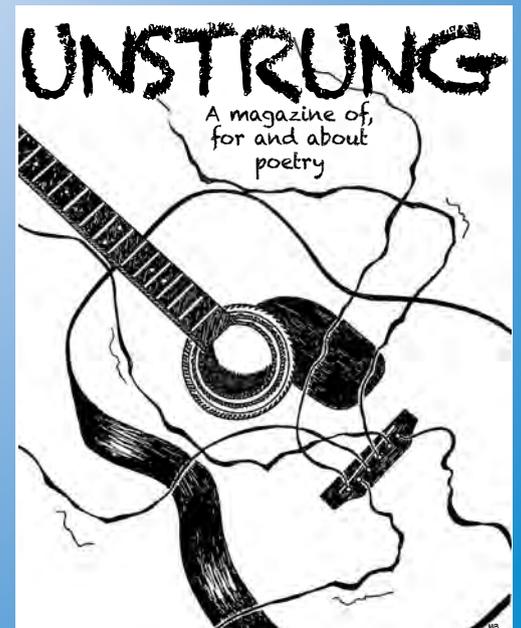
Spring 2023

# A Call to Poets for the 2023 Issue of Unstrung

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks poetry submissions for the Summer 2023 Issue of Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry. Submissions will

be accepted from June 1 through July 4. 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. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. 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 Blue Guitar Jr.

Open to children and teens who write  
and to adults who write  
for children and teens

**T**he Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks literary submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who write for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2023, in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction — all geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Writers must submit original work and must live 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 additional information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine is a project of the nonprofit The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine and 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 The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr. magazines 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 Artists for The Blue Guitar Jr.

Open to children and teens who create art  
and to adults who create art  
for children and teens

**T**he Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks art submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who create art for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2023, in all media geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Artists must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the artist 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 mediums; up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail; please provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name, contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. Please include your name and the best way to contact you. To submit or for more information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at [richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For additional information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine is a project of the nonprofit The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine and 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 The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr. magazines 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 Fall 2023

**T**he Blue Guitar magazine seeks literary submissions for the Fall 2023 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. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. 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).

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# A Call to Artists for Fall 2023

**T**he Blue Guitar magazine seeks art submissions in all mediums for the Fall 2023 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 4. Any artists who work in any visual art media, are 18 years or older and are part- or full-time Arizona residents can submit. It is free to submit and up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail; please provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name and contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at [richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For more information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).



The Blue Guitar magazine is a nonprofit project of 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 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).

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**“Things as they are are changed upon the blue guitar.”**  
— Excerpt from Wallace Stevens’ 1937 poem “The Man With the Blue Guitar.”  
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**FREE!**

*“Things  
as they are  
are  
changed  
upon  
the  
blue guitar.”*