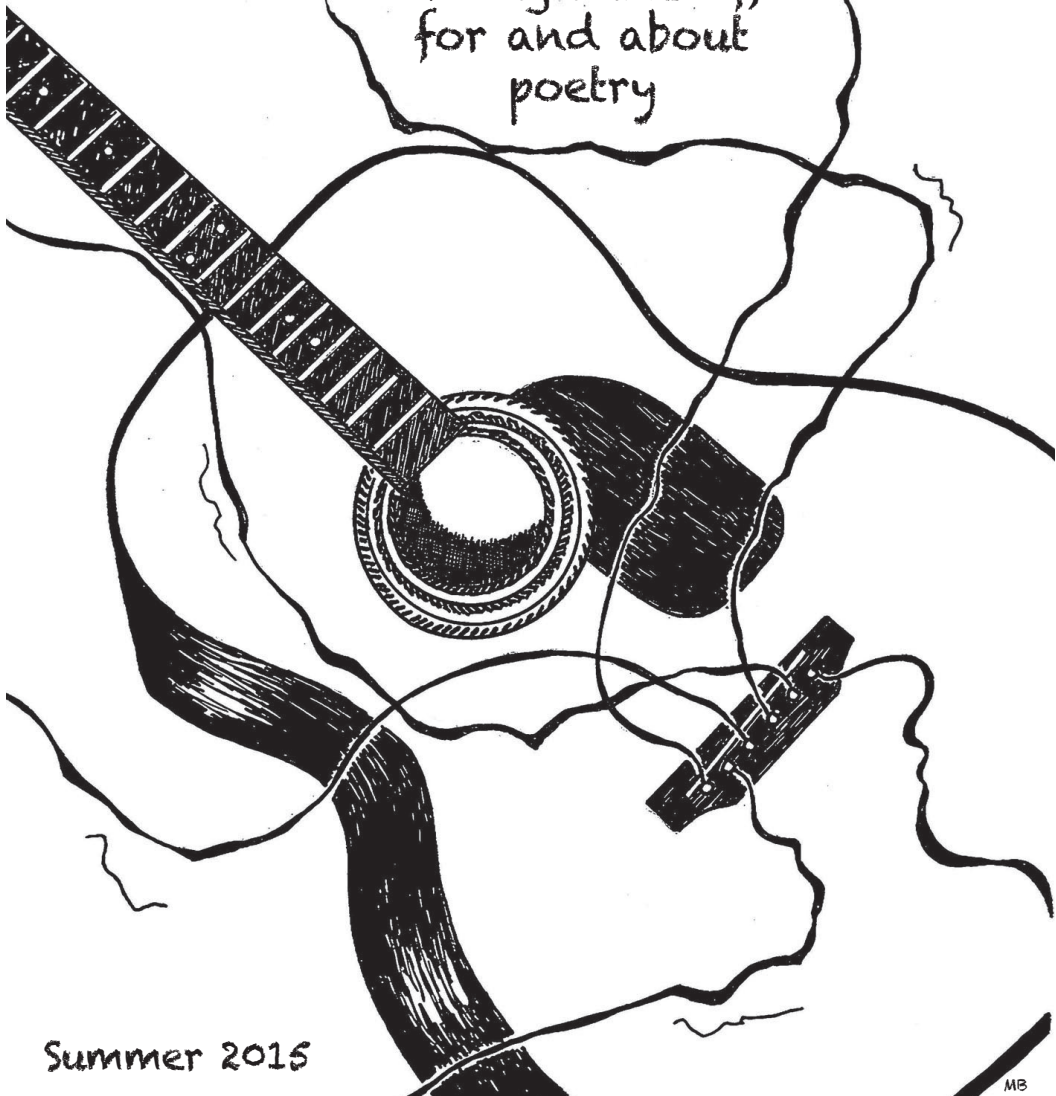


# UNSTRUNG

A magazine of,  
for and about  
poetry



Summer 2015

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Kat

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and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

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# The Poets



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# Jordan Anthony

## Desert Bliss

Abandoned, yet somehow gleaming with life.  
My hideaway starts with a cobblestone pathway wide and sturdy,  
glittered with fallen twigs and leaves from trees past.  
Slowly, the pebbled walkway fades into grass—  
nature's ombré from gray to pale desert green.  
The grass is like the haircut of a fidgety child—  
choppy and uneven with a few bare spots.  
This meadow of scraggly plants goes on for miles,  
an African savanna not far from my own front door.  
At the end of the plain stands a wall  
quashing sounds from breaking the hush  
of this blissful grassland.  
Looking back towards the rock path,  
moving my gaze to the unkempt grass,  
I feel this desert landscape  
encompass me.

© 2015

# Jordan Anthony

The poet writes: “I’m an Arizona native, born and raised in Phoenix and, even though I can’t stand the heat, I truly love the landscape and beauty of the desert. Currently, I am working towards a degree in Interior Design, but I continue to take courses in poetry and creative writing whenever I get the opportunity because writing has always been an important creative outlet in my life. This is my first time both submitting to and getting published in a literary magazine and I’m looking forward to what’s in store for my writing career in the journey ahead.” Contact the poet at [JOR2153638@maricopa.edu](mailto:JOR2153638@maricopa.edu).

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# Jordan Anthony

## Perseus the Great

The hair of serpents frames the face of she  
who turns the hearts of mortal men to stone.  
Though humans try to run away and flee,  
she traps and kills them; mightiest of crones.

The Gorgon stands alone within her cave  
and waits for other men to claim her head.  
The monster knows not of a man who's brave  
or strong enough to leave her there for dead.

6 From the town of Argos, a hero comes;  
The demigod is quite quick and cunning.  
He lets the body rot amongst the 'mums  
and takes the head, a feat truly stunning.  
Alas Medusa realized her fate  
and Perseus will long be held as great.

© 2015

# Dario Beniquez

## Check-up

So I go to the Doctor, and say,

“Mr. Doctor-man, what’s this stinging sensation I feel in my lower lumbar, and what’s up with these Dollar Store reading glasses?”

I wait for an answer  
from a man with a Doctor of Medicine degree  
and a Board Certified Diploma

from the Institute of International Higher Consciousness  
that hangs on the waiting room wall, next to a big screen  
TV that replays a basketball game over and over again.

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He says, “God designed us that way.”

At that moment, the light of enlightenment hits me.  
All this time, I thought the tingling sensation on my right  
foot, big fat toe, and failing eyesight, had to do

with my lack of atonement for my behavior eons ago  
when as a pterodactyl I swept down on lesser creatures  
than me to gobble up.

But no, that was not right.  
I was made by God to fall apart,  
disintegrate, simmer down,  
and join the other pebbles in the sea.

© 2015

# Dario Beniquez

Dario Beniquez is a poet and engineer. He works for the United States Air Force as an Industrial Engineer. He founded the Gemini Ink Open Writers' Workshop fifteen years ago, which he currently runs.

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# Dario Beniquez

## Glorious

Today in the early morning sunlight,  
I sit at a park, the wind whirls  
around me. Branches sway

in the light. I dream angels. I see  
angels.

I live in a hallucinatory world,  
but the angels are real, curly haired  
angels. Each angel, I see, elicits  
in me a desire.

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They look at me with their dark eyes.  
I want to see something in their eyes,  
something glorious, joyous,

a “yes,” but I don’t. I dream on,  
and wait, for the next one,

the next eon, the next one, to carry on.  
© 2015

# Dario Beniquez

## Night Spirits

Tonight I see grackles everywhere; they sit on  
telephone cables chatting. I wonder what they

are saying. Maybe they are saying, this is a holy place,  
this parking lot in front of this coffee shop,

let us gather here and sing hosannas unto the lord,  
or maybe they are saying, this is a haven

away from the noisy roadway,  
where lights flash in the night,

let us feed here,  
by the supermarket where humans trot.

Then little battles break out over morsels of bread;  
these battles are nothing to us.

They bite each other for crumbs of bread  
till one bird flies away, much better than us.

