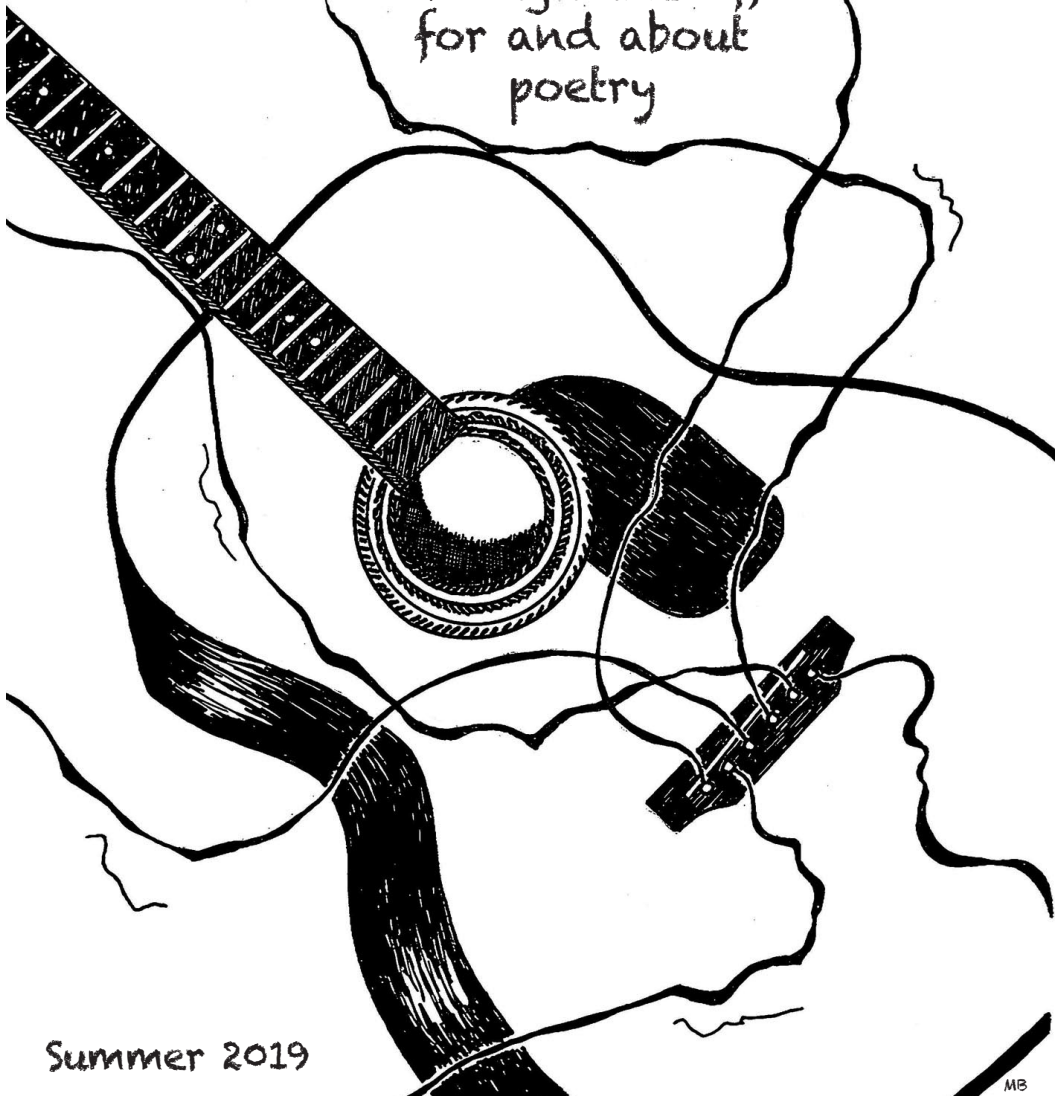


UNSTRUNG

A magazine of,
for and about
poetry



Summer 2019

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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.

3

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

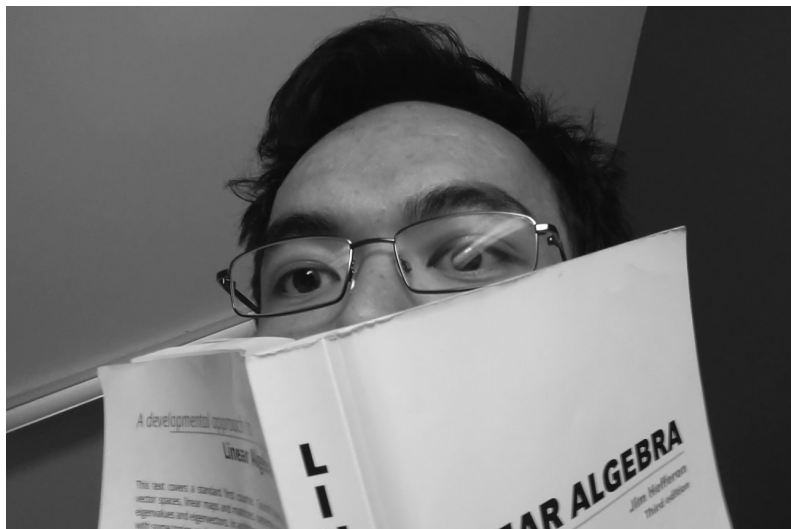
But I digress. We are spicy, like our cuisine
And like our capital, an affront to nature
A blending of dubious historical decisions
and a purchase lost to time.

