

# UNSTRUNG

A magazine of,  
for and about  
poetry



Summer 2023

# The Poets

**“A mother and a child,” “David,” “Transcendental Tea”**

– *Mary Knapp* .....3-7



Knapp

**“A Song For Myself,” “(A)gachado Well,”**

**“Language Barrier Gatekeeper”**

– *Jorge Gamboa* .....8-13



Gamboa

**“A Thousand Years of Joy,” “To the Poets at the Open Mic  
in Mesa, Arizona,” “To the Orange Tree Coming Down Outside My  
Window,” “To the Spotted Lanternfly”**

– *Alfred Fournier* .....14-18



Fournier

**“Honey Crisps,” “In Gratitude and Quiet Awe”**

– *Roxanne Doty* .....19-21



Doty

**“Chiricahua Solstice,” “Wolf,” “Early Summer”**

– *David Chorlton* .....22-26



Chorlton

**“Calming Confidence,” “Future’s Time,” “In Stride,” “Reavow”**

*Duann Black* .....27-32



Black

**“Thanks,” “Some,” “MMeetttiinngg,” “Once More?,” “Woolpower,”  
“Better,” “Eumaeus, Stokhastes, and Thrush”**

– *Richard Fenton Sederstrom* .....33-46



Fenton  
Sederstrom

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and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

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# Mary Knapp

## A mother and a child

When I saw them together on the path ahead of me  
— a mother and a child —  
I noticed something was wrong  
The boy, the baby boy  
His skin was red, too red  
As if an African sunset had set his cheeks on fire  
And his young mama slowed her hopeless pace again and again  
so she could lift his beautiful limp body up higher on her shoulder  
Giving her time to pull a soft cloth back up over his head ...  
hopeless shade from the Ugandan heat  
Only then did she resume her struggle to run, her feet slapping against  
the inevitable red dust, crossing down toward the clinic,  
down to the bottom of the hill ...  
but even there I was sure she would find  
only immeasurable heaps of unending sorrow,  
and the inevitable fate we all face.  
It wasn't until much later that I heard singing ...  
I think it was the song of burial rites  
and I wondered who it was meant for. But I already knew.  
They were singing the song for the boy.  
The beautiful baby boy

3

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# Mary Knapp



4

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

# Mary Knapp

## David

There wasn't anything that David wouldn't do for me.  
He was ready at the drop of a hat to  
Mow my lawn — even though it was really  
more like a jungle than a lawn  
And he was always there to try to  
Cajole me out of my fowl moods  
Or be willing to ignore my rude comments  
Or even to surprise me at just the right moment  
With a heartfelt gift I always refused to acknowledge

But, no, even with all that  
I had no time for David  
He was impossibly kind but unrelentingly irritating.  
And the thing that irritated me most about David  
Was his complete inability  
to turn himself into the handsome scoundrel  
I had been chasing all summer  
The one who had just left me high and dry by the way...and so...  
Instead of the handsome scoundrel...  
All I was left with was David...  
Grass-cutting, gift-giving David.  
I didn't deserve him then and I don't deserve him now.  
So it only seems fair that  
I'm left with no one but my own weary self  
and the used-to-be memories of David

Continued on page 6

But sometimes, when I hear  
the oddly perfect lyrics in a Leonard Cohen song  
Or when a Bob Dylan rhyme gets tangled up in blue  
That's when I think about David.  
You know those songs that always get you where you live?  
Those are the ones.

If we were to meet in heaven someday  
Me and David  
I know he would have a shy smile for me  
And after his numerous hints,  
He would finally ask me if I wanted to hear a poem he was working on.  
I'd smile and he would smooth out  
the crumpled page he'd been holding in his hand and begin to read.

And right then ... for just one precious moment ...  
time would stand still....