© 2015

# Dario Beniquez

## New Testament

Every day I say your name,  
breathe in the sacred intervals  
of your breath.

In the far distance, a pale  
sky flashes.

I know you are near, in the mist  
of the lake,  
in the whisper of the wind,

a testament to the faithful.

© 2015

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# Dario Beniquez

## Home

Night opens like an iron gate  
into a vast land. Nanda closes his eyes.  
In his dream, he sits in a café in Mumbai,

slips off his sandals, and speaks to men  
in white shirts and black ties. He tells them  
about a man, one that lived long ago,

a healer, one that will come again. As always,

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they listen for they have heard many stories  
about prophets. Nanda's been here for many  
years and though far from home, he's never

forgotten the pines trees and creeks of his  
birthplace. He is tired now. He's followed  
the healer all his life, and though Nanda has

never healed anyone, he knows it is possible.  
Tomorrow, he flies home. When he arrives,  
he'll follow River Creek Road up the mountain

to his sister's house, the same house  
he was born, and she'll greet him with her sons  
and sweet bread in her hands.

© 2015

# David Chorlton

## Crater Range

In the glare at the heart of an afternoon  
the sloping roadside gravel is an invitation  
to stop, pull over

and stare at the ground  
until it offers up  
its history

of floodplains, sand  
and alluvial fans  
where rain ran away with the silt  
the wind carried back

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over bedrock and clay  
as it worked its way into  
lava that cooled into the shapes

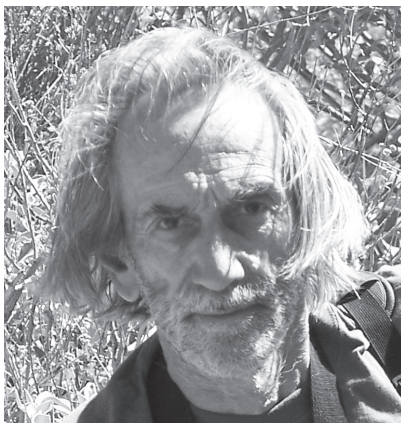
that stand back from the heat  
dancing along  
the double yellow lines  
at the center of Highway 85.

© 2015

# David Chorlton

David Chorlton was born in Austria, grew up in Manchester, England, and lived for several years in Vienna before moving to Phoenix in 1978. Arizona's landscapes and wildlife have become increasingly important to him and a significant part of his poetry. In September 2015, he will participate as a poet in the "Fires of Change" exhibition at the Coconino Center for the Arts in Flagstaff (sponsored by the Southwest Fire Science Consortium, the Landscape Conservation Initiative, and the National Endowment for the Arts).

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# David Chorlton

## In a Desert Town at Noon

A bright light soaks  
into stones around the church  
whose plastered white façade  
vibrates between palm trees  
that stand rooted in their shadows.  
When the clock's hands join

at one hundred degrees  
the plaza is still  
from the tiled dome and arcades  
beside the platform where trains  
used to stop

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to the curve in the road  
at the far end with the flagpoles  
and benches floating  
on a concrete glare. Nestling  
in the silence  
the temperature imposes  
is the cooling unit's hum

at the café, while in the not-  
so-long-ago abandoned  
open pit, heat pours down  
the terraces and pools  
in the oval at the bottom  
that stares directly at the sun.

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# David Chorlton

## Bats at 4AM

Little of darkness remained them.  
A raindrop fell.

The pair flew overhead,  
not in a smooth motion, rather  
trembling just above the roof  
as they progressed from west to east.  
It was a single drop

that fell between them  
and soaked into the path. The bats  
were moving toward daylight

slowly enough to suggest  
they would turn back.  
Clouds pressed softly  
down. The only movement  
had been two pairs of wings

when the silence before dawn  
was such that the city  
rested lightly on the Earth.

© 2015

# Lysette Cohen

## And She is Beautiful

Deep lines streak once smooth skin.  
Pendulous breasts swing freely.  
Bulges and rolls around hips and waist.  
And she is beautiful.

Tiredness reflects from once brilliant eyes.  
Pain and loss are etched into every line and crease.  
Years of ceaseless toil have left their mark.  
And she is beautiful.

Wisdom shines from her eyes and love spills from her lips.  
Every wrinkle tells a story, every scar shares an experience.  
Every exquisite flaw adds to the divine mosaic of her life.  
And she is beautiful.

She transcends elegance.  
She transcends grace.  
She is Mother Earth, she is stalwart and strong.  
And she is beautiful.

Heart opened wide to encompass the world.  
Every breath exudes divine strength.  
She embraces all with a mother's unconditional love.  
And she is beautiful.

© 2015

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# Lysette Cohen

A native of Arizona, Lysette Cohen is a professional violinist and instructor at Mesa Community College. Several days a week, she strikes out into the untamed wilderness of adult education and stands in front of a classroom for many hours at a time trying to convince students that Shakespeare is not boring, James Joyce is brilliant, and that “To Serve Man” is not a story about becoming a waiter. In addition to her teaching duties, Lysette also plays violin with various bands and musical ensembles around the country. She is currently composing her first solo album, writing her third novel, and planning her next short story. Her short stories, poetry, and novels can be found on her website: [www.lysettecohen.com](http://www.lysettecohen.com).

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# Lysette Cohen

## Invisible

She sits in the shadows,  
A shadow of humanity.  
Unheard and unseen,  
She is ignored by a humanity too busy to care.

She sits in the shadows,  
Her once sweet voice now silenced.  
Rejected and scorned.  
She is disowned by a society selfish and indifferent.

She sits in the shadows,  
Family, husband, children now gone.  
Forgotten and forsaken.  
She is disdained by the very people who profess to care.

She sits in the shadows,  
Fading more and more each day.  
Abandoned and discarded.  
She is but one more soul lost on the breeze.

© 2015

# Lysette Cohen

## Moonlight Pleasures

Our eyes hold, void of irony or vacant stares,  
Blood rushes through veins with heady despair.  
No closer can we be than sharing the same skin,  
More in love, we have never been.

Moonlight pleasures so dark and heady,  
Drifting away on the sweet release of death that passes so sweetly.  
Sighs rush forth, for in his arms do I find bliss,  
Cleaving together with the fear of being cast adrift.

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In an addiction of sensation, I am lost to time and earth,  
Nothing else matters, never do I wish to return to home and hearth.  
Your touch I crave in silence so golden and true,  
To pass away the hours and postpone the morning's dew.

© 2015

# Lysette Cohen

## Death of Self

An existence mummified in a lifetime of fear,  
Precariously vulnerable to ephemeral whims of those so dear.  
No more than a skeletal husk, empty and brittle through to the marrow,  
Open destiny of life, the cruel joke of tomorrow.

Decades of selfish, narcissistic labor under guise of servant hood,  
Consensual rape of self, raw and bloody and crude.  
Happiness an illusion for lies coated in a civil veneer,  
Momentary bliss poured out over a lifetime of pain so queer.

Ties that bind and choke and kill, wind so tightly around the soul,  
A permanent addiction that brings heat to the cold.  
Heroin to the heart and body and mind,  
Sweet release of death to never be poured out in kind.