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

4

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Abraham Aruguete



5

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.

© 2019

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

7

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
© 2019

8

Lysa Cohen



9

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

© 2019

10

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

11

© 2019

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

© 2019

12

Gari Crowley

A Father's Aspirations

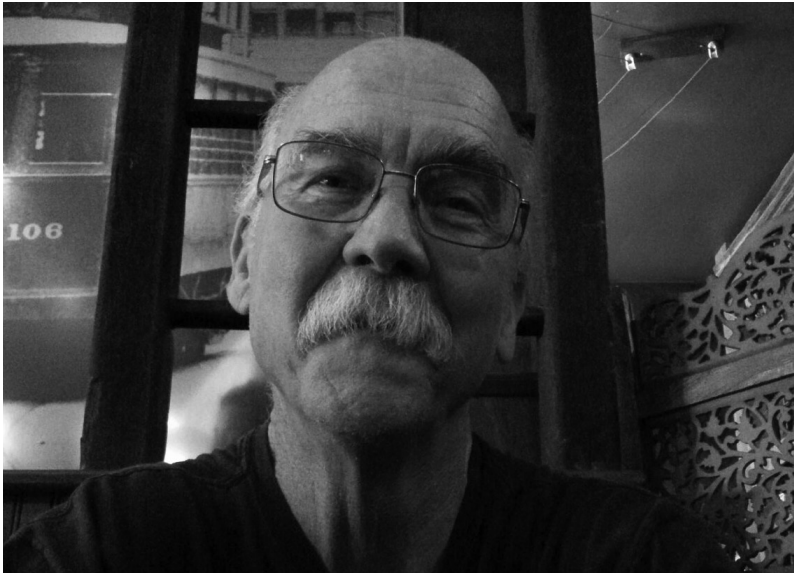
Clenching
his animosities and failures as he would
a knife,
he disfigures the embodiment of aesthetic significance.
Himself,
an uninspiring portrait of acrimony.

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.

© 2019

13

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.

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

15

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

16

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.

© 2019

18

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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21

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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23

Richard Fenton Sederstrom



24

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

© 2019

27

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.

© 2019

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

© 2019

29

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 . . .

32

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.

© 2019

34

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.”

© 2019

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.

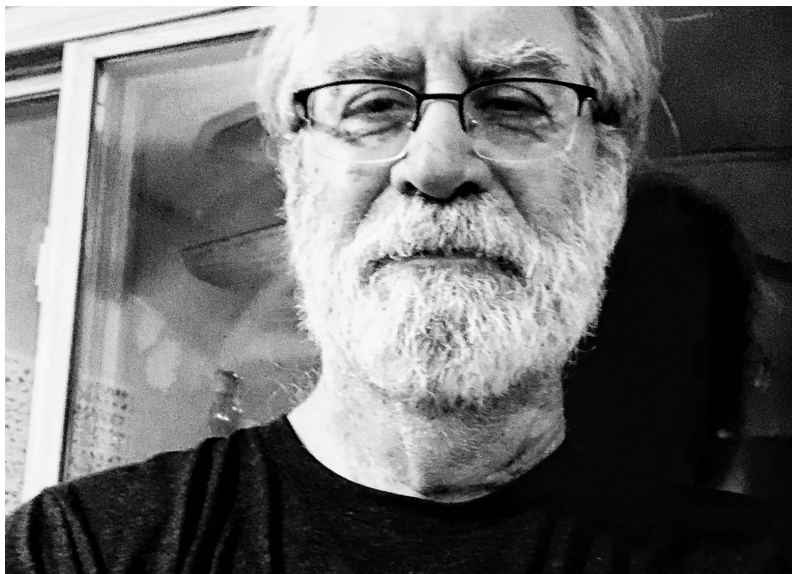
38 I suspect an infant has a rich experience of life,
without words, but eventually and willingly
submits to the laws of grammar for cheers and
sweets and shiny things, as I do. Lately,
though, my reasoning has much less to say,
having already drawn so many conclusions –
less is more, Nature bests any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

© 2019

Peter Martori



40

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.

© 2019

41

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

42

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

45

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

© 2019

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.

46
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.

© 2019

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.

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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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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.

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

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.

For more information, e-mail Rebecca at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org or visit 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 and 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. For more information, visit 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 and 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.

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.



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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.



UNSTRINGING

A magazine of
for and about
poetry



Unstringing will
return in
Summer 2020