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# Mary Knapp

## Transcendental Tea

If I could journey back in time  
I would go to that cozy tea shop in Nyong Shwe  
And stepping inside, I would hear the owner call out to me:  
Welcome, Welcome!  
I would take my seat,  
And he would present me with a small cup of hot transcendent chai  
Then later his wife would add a small basket of her pastries to the table

Thus welcomed,  
I would pull out my rumpled journal  
And begin to write  
Swirling down the pages  
to tell the stories of then  
so I can remember them now

7

And in this journey, as the hours pass by,  
I drink endless cups of “welcome chai”  
Each hour marking a tender bridge of hope from here to tomorrow

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# Jorge Gamboa

## A Song For Myself

A melody  
only I can craft  
Sharp tones and Technicolor vistas  
only I can evoke  
Without the need of intermediaries  
nor external agents to manage my feelings  
or a factor to take care of business dealings

No manor's factor  
No algebraic factor  
No X Factor  
No manufacture

8

Set aside all guitars  
woodwinds and brass  
string quartets and keys  
Cast aside all studio sets  
show the door to the studio brass  
do without the key grips  
place the cast under house arrest

Just pen and paper  
or screen and keyboards  
or my words and a recorder  
or my fingers tapping Morse code

Continued on page 9

For raw material life itself  
and if I can't have nature  
then the beauties and horrors  
the comedy and pathos  
of the digital world  
and a chronically online existence  
will suffice

As long as I breathe and hold awareness  
the body electric that I sing of  
will be my own

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# Jorge Gamboa



Jorge Gamboa hails from Sonoyta, Sonora, and his family roots in the region date back to countless centuries. He has family on both sides of the border, mainly in Southern Arizona, and this has fostered a unique worldview and appreciation for the land and the people of both countries. He is a writer, film critic, translator and Spanish tutor.

# Jorge Gamboa

## (A)gachado Well

*To “La Parrada”*

Where did your A go?  
Did it go the way of your maker?  
Was it swept away by the monsoon rain?  
Washed out in the arroyos?  
Did it cross through the reservation?

Your maker's family name was Parra  
In Spanish, it means vine  
The name grew deep roots  
and knotted itself in the very soil  
of this deceptively barren landscape

Parra dug the earth  
Water sprang forth  
Life was guaranteed  
The well was baptized  
not with his family name  
but with the moniker bestowed to him by his peers

11

Continued on page 12

Agachado  
In Spanish means someone who  
crouches  
bows  
bends down

to walk through thresholds without pain  
and avoid hurting the crown of his head  
A tall man, architecture could barely contain him  
no more than he could restrain the desert  
but for a small inch between skull and doorframe  
An inch as essential as the inches of rainfall that plummet  
to nourish a desert that savors each drop  
with wanton delight

12

He has been gone for years  
and the same fate befell your first letter  
“Gachado” they call you  
now that you are on this side of the geographical equation  
I like to think that your decapitated alphabetical head  
is the one that resides on the sentinel’s peak  
that lords over the spring  
at the base of the mountain  
When I look at the A  
I smile  
Because when the Earth folds back to Pangaea’s way  
The A and Gachado will once again  
Be one  
In the land of the vines

# Jorge Gamboa

## Language Barrier Gatekeeper

You lift your chin and jut your jaw  
your teeth rattle like bowling pins  
that hesitate to tumble  
“I know two tongues,” you mumble  
“But I speak only one at a time.  
To shift languages between sentences  
it’s like pouring rusty water into wine”  
But what do you have to share  
in any lingo that you boast to master?  
When you rush to speak of love forsaken  
your words are like a labyrinth of maize  
ground to cornmeal mush

13

*Je pourrais en dire plus  
mais je ne vais pas*

Is the thalassic depth of your feelings  
reserved for woeful paeans to bygone what-ifs?  
Before you pass sentence  
on those who can traverse languages  
like crossing rooms inside their homes  
first learn to wean your two-forked tongue  
from the spoiled taste of pettiness  
Those who shift idioms to speak only trifles and gossip  
cannot patrol a free man’s words

# Alfred Fournier

## A Thousand Years of Joy

*For Edwin “Mess” Messel*

Before Love was sent to stray the Earth for a thousand years,  
she whispered in the barmaid’s ear. A coil of blonde hair brushed  
by her breath still resides behind glass in the British Museum.