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© 2015

# Shanon Hittner

## Love Is All

How blind  
Can we make us  
One way or the other  
We both are.  
You can't see  
That you love me  
And I can't see  
That you don't  
And I only have  
My own head  
My own brain  
My own soul  
To contend With  
My heart,  
I don't ever blame her  
She has every right  
To do as she pleases  
Because she is good  
And that's all she has to be  
but my brain, my head  
They're supposed to have my back  
Or is my back supposed to get them  
Either way  
Someone dropped the ball  
Because my heart hurts  
And like I said  
She's the golden child

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Continued on page 23

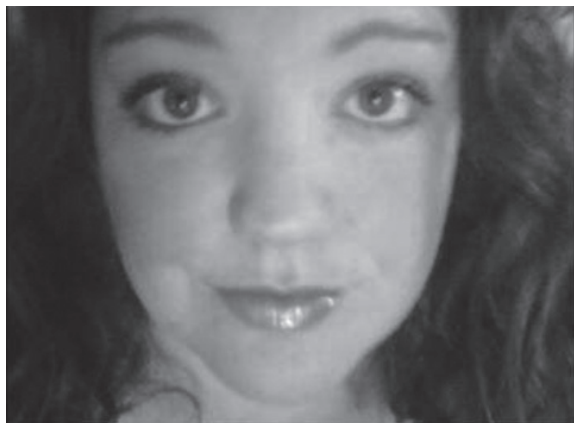
Truly  
I blame my soul this time  
There's a lesson here  
She's not letting anyone in on  
And though I try to wrap my heart around it  
And I know my soul means me no harm  
There are things I see  
In bits and pieces  
Like watching a rain storm  
In slow motion.  
Only my heart aches  
Like she's tired Of the ride  
And maybe that's it  
Maybe it's right  
When they all get on board  
And I want to stop looking for the answer  
But I'm not sure how  
That's a Peace,  
A freedom  
I've been looking for  
My whole life.  
I found a moment of it  
distracted by the trees  
But always when I am open  
I can't be anything but  
Wide  
And always if I look for beauty in this world,  
Always  
I fall in love  
So I guess  
There are no answers  
But love

© 2015

# Shanon Hittner

Shanon Hittner is a 29-year-old writer, artist and mother. Born and raised in Arizona, Shanon has been writing poetry since she was a little girl. Her style is geared towards creative nonfiction. She believes in writing what you know from the heart. Reach the poet at [mrskent33@Yahoo.com](mailto:mrskent33@Yahoo.com).

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# Shanon Hittner

## Aloud

I write so much  
Because  
Though I still relate  
I become quickly weary  
Of my old poems  
But we change so quickly  
And panic in our  
Own ways  
At our own times  
It's 7 am on a Saturday  
And I want to run away  
Strangely at a time  
When you seem the most  
Interested  
Genuinely  
And steadily.  
Your not  
Listening to the fear  
Though you are  
By nature  
Defiant  
And so have looked  
Your fear straight  
In the eye  
And found nothing there  
That you thought

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Continued on page 26

Might be  
Instead, you found  
Me  
And I begged you not to be afraid  
Silently  
Setting aside my own fear  
Of vulnerability  
And becoming  
Not so silent about it  
After all.  
© 2015

# Shanon Hittner

## The Pre-Apocalyptic Nap

I suppose just like anything else it encompasses  
The world probably won't go down  
Without a fight.  
The will is to survive  
And anything living  
Has it.  
The will.  
So im gonna take a nap  
Rest myself up for the apocalypse  
So that the world doesn't have to fight alone.  
© 2015

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# Shanon Hittner

## I Am Fallible

I never mean to run them off  
But something about my presence  
My being  
My love  
Is blinding, paralyzing, unforgettable  
I'm a strong wind  
A glowing beacon  
My honesty is breathtaking  
I can see things that others don't even know is there  
Silent wishes and fears  
So deeply involved  
Inseparable lovers  
Maybe, just maybe, if I didn't dream  
I wouldn't fear  
I refuse to quit dreaming  
And I refuse to hold on to dying dreams  
It is easy for me to detach  
It always has been  
Its holding on, investing, committing  
To a man's solid form  
I still hold on to some memories  
I'm no robot  
Every time a lit cigarette dangles nonchalantly from my lips  
I remember the young man who taught me  
That my fears could devastate love  
Every graph reminds me of the bitter old man

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Continued on page 29

Who taught me that happiness is a choice  
And that I must also choose  
A happy man.  
With every sports car, street rat, bike taxi, and friend turned lover  
I am reminded that I am fallible  
My wishes desires and dreams  
Are just that,  
Roots. Only useful if you can get the tree to grow and bear fruit  
My soil, my love, my roots  
Are hospitable  
And yet the seeds usually just blow away in the wind  
But I stay grounded

© 2015

# Michael Honn

## Footsteps

Footsteps,  
dancing past.

Echoing louder  
than the emptiness  
of dangling fingertips.

Footsteps,  
tracing moments.

Invisible motions,  
precursors to patterns  
outlined inside the perimeter.

Away,  
somewhere.  
Unknown,  
anywhere.  
Alone,  
everywhere.

Wandering eyes,  
sinking ships.  
Closed lips,  
slightly statue-esque.  
Malevolent.

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Continued on page 31

Medusa-like  
fragments of a glance.  
Trailing whispers  
of what could have been.

A moment gone,  
a moment to pass.  
Moments  
that were born  
to never last.

Footsteps,  
dissipating.

Feeding on  
their own direction.  
Sealing my fate.  
A reflection of  
silence,  
realized  
too late.

© 2015

# Michael Honn

Michael Honn is a 23-year-old Chicago native, newly arrived to Tucson. From a very young age, stories told through the medium of Graphic Novels have always deeply captured his imagination, being a catalyst to his very visual way of thinking. He hopes to one day write in that industry, a place that is all too often missing the dark, gritty realism of life. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Creative Writing with a concentration in Fiction at The University of Arizona. The rest of his time is divided between a book-length project, working part-time for Whole Foods Market, and creating music. Contact him at [michaelhonn@email.arizona.edu](mailto:michaelhonn@email.arizona.edu).

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# Marilyn June Janson

## Be Gone

“Now I know what it will feel like when I’m terminal,” Mom says.

I pretend not to hear her.

In our Scottsdale Camelback Resort hotel room I’m watching

Sue Ellen and J.R. Ewing fight on Dallas.

On spring break from college Mom took me on vacation.

Without my dad.

33

“Poor Betty Bacall,” my mother continues. “Bogart suffered so much

before cancer took his life.”

I am sorry I gave her Lauren Bacall’s autobiography to read.

At least Lauren was there for Bogy.

Mom had ovarian cancer. Three years later she was terminal.

She died alone.

Dad chose to be gone.

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# Marilyn June Janson

Marilyn June Janson, M.S., Ed., is the author of “Recipe for Rage,” a suspense novel, and three children’s books. She is writing a YA novel. The writer is available for speaking engagements and school author visits. Contact her at [www.janwrite.com](http://www.janwrite.com).

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# Marilyn June Janson

## Neglect

The savage claws of neglect twist tightly around my vocal cords  
Neglect suffocates, severing my windpipe,  
like being buried alive under frozen earth  
Oxygen reserves are trapped  
Heart muscles restrict  
Mouth opens wide  
Parched lips yell, "Help!"  
Silence, loneliness and death prevail  
Flesh, puffed with density, shrinks, then crumbles into sifted flour  
Bones fall in a heap like pickup sticks  
A broom, tattered with broken straw,  
sweeps the bones away, like burning kindling  
"Wait. I'm still here," I want to scream.  
I'm not curling up and dying because you stood me up  
Forgot about me  
I will my bones to order  
Pump myself up  
Grabbing neglect from around my mangled neck  
Stubbornly, I release myself from its wiry grip  
I stand tall  
I get an attitude  
I walk away with my pride resurrected

© 2015

35

# Ivana Kat

## New Love

Frozen – my nose is  
And I can't feel my toes  
Memories long forgotten, and yet missed  
By Father Frost on the cheek to be kissed

Snow replaced with sand  
A prison without walls  
Cacti are the snowmen of this land  
I feel like an ant under magnifying glass

Racing and losing to a roadrunner  
My car is equipped with the “luxury” of AC  
Patience is tested when waiting for a cactus flower  
Blooming once every so often, I am eager to see.

© 2015

# Ivana Kat

The poet writes: "I am Ivana Kat, from Eastern Europe. I live in Arizona now. I find writing poetry a cozy refuge. Writing in a foreign language is a challenge I accepted."

37



# Zoe Keeter

## From My Ghost To Yours

You ask for my eulogy as  
one hand holds the microphone  
and the other plunges the knife into my back  
hypocrite.

Tell me why I must speak  
when all I had to say died when you  
stopped hearing me  
tell me why it still  
stings.

38 Tell me why it is only after I  
have long forgotten the serpentine tongues you speak  
that you beg of me to break my vow of silence  
taken for your  
safety.

Tell me why I should be numb  
but my body is your scarecrow  
left to die in failed weather, failed crops  
failed life – yet, without the farmer, I can still scare off  
crows.

Continued on page 39

Tell me why I should see your question mark  
and do anything but take the hooked end and  
hang you in the town square, ill omen that you are  
vision of the silence you forced upon  
me.

Tell me why it is because I still have the heart  
to love the ones who left me guarding dying pumpkins.

Tell me why when question marks appear  
my veins are lined with gunpowder,  
this overly tied tongue's weak wick stands ready  
the sticks of dynamite that pose as my corrupted skeleton  
are whispering as they collide.

You stand with lighter in clenched yellow rose fist  
flicking flame at my timidity like lashes of the devil's  
tail.

And my eyes are glitching timers  
trying to foresee their own destruction  
and not comprehending why, WHY  
a question  
could so pose itself simply  
but just dangerously enough to stand me on the  
edge of infinity  
and dare me to answer  
with its 99 cent lighter inches from my fuse.

Silence  
was my only defense.

Perhaps  
no answer  
is my answer.  
I was too fragile to risk.

But luckily, I don't see your lighter anymore  
and so this tongue will reach out of bounds and  
keep going.

This scarecrow turns from avian and to aliens  
who think they can dry me in the sun  
and leave me to rot under their vengeful eye.

This scarecrow  
is an arsonist.

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And I should've been more careful with the lighter  
when I burned the farmhouse down.

Tell me why I didn't laugh  
when I saw you burn.

I died  
and I still haven't gotten the answers.

I'm still alive  
and I want an answer  
as I speak to ghosts.

© 2015

# Zoe Keeter

Zoe Keeter is a fifteen-year-old poet born and raised in various places around southern Arizona. She is currently a high school student in Vail and has been writing for three years with no intention of stopping anytime soon. She keeps her work lively and passionate by attending Tucson Youth Poetry Slam monthly and spitting her work on the mic. In the future, she looks forward to making her work more visible in the literary community and continuing to slam. She can be contacted through her e-mail, [tigerkitsplashkit1411@hotmail.com](mailto:tigerkitsplashkit1411@hotmail.com).

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# Zoe Keeter

## The Blues Was Your First Language

The sun  
bats its eyelashes in a way  
that makes me feel  
like it was really looking at me  
the way you used to.

The morning dew  
laying lazily across blades of grass  
still clings to the images  
of the stars  
that we used to sing about.

42 The face of an alarm clock  
shows me that /my/ face  
is broken, right down the middle  
and the pain of the fracture zips through  
my wood like it was new.

The morning breeze  
pushes a sign hung around my neck  
but does nothing for the dust  
layered upon the hole in my middle.

Beside me  
peeking through the blades of a fan  
that sputtered out years ago  
like myself  
is the orange eye  
that you fled from  
every morning.

Continued on page 43

The sun  
takes me back  
to long days  
sitting against your nightstand  
waiting for your footsteps  
ringing the bells to my escape  
You never picked me up right away  
and so, each night, excitement  
pulled my heartstrings taut  
like the tension in your jaw  
as you watched outside the window slats  
for the pale face of a loved one  
just beyond your callused fingertips  
and when it grinned bright at you  
between the bars of your cage,  
You would swing me up with ease  
and my heart fluttered next to yours  
Maybe you pulled my hair  
to get me to make just the right sound  
but it stopped stinging with the vibration of your chest  
You pulled my neck up by yours  
and you held me like you loved me  
and I like to think you did.

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You and I sat up all night long  
You with the scent of cherry wood in your brain  
and I with the slightest scent  
that comes just when you walk in the door that reminds you of home  
intoxicating me  
We three, you and I with the moon by our side  
We weren't the best singers,  
but we were on those nights.  
Baby, we – YOU – played the blues  
like you were born with sheet music  
tattooed on the back of your eyelids.  
Boy, things were swell.  
So one night I sat  
loyally against your nightstand  
waiting for baby to come back home,  
but footsteps were instead  
the steady beating rhythm of words in tongues  
I couldn't begin to understand.

My heartstrings tightened  
not with excitement, but stress.  
And when you stormed in that night  
you were rockin' like a hurricane  
throwin' things around at the speed of sound  
and words I didn't know but made me wanna  
wash out my mouth  
You sat upon your messy throne  
like a fly on the wall  
you pulled me up like we were going dancing

I felt the excitement rise  
but fall and crash when I realized  
you were holding my neck  
a little too tight  
Your breath was not the wind in the reeds, but the snort of a bull  
You picked me up till I was high as the Empire State  
and you threw me down like  
I burned you.

But in the time it took  
to fall somewhere between being in love with you and hating you  
I realized why you spoke foreign languages like the Blues so well  
Because you saw them  
in your untied shoelaces  
in your mirror in the morn  
in your daddy's face when he told you "music won't feed a family"  
in your friends  
in the air  
in the moon  
and maybe even in me.  
So when I hit the ground, I knew the pain of my face splintering  
could never amount to the pain you felt  
I know the teardrops hitting my heartstrings, burning like acid  
were a flood of songs we could never sing  
I knew you hurt.

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When I was broken, you turned away, but I understood.  
I understood  
when you stuffed me in with the monsters in your closet  
even though it hurt.  
That's why I waited  
for five long years  
lounging with the skeletons in the closet,  
waited for the footsteps ringing the bells to my escape.  
That's why I'm waiting  
in the driveway  
with a broken heart and a sign  
hanging from my bruised neck  
that says in a nasty language I will never understand  
"If you can fix me, you can have me."

But I swear, upon my old friend the moon  
upon all the stars in the sky  
upon all the songs we never sang  
that even if I never get  
this scar welded shut  
I will find a way – I'll  
search between every note I  
can possibly play  
for a way  
to fix  
you.

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# Zoe Keeter

## My Definition

Hell is  
turning back to say goodbye  
only to see they're already gone,  
knowing you're monogamous and  
losing your mate to a  
world whose land wears  
teeth for jewelry,  
great fire that consumes  
all your hair like underbrush, forcing you  
to watch it clog your shower drain  
and wonder at how deeply the burns licked your hide,  
singing the most powerful song  
only to find out later that the lyrics  
were all wrong,  
loving unconditionally  
while your lover hides a contract  
between crossed fingers behind their back,  
seeing your heart get up and walk out of your chest  
after a particularly ugly fight without  
being able to find the words  
to call it back,

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Hell is  
your shadow shaking hands with strangers  
you would never dare to speak to,  
watching your personal songbird  
sing as sweet to your enemies  
and lose its key every time it  
looks at you,  
rooting yourself deep in suitable soil  
only to be stabbed deep with sun burnt metal  
and raised into the sky  
too soon,  
a daring dream of dancing  
to wake with cold, still legs  
and your arms around a lifeless pillow,  
tears left for dead on your  
battlefield cheeks,  
an open heart transplant  
interrupted by the news  
that there was never a donor,  
the blaze under your cheeks when  
soft laughter pushes your face towards the dirt,  
that constant paranoia that lurks on the edge of  
break-ups and breakdowns that questions  
whether you have ever truly loved, or been loved at all,

Hell is  
being so human  
that you become  
a monster.

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# Zoe Keeter

## Necromancy For The Commoner

When our lungs finally fill with our  
infinity, our freezing death rattle, our  
cold final utterances, haunting no matter the words  
We die.