A stranger enters a quiet room, and everyone turns. His coat  
is heavy with history: some worn on his sleeves, some secreted  
in pockets. If this were a movie you’d know everything is about to change.

14

The male peacock spider flaunts his blue and orange abdomen  
in a dance sure to draw many eyes. But sometimes hope is a beggar  
who asks nothing. The wisest understand there are many worlds

within the one. On a city street, people pass without noticing each other.  
Notes from a blue guitar at the top of a subway stair glisten in the air  
like magic. Drop one stone into a pond and the taste of the water changes.

Her thousand years of wandering done, Love collapsed in a chair,  
dropped her shoes and rubbed her feet. Beyond the window:  
ocean, the calls of birds. White wings hover then disappear into blue.

*The title is from the Robert Bly poem, “Stealing Sugar from the Castle.”*

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# Alfred Fournier



15

Alfred Fournier is an entomologist and community volunteer in Phoenix, Arizona. His poems and creative nonfiction have appeared in *The Blue Guitar*, *Delmarva Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *New Flash Fiction Review*, *The Indianapolis Review* and elsewhere. His poetry chapbook, “A Summons on the Wind,” is forthcoming from Kelsay Books. Twitter: @AlfredFournier4.

# Alfred Fournier

## To the Poets at the Open Mic in Mesa, Arizona

*After Robert Bly*

There's no use in us trying to be normal.  
We'll do better as ourselves. The people  
in this room share a breath so light,  
like insects skimming over water.

Sometimes love reaches like sunlight  
beneath a couch, igniting dust motes  
and forgotten coins. Even the trash  
on the curb glistens beautifully this morning.

The house finch sings over the whine  
of a neighbor's hedge trimmer.  
We make too many noises in the world  
to hear it for what it is.

Of course we are rich. When the last  
golden leaf falls on snow-frosted ground  
somewhere far from this city,  
the people in this room will hear it.

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# Alfred Fournier

## To the Orange Tree Coming Down Outside My Window

The liquor-sweet scent of your blossoms  
will be absent this spring, an emptiness  
in desert air. No hummingbirds will weave  
for drink through your green limbs,  
like the one in her thimble-sized nest last year,  
arm's reach from my window.

I'm sorry, and I cannot watch.

Even now, the chainsaw screams.  
Life that streamed through your limbs  
suddenly cut, as branch after branch  
thumps to the ground.

Each fall, your bounty of fruit  
became a burden, never that sweet.  
Enjoyed only by the rats,  
who feasted like fattened thieves,  
leaving only hollowed husks behind.

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17

# Alfred Fournier

## To the Spotted Lanternfly

What is it like, this harlequin magician's life,  
for you, who neither sting nor bite  
but have farmers and park rangers on high alert?

With your angular pose, audacious colors.  
Changing costumes, stage to stage,  
your spots converting from white to black  
like a photo negative, a mitten turned inside-out.  
Your dull outer wings as an adult  
conceal a riotous flag: red, black and white  
memento of your nymphal days. Not a fly,  
but a bug, true to your plant-sucking nature.

You might do better, draped in dull colors  
when they come with their pesticides.  
Your appetite your undoing, though gladly  
I would trade the apples and grapes you might spoil  
to learn your flamboyant ways.  
Six-legged guru with nothing to hide.  
A bright plague on the earth.

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# Roxanne Doty

## Honey Crisps

I saw him most mornings at the intersection,  
a freeway frontage road and city street  
his wavy blond-gray hair in a neat ponytail,  
blue eyes clear and sharp, his possessions  
neatly stacked in a utility cart with two baskets.  
Morning sun bounced off metal and chrome  
as vehicles waited for a green light, sometimes  
we chatted about the traffic, the weather.  
I'd give him money. *God bless* he'd say  
and I would say *have a nice day*.