And we dance for our dead; we  
bathe them in sunlight, we  
dance for what remains of them, imagining  
their cold branch fingers with fresh sprouts  
their violently still hearts beating with our own  
their curled toes not for lack of blood but for  
light eskimo kisses

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We produce them in their cerements  
Skeletons wearing rose crowns  
The budding heads of lilacs peering between  
the spaces of their canines, shy (but we know their deceit)  
Dress them in swan and raven feathers  
Light, and unhindering; something walks within them  
toward brighter lights at the end of subway tunnels  
Paint their faces with vibrant  
but venomous  
berries' blood  
and thus present them to their master

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But these hands of warm jelly were not  
made to present infinity to infinity  
and so collapse in the face of an  
almighty and multifaceted God  
our demure, marrow filled, rushing bones  
collapse and let our beloved fall  
into the arms of their ending.  
Back away slowly, but never remove our eyes  
from the animation we pretend to see  
in the emptied sockets of the lost's  
eyes

Never step too far away  
for fear of their lovely nonflesh growing lonely  
Know that we may never attend their steps again  
but joyfully promise to each other  
that we  
are  
not  
alone.

so

Continued on page 51

Skulls overtaken by technicolor dynamite aftermaths  
hang slackjawed  
adorned with their crown of thorns and nightshade  
Shadowed in their sepulchers  
pieces entwined with the stems of foliage  
they were born of  
and we try to breathe life  
back into them,  
try to look them in the eyes  
and teach them the rhythm of our hearts  
so they may have a home to return to;

but no matter how  
we gaze into empty concavities  
they will not  
look back.

No matter how many holes we  
lovingly dig out of their coffins  
for starlight to speckle their bones  
the beloved dead  
are still cold.

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# Emily Long

## A Night of Spoken Starlight

You came near me (and how I tensed!)  
With such unreasoned circumstance  
All night we laughed there (you and I)  
While eyes, as stars above, they danced:  
    You eased my soul's ache, by the by.

(Oh, so fickle, the things we spoke!)  
Yet fell short to thoughts we feel.  
All night we spoke there (you and I)  
Knowing unspoken the means of our deal:  
    For feeling is fine when reasonings hide.

We sat separate together (under seeing starlight)  
Eyes brightest yet, since lacked tomorrow.  
Night knew our love there (you and I)  
And now leaves new days bleak and hollow:  
    For skies lose their wonder when shooting stars hide.

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# Emily Long

Emily is an undergraduate at the University of Arizona with a dual major in Psychology and Neuroscience with an emphasis on neurobiology. She is working toward a medical doctorate degree, but in the meantime, enjoys sharing her life experiences through written word and photography. Reach the poet at [elong444@gmail.com](mailto:elong444@gmail.com).

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# Emily Long

## In a State of Mind

in the midst of a shadow  
not Foreseen, yet entwined,  
keeps the tattered soul withered  
Evermore feigning fine.

while the Art of restraint  
saves from moments of strife  
those sad moments in waiting,  
in Recluse, robbing life.

© 2015

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# Emily Long

## To the Man I Never Knew

Sir,  
You taught well – I admit.  
To this day, words drop out of me:  
    Light . . . with pause, and  
    Fearful.

Because little girls shall not make large ripples  
But you ripped much more than my voice.

So now I make a sound, Sir.

for every disregard,  
    every lie to match convenience,  
    every shove into the corners of my mind,  
i thank you.

My mind is now furnished with the comforts of a home  
that you never could provide  
And a heart large enough for a world said to have no heart for me.

thank you.  
for the cutting curses  
that cut me free from the complacency of a life  
meant to keep my head down  
So that I could float above the world to a found home. and  
thank you  
for beating me down until I didn't know myself  
So that I had to stand up again to be found

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and most importantly,  
thank you  
for hurting me  
So I could learn to weigh importance with pain.

it hurts to look you in the eye, sir.  
nowadays it hurts to look just about anyone in the eye.  
because what you did to me was enough  
to stop looking for anything in others.

And yet I found my way to speak.  
I have a life of making large ripples.  
And there will be a day when I give my love

Not as a sacrifice, but as a reciprocation.

Not because of,  
but in spite of  
you. Sir.

you taught well.

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# Christa Lubatkin

## Dolomiti Paradiso

I came to these rugged friends fifteen years ago  
drawn by their carved good looks  
dynamic personality  
the green of their shoulders  
spires like un-gloved fingers stabbing into crystal air  
backs turned to the Austrian north.

I was a stranger then, knew  
none of the peaks by name, not  
the sunset face of the blushing Monte Civetta,  
nor Cristallo soaring  
above voluptuous morning vapor  
rising from the valley floor.

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Straining lungs and legs, I labor  
over trails through forests and beyond  
to where no tree can take hold  
I thirst and hunger to reach the cross at the top  
above the vertical rock where alpenrosen  
burst flaming pink in late July.  
In September I walk on carpets of pine needles  
through a larch tree blaze of amber.

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We who know these mountains  
speak of them with smiling hearts  
share memories so intimate  
we might as well be speaking in tongues.  
Yes, our wanderings along the mighty Tofana di Mezzo  
and Piz Boe have forged iron friendships.

Below the limestone peaks  
in a high meadow, a flock of sheep  
nibble on grass and daisies, their bells ringing  
until they settle near a glacier lake  
to nap the nap of eternity.

Shepherd and dog shelter in shade.

We wander past, our knapsacks heavy  
with water, mountain cheese, bread  
and the chocolate of gods, a bar of Toblerone.

We dig in our boots and hiking sticks  
ascend on a snaking trail to refugio Lagazuoi  
perched above 9,000 feet on the Picolo. Our shoulders  
set against vigorous wind, the same wind  
that on calmer days plays tenderly  
over our cheeks and whispers in our ears.  
We already smell the welcome –  
cheese polenta, roe deer stew and strudel.

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Why do we carry our lunch you might ask?

It is the provision of the wise  
for mountain weather can turn ornery  
with snow squalls in July  
the crack and whip of lightening bolts  
a rockslide crashing over our trail  
minutes before we arrive.

By nightfall we must reach the refuge.

A small chamber awaits us –  
two beds dressed in white linens  
stuffed with goose feathers  
a carved creaking armoire.  
Our window looks over the glacier  
of Monte Marmolada  
alternately brooding or sparkling,  
depending on weather –  
as everything is in this region.

Guido and Alma smile when we enter  
(they have hosted us many times before).

Always we suffer as if leaving a lover  
but the Italian Dolomites are faithful  
they wait while they are shaped  
by wind, by rain, by time.

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# Christa Lubatkin

Christa Lubatkin was born in a bomb shelter (her claim to fame perhaps?) and at age 15 immigrated to the U.S. Throughout her life, writing has held her in good stead and writing poetry in particular. She is an enthusiastic hiker and loves the mountains from Tucson to the Alps. Vistas and surprises. Her poetry has appeared in the Paterson Literary Review, Soul-lit, The Blue Guitar and Unstrung.

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# Christa Lubatkin

## ears and eyes on the sea

in the roar of our earshells  
we hear the constant, the caressing carefree sea.

a glistening sun scuds upon the surf.

soon children will enter to splash  
and scream, then sally home.

would the untamable  
unembraceable  
uncontrollable ocean, buoy us?

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our eyes flinch not  
from her salty, seductive swell,  
though we heed her growls and groans.

we blanch at the sight of the beating  
the battered black and blue waters.

in her womb lie the wounds,  
the birth of being, the hum of the heart.

we witness her whimper, her wind-wrestling,  
her wake and wallow.

Continued on page 62

she alone endures, she,  
the deathless companion of the moon.

we sway no influence over the sea and pray  
she sways gently with us.

a swell of peace rises in us and sets us free –  
we hear and we see.

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# Christa Lubatkin

## Skydiving

“Why am I made to suffer?”

“No reason.” – Zen wisdom

They came to jump with me.

My excitement soon was  
dampened.

They brought gloom wrapped  
in silence.

Exchanged covert glares, closed  
doors with restraint

(when slamming  
would feel so good).

He sat and sat, lifted neither eyes  
nor fingers, she

eager to please

stirred the soup, folded napkins,  
cleared crumbs

from a clean table.

Ice sloshing scotch to drown his  
funk. Only tea, thank you –

she crosses her legs, settled  
sweetly.

The marriage – not one year old.

\*\*\*

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Unstrung • Summer 2016

After the jumps, after hugs  
at the departure terminal,  
my unease too deep to lift  
with yogic breathing,  
I got lost in Phoenix.

Drove too fast in the dark  
on RT 79, no lights, no sign  
of happy  
behind-window-living  
bristly desert on both sides  
coyotes howling – yellow eyed  
rattlers sleeping  
No service station in sight.  
Florence, the prison town  
more danger  
afraid to stop for gas.

At home, I open windows,  
waiting for a lilt of Zen  
to breeze in with the night.

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# Enrique García Naranjo

## Guadalajara Wash

the shards of liquor bottles, guised  
as stones, reflect the searing sunrays  
of the afternoon.

glass that is now desert,  
arranged like patches on a quilt.  
each shard has a density  
and hue; each shard is an emblem  
carrying a history of tragedy &  
jubilee.

bottles that Chicano boys drink  
& throw into washes, bottles of  
hard liquor consumed by Yaqui boys;  
bottles that break like their reflections.

broken bottles like the memories  
of drunken saguaros, who drink  
sunrise and vomit ashes.  
they are phantoms, who don't  
know their names & who wait  
for the rain to fill up the washes.

their gratitude is all this glass  
on the bed of the wash,  
an offering in return for  
the liquor of grey skies.

a wash of desert glass is  
a mirror made of these shards  
reflecting the sun &  
all the forgotten faces of Tucson.

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# Enrique García Naranjo

Enrique García Naranjo is a Chicano poet from South Tucson, Arizona. He has been performing poetry since 2011 and has won awards for his literary work and activism. In 2014, Enrique published his first collection of poetry, “Tortoise Boy Says,” available through Spoken Futures Press. Firmly believing in the power of knowledge, Enrique is actively involved in re-writing the narrative of the Chicana/o community.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## From “Fenton’s Folly Speaks for Herself”

If you are at all interested in learning what being a Fenton is like, you should start here. Think what Scott Fitzgerald said about writing,

that it is like “swimming under water and holding your breath.” But now breathe anyway. Glide in my direction. You must now add

the impossible, because being a Fenton, being human, is like being anything else that you aren’t, at least not yet; well, human, yes, but

maybe—

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Add that writing is like swimming under water and breathing at the same time through an apparatus that works only because you have declared

that it works, and you have somehow said it in such a way that those who listen are willing to agree with you at the same time that they know it ain’t true,

like

breathing under water.

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No, it is not possible. No, Let us not say that. Let us say that, however much and however adequate the investigation, evidence strongly suggests that no attempt at it will succeed.

With that admonishment, we will be able to continue, I think. So, given the probability that what we are about to explore as factual cannot actually happen, let us proceed:

I walk back down to the river, unable to find once again the place I actually hid from him, but close enough. I cut a stem of trumpet weed about two feet long,

and I make sure that the stem is, pretty much, hollow. I then attempt to breathe through the weed, as though I might be under water. I would lie at the bottom, breathing sunlight.

I would try it under water only to determine whether the pressure of water above me will preclude my breathing through the stem, but, since I cannot anyway, I will not bother.

Thus do I sacrifice a meeting of direct observation with old Archimedes, but this sacrifice is worthy. The end of the experiment is merely to prove that what is manifestly unprovable is

manifestly to be believed, the revelation delivered with appropriate verisimilitude. It is necessary for our purposes to sacrifice factuality for the sake of a new reality,

a virtuous reality that will be accepted before fact: I had three Spanish silver dollars. Two of these I melted in my old iron bullet-molding pot. But before I did this, I had already gathered

enough clay—and I did not require much—from the river-bank to make a small mold of the face and obverse of the coin I had already regarded as the clearest and sharpest of the three.

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I pressed the face of the cross-faced coin into one round of clay and the obverse into the other round of clay. I did this carefully by pushing each side of the coin into the clay

as precisely as I could to half-way up the edge, placed together with equal care the two rounds that should make for a mold for almost the same weight as the original, or a little more than

the original just to be fair. That is why I had to melt both other coins; I needed to be sure that my new silver coin was not only the exact imitation of the original but that the new coin

carry the exact weight as the original,  
identical to the original, and a trust more,  
unmistakably the same coin as the original,  
*and* perfectly distinguishable, but

It's not the coin that we try to keep  
forever and forever, but the feel  
of the touch of stylus on clay, the feel  
in the fingers on the stylus, the feel

through fingers of the patina of clay,  
smooth grains sliding to make way  
for the imitation of the cross on the coin,  
the true false cross, felt through the clay

and the stylus, from the fingers  
through the eyes into the mind  
and thence into the memory where  
the forever strains toward the same

feeling in the minds of those following  
who feel all of that without stylus  
or fingers or touch of any sort, but  
sure that what remains in generations

remains:

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which is what I want from my work and from the work of your necessary senses: that the coin you know, because in your listening,

in your looking at the coin, even after that coin has been lost for two and a half or maybe three centuries, is a fabrication based upon

a coin that you have no reason to see as real in the first place, but is real. And it is real not only because you can see and feel and hear it clink

against the next coin in our imaginary bag of coins and tricks, and not only that it is real because it is a coin and it is made of silver and

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it bears the art and signature of the original silver coin that is counterfeited, made apposite, but that it is *the very same coin* that it is

counterfeited from. And because it is what it is and what it was before it was created, *because* it is created and not a mere item

of commerce palmed for no reason than commerce, but because you know now that you are the maker of that coin and that

your own sons and daughters and theirs are  
also the makers of that coin, and that none  
of those people can be anything else but makers!

And this too: that the first person singular  
that you have been reliving has been,  
though and because you have not noticed

as you read along, none other than the one  
you have no choice but to create on your own,  
while I . . . while . . .

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Would it be worth anyone's while if I were to explain why  
I have written in verse what looks more like to be history?

Probably not. So I will assert that between poets and historians  
we got here first and besides no one has ever thought to regard us

as factually dependable. That is handy for us all. We let our imaginations  
roll fairly free among the facts; the good news is that our readers

have the same freedom. Take freedom and enjoy as you will.  
Perhaps the first poem will help explain what I mean . . . or then

maybe the second, or the third, or . . . while you have a bit of time  
and face it, most of us have plenty of time if we wish to learn

how not to hurry. We had better have time or the hurry will get to us ahead of our time. Let me illuminate what isn't time, but:

When you flick on the light, you flick on the light only.  
You don't think, don't need to.

But thinking is control, you know, which  
you lose in the unthought flick of the switch  
to the silent, masterly surge of blind lightning.

With a candle, even a brief stub, maybe only  
a stub from the neglected rear of a kitchen drawer,  
you control the light, control all that the light controls.  
Your hand controls the light-defying wind,  
while you illuminate the secret map of your palm.

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With the oil lamp you accept the laws of control  
that come from having to buy the oil,  
having to bring home the oil along the paved road,  
the oil-paved road going back to gravel  
in the gentle imprecise control of memory.

But when you have shut the door,  
have allowed the outside to darken, have lighted your will,  
then you fill the lamp in the resin-scented,  
fire-scented old kitchen, your grandparents' maybe  
or theirs. You trim the wick.

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You light the lamp.

You adjust the wick for the light correctly controlled  
to the brightness and the dimness you need  
to control time to the needs of your soul,  
and you open the book to light the poem.

But why all this language about poetry when I ought to focus  
on our house, Fentons' Folly and its inmates. Because the Folly

has been my inspiration for a good part of my work as a writer  
and as a person for almost seven decades and the inspiration

74 for a whole book. I mention this partly out of vanity I suppose,  
but mostly to lead to the question. To what does your own home

in the world inspire you? Certainly it needn't be poetry, or any art,  
but something important to you and something important that you want,

no need, to leave behind. Before we go further, assuming you  
want to go further, and I hope you do, let me suggest that

the common notion of poetry reading as a task to perform before  
Miss Fidditch's next English test has not been good to us poets.

Frankly, in the last century and for the first time since poets  
have been entertaining and teasing people for all these thousands

of confusing years we are just a bit lonely, just a bit frustrated.  
Without the Folly as genius loci I would be despondent. So listen:

You do not want to read a poem the way you would read a newspaper  
article or the instructions for the new kayak rudder (a source of despair

I have been pouring over lately) or the testament of the latest perfect  
stranger who has decided to “friend” you, or the misery of your

mortgage restrictions. Poems deserve to be read slowly, performed  
inwardly. True: poems, especially worthy ones, tend to be a bit difficult

and a bit confusing. But poems are written to reflect life and life  
is a bit difficult and a bit confusing. I know a poet and teacher

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who claims that he writes and teaches out of confusion and into it  
the way teaching should be done, the way poetry should be

done, the way life should be lived. Here's a pretty simple poem  
and one that is like its subject dear to me:

In August the road is clear, paved in green,  
framed in green aspen, birch, pine, spruce,  
an unnameable glory of undergrowth  
that restricts our focus to the only clearing  
in the wood, that green tunnel of old road.  
I cannot see Carol's face when she looks  
back into the green, but I see *from* Carol's  
face, because I see what Carol sees. We  
share the enveloping light of it all.

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If I could see her face, my photograph  
would have been of her face, but my soul  
reaches Carol as it reaches Carol's world,  
the one we share, the world she nourishes  
day by living day. So in a way, I left  
the life out of the picture. I did that  
for the small sake of my soul, our soul,  
mine, Carol's, the soul of what we see  
down the old road, all that we don't see  
outside, her guide for looking inside.

It's not a difficult poem I think, but still it shouldn't be read fast and maybe  
if you want to live a few minutes in the poem you might read it again

and maybe read it aloud. No one is looking over your shoulder with a stopwatch and no one cares whether you get the questions right or not.

In fact the only questions are the ones you may ask yourself and that is the best of what reading poems is all about—entering the correspondence

that poets have with one another and with anyone who chooses to join. Hey, and you don't even have to be alive to play a part. Homer and I correspond

regularly. Geoffrey Chaucer and I have been good friends for almost 50 years. Robert Frost and I have been trying to confuse each other since 1958.

And it is always a happy challenge to try to figure out what dear Emily Dickinson has been up to just this 60 years or so join us

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where the light is better.

Mostly I stay where the light is good,  
where life is comfortable, safe, well lit,  
sometimes even interesting, secure.

But now and then something shuffles  
in the shadow, and I shake my head  
from under wing to discover some light,

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and I blink, only sometimes with passion,  
and mostly, when I cast my light  
on my shuffling soul, I am only shadow—

wiping dishes, untangling fish hooks,  
typing something in the bad light  
of my palsied memory, half created—

But maybe the shadow is Ergo Bear,  
or Pooh and Babe or the baby Jackpine  
outside the warp of this wrinkled window,

78 or the Folly itself, that pops out of time  
and shadow, full of conversation,  
timeless energy looking for words—

“This isn’t orderly,” my window argues,  
the old man’s head is barely attached  
to language at all! His way is folly!”

And my Old and Wise Ones whisper back,  
“But if you think it will work . . . .”  
And I taste, and breathe, and work.

You see that this can go on for a while. Maybe a long, long while.  
There is plenty of room on the web site. Someone will tell me if there isn’t.

But this is a good place to mention another advantage of poetry over history. Poetry tends to lack chapters. You can pick up a poem, read it, read another or not. People are led to think that poetry is about getting through those interminable English classes in high school.

But it isn't. Poetry is about freedom. Poetry is always about freedom, even when it isn't, even when it is, maybe, about rules, or breathing.

Some "history" can't be trusted to anyone but the poet, still, after all these millennia. History, by definition, has no imagination, or it couldn't be trusted

as factual. So we trust the poet to try to live in the Other, like these deer. And we try to trust the poet to persuade that Other to live in us.

\*\*\*

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And then there's this morning. And yesterday. And the morning before. I had once planned a yearly "Caw" poem, each summer a new poem

relating corvine conversations. But quite some time ago I lost heart or I would be sitting here composing "Caw VII." You would lose heart too.

Maybe you have. You have a story behind you that is only yours, a story that doesn't need to enter into the poems or intrude upon the lives of their readers.

Another good thing about poetry: The readers are always just as expert about life as the poet; the readers always get to decide.

Decide.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

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



# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## On the Long Poem

“Fentons’ Folly Speaks for Herself” is part of a long poem, I hope, should I live so long, begun in response to the efforts of members of my family to get me to compose a family history. This I have refused to do, partly because, save for a few of us, we are at least as dull a generational tract as any. More specifically because, although I respect written history, I find the writing of it tedious. Besides, history asks us to know about the past; poetry asks us to live it, to invent it along with the poet, to try to sort out the confusions in the same way we try to sort out the confusions that create out of existence, living.

So, for a family of people who, like most people, are not poetry readers, I have started easy. I have composed verse that is not awfully difficult, although I hope it contains some puzzles for readers to participate in. And I have interspersed a sort of “wen fu” that attempts to help out, and which is easily picked out by the long couplets in which it resides.

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It also occurs to me that, Unstrung being a magazine dedicated to the art of poetry, my fellow practitioners might enjoy some notions about composition from one of the group, and may wish to enter into the conversation.

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# Jack Silver

## Six Haiku

POETRY ESCAPES

JOYOUSLY PAST THE MIND'S GATE  
USING HEART AND TRUTH

FASHION SLOWLY CREEPS  
FROM BAZAAR BLACK GHETTO LOOKS  
TO COOL WHITE WEALTHY

82 WE ALL WITH OUR DREAMS  
ASSIST THE CRIPPLED DAYBREAK  
TO HER SUNLESS FEET

ALL FLAGS ARE THE SAME  
A GENTLE BREEZE SENDS SHUDDERS  
UP THEIR SPINAL CORDS

JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS  
NOSTRADAMUS WAS ALSO  
CYNICS OF THEIR AGE

IT IS CONFIRMED  
WE KNOW ABSOLUTELY ZILCH  
WE WERE JUST DREAMING

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Unstrung • Summer 2015

# Jack Silver

Jack Silver was born in Newark, N.J., in 1941. He traveled the world studying contemporary and indigenous peoples' arts and crafts, focusing his own work on pen and ink, painting, writing, portraiture, sculpting and spoken-word performances. His philosophy is that art is God's gift to all. Jack introduced Haiku as a tool for teaching English conversation in Asia. He is a hospice and VA volunteer and aqua aerobics instructor. Reach the artist at [silverjacks80@yahoo.com](mailto:silverjacks80@yahoo.com).

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# Joe Sweeney

## The Lie of Love

my heart is hollow  
a surface without substance  
it's the lie of love

© 2015

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# Joe Sweeney

The poet writes: “I am a freelance editor and a writer. I have my own publishing company and have written/published eight of my own books and published two by other authors. I write primarily short stories — science fiction and fantasy. I also run a writers’ group in Tucson called the Pima Writers’ Forum. In addition, I do contract programming on the side and worked as a computer programmer for many years.”

85



# Joe Sweeney

## The Other Side of Love

Threads intertwined  
A once joyful tapestry  
Now soiled with pain

With each cut made  
With each knot untied  
I feel like a lesser man

I am the Tin Woodman  
My body rusted by tears  
My heart unraveled and gone

I am a hollowed shell  
The pain still echoes  
In soundless weeping

My hell on earth  
Began when we frayed  
And our life ended

© 2015

86

# Joe Sweeney

## The End Written Into the Beginning

the circle of life; an endless path  
a chance to re-write history?  
or something comfortable  
because it is known?  
either too afraid to change  
or lacking the knowledge  
as the next one comes around  
another in a series  
fresh off the assembly line  
differing inconsequentially

how does one end  
to truly begin?

© 2015

87

# Joe Sweeney

## Father's Day

'Father' was too formal  
And 'Daddy' wouldn't do  
You were always 'Dad' to me  
And that was fine by you.

Across the room each Sunday  
The time passed in silence  
With only trivia and news  
To help us bridge the distance

88

After all those quiet hours  
With too much left unspoken  
The memories that remain  
Are fractured, they are broken

The man who was my father  
The man I came to know  
Still remains a stranger  
For all he could not show

© 2015

# Joe Sweeney

## Fight (for) It

Silence is a weapon

Hide the truth

Show nothing

Safety is a wall

Hold the pain

Risk nothing

Watch it dissolve

Do not waver

Fight (for) it

© 2015

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# Joe Sweeney

## Path to Faith

A praiseworthy child

Reciting prayers

Introduction to faith

A questioning teen

Challenging prayers

Attacking faith

A bitter adult

Forsaking prayers

Unanswered faith

A wise elder

Heartfelt prayers

Knowing faith

© 2015

90

# Joe Sweeney

## The Man Behind the Father

Working long days to earn his daily bread  
A provider of shelter, clothing, food  
Serving God and country to get ahead  
For a wife, seven children in the brood

Stern and stoic was the man that I saw  
Strong, forthright, honest; a man of his word  
Slave to smoke and drink; yet I was in awe  
Of the keen intellect that I observed

But now I know the man I never knew  
Age reveals, I begin to understand  
Deepest feelings hidden far out of view  
The man behind the father is human

A legacy soon mine to carry on  
This mantle I bear as the eldest son  
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# Hannah Irene Walsh

## To Know

When man walks ancient paths again  
Accepts his nature not as sin  
And all things risen from clay as kin  
Will the bones of Adam rise

To roam free of bonds remote  
Singing words that Nature wrote  
And in the pocket of his coat  
The treatise of his soul revised

92

He'll scout along the verdant wild  
To track lady Lilith long-exiled  
And together bear an exquisite child:  
A fiery bird to the stars betrothed

Who takes wing on ethereal tides  
And, like all God's children, to fate abides  
While Adam, Lilith at his side,  
Buries his rib in the old fig grove

© 2015

# Hannah Irene Walsh

Hannah Irene Walsh was born in Phoenix, Arizona, and raised in the town of Gilbert by her mother. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jewelry & Metalsmithing from Northern Arizona University in 2012, and is currently pursuing her Master of Fine Arts in Drawing & Painting at Arizona State University. Her work explores primal and mythological concepts, and she often supplements her visual process with written word. She admires the writings of Hermann Hesse, Mervyn Peake, and Patti Smith. Reach the artist and poet at [mercurial.raven@gmail.com](mailto:mercurial.raven@gmail.com).

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# Hannah Irene Walsh

## To Want

In my youth  
I was a witch  
Upon my chest a scar  
And in my hands  
I held a bird  
A precious azure star

If only to fly  
I could have known grace  
But such was not mine to share  
So with envious hands  
I spread his wings, broke them,  
And left him laying there

94 “Do you bleed?”  
I asked the bird  
“Do you feel as I do?”  
I’ve suffered idleness  
And so I must tell you  
Of the dreams I have of endless seas  
And of temples vandalized.  
My love for you undying,  
Yet still away you fly.  
The sky may welcome you,  
But my words a tempest make.  
I will cage you in my chest  
For I have no heart to break.”

Continued on page 95

If only he bled  
I would feel revived  
But his life was not mine to take  
He dreamed my dreams  
And in sleep he walked  
To drown himself in the lake

In my heart  
There was a mouth  
A hungry thing, a pit  
Deep within  
Was built a nest  
And white bones lay in it

To fill the hole  
I would seat something new  
Where a bird once made his nest  
So I climbed the mountain,  
Cried his name,  
And clung to his rocky breast

“Do you speak?”  
I asked the mountain,  
“Do you feel as I do?  
Every drop of sweat  
Was to become worthy of you.  
Though I still have fear of falling  
And being blinded by the sun,  
I want only for my devotion

95

To set loose your crystal tongue.  
My words are to you unmoving  
For your roots run far too deep.  
Without the strength to crush you,  
You'll dissolve in tears I weep."

If only he spoke  
I would be made whole  
But his stones were not mine to break  
He fell into my tears  
And in silence was carried  
Through the streams that fed the lake  
© 2015

# Hannah Irene Walsh

## To Love Azathoth

Oh you fool, you pretty thing,  
Your lips to the foot of a blind man  
A fool himself, but enthroned  
Upon his tower of imperfection  
Yet still you climbed

The breath of his music  
Inaudible frequencies  
Fiery wind, magnetism,  
His light radiant, empty  
The sun of your desire  
And you, Mercury,  
Learned nothing from Icarus

You watch the motions of his hands  
Platonic solids cast like dice  
Little bursts of hydrogen in the dark  
And you hunt their shards  
Plucking jewels from the tar of night  
To crown his babbling head  
With laurels of geometry

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Sometimes  
You dream of stealing his flute  
And breaking the damned thing  
Over your knee  
And pressing your hands to his face  
Spreading apart his pursed lips  
And shaping his breath  
Into notes of truth  
© 2015

# Hannah Irene Walsh

## The Wasteland In My Belly

I nourished this love with my whole body.

I was its vessel.

Am I to blame for the still-birth?

Was the food I ate for it too rich?

Was the drink I swallowed too potent?

Or perhaps it was the blows  
of heavy silence upon my gut.

Perhaps it was the fall  
from where I stood, enraptured,  
at the summit of the flight to awe.

99

The love I bore to you was miscarried:  
another casualty of mortal pursuit.

I buried its remains  
far into the desert, alone.

I hope that as you wander the wastes,  
fed with manna and mescaline,  
you will be drawn to this monument.  
Only through death is it immortal:  
the only sign from your god ever manifest.

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# Editor's Note

**D**riving home late at night from work, I always look for bats swooping down from the darkness to grab at insects caught in the glow of streetlights. One recent night, I watched as a bat glided down into the light to feast, then effortlessly glide back up into the blackness as if swallowed whole. Then and there, I knew I had to write down this moment — what happened exactly as I had experienced it, sensed it and felt it. After several attempts, I came up with “The night snapped shut around the bat.” I’m still fashioning the rest of the poem, and I may yet still change that line. But for me, poetry is the best and perhaps only way to capture these intense moments of experience and concentrate them in the most potent image possible. Over the years, naysayers have purported to ring a death knell for poetry. I say, it’s more alive than ever, with all of its diverse, wonderful voices, all communicating our shared experience in this vast creation — what it means to be human and what we attempt to fathom deciphering the darkness.

**Rebecca “Becca” Dyer**  
**Editor**

## Editorial Staff

**Editor:** *Rebecca Dyer*  
**Editor:** *Richard H. Dyer Jr.*  
**Publisher:** *Elena Thornton*  
**Artwork for front cover:** *Marjory Boyer*

# Open Mic: A celebration of the arts

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

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

**When:** Every last Thursday of each month, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

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

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

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## Coming Oct. 25: Save the date!

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

Noon to 4 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 25

In the beautiful, huge courtyard of the

Arizona Historical Society Museum at Papago Park,

1300 N. College Ave., Tempe.

Admission is free!

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

# A Call to Poets

## For Summer 2016

Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, will seek poetry submissions for its Summer 2016 Issue from June 1 through July 1, 2016. Poets must submit original work and must have a tie to Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the poet must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and multiple poems may be submitted. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your e-mail submission. Please include in the e-mail subject line: Attn. Unstrung — Poetry submission, and send to Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org).

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

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

*[www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org)  
and [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org)*

# A Call to Writers for the Fall 2015 Blue Guitar

The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine seeks literary submissions for the Fall 2015 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 2. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work and must live part- or full-time in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For more information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

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

# Meet the staff of Unstrung magazine



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

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



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

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



# UNSTRUNG

A magazine of  
for and about  
poetry



Unstrung will  
return in  
Summer 2016