When summer heat arrived, I asked if he needed  
water, he shook his head and pointed to an 8-pack  
of Aquafina in the bottom basket, a towel  
and shirt folded on top. One morning, he asked  
if I liked apples. I nodded. He reached into a backpack  
in his cart and passed me two perfect honey crisps  
red flush, gold-yellow streaks, radiant with shine.

19

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# Roxanne Doty



Roxanne Doty lives in the Phoenix, Arizona area, which is the setting for much of her fiction and poetry. Her debut novel, “Out Stealing Water,” was published by Regal House Press, August 30, 2022. She has published stories and poems in Third Wednesday, Quibble Lit, Superstition Review, Espacio Fronterizo, Forge, I70 Review, Soundings Review, Four Chambers Literary Magazine, Lascaux Review, Lunar Review, Journal of Microliterature, NewVerseNews, International Times, Saranac Review, Gateway Review and Reunion-The Dallas Review.

# Roxanne Doty

## In Gratitude and Quiet Awe

for the tiny turtles endangered  
but hatching anyway only a few  
survive to adulthood the world  
shattering with destruction  
and lost habitats still these Burmese  
peacock soft shells are crawling  
from a muddy hole at Indawgyi Lake  
in a land of abuse and genocide  
and now also this unexpected wonder  
black and orange eye markings  
like a peacock's feathers so small  
four or five fit in a human palm  
they are scampering along the banks  
through puddles like small miracles  
new life bursting with joy  
for just this moment

21

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# David Chorlton

## Chiricahua Solstice

A tree hangs from every star tonight  
and the moon is festooned  
with colored ribbons.

A fox

on a frosty trail  
has stopped with a mountain encircled  
by the loop in his tail. An owl  
calls down snow  
from the darkness that begins at the Earth's  
lonely edge and  
never ends. The deer  
tread lightly as they pass  
between the trees

and when one  
stops the ones beside it stop  
and turn their heads toward a crack  
in the silence.

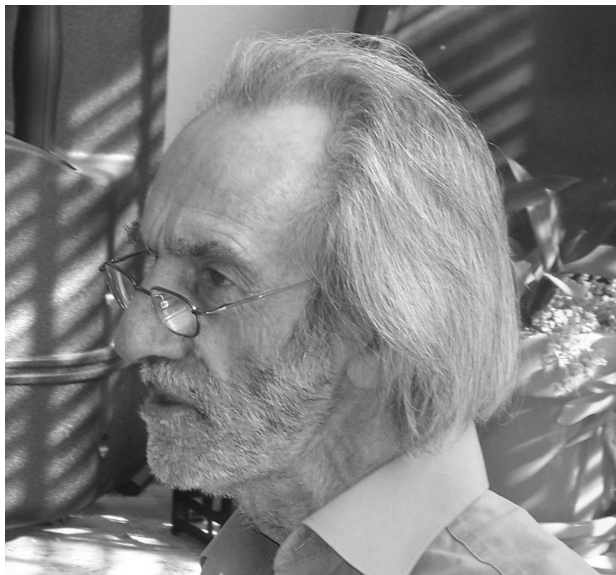
Was it bone?

Was it ice?

The season's angels send  
blessings from the sky  
to every animal who stares at midnight  
and sees its own  
frostbitten soul.

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# David Chorlton



23

David Chorlton recently had a nonfiction book published by New Meridian Arts. It is a true story from 1960s and '70s Vienna, which deals with a wrongful conviction: "The Long White Glove." The book was decades in the works. Poetry moves with more spontaneity, and David's "The Flying Desert" is brightened by having his watercolors of birds to go with the poems.

# David Chorlton

## Wolf

A wolf was here.

The Screech Owl saw him. Saw  
how he stepped out of his body and back in  
some heartbeats later  
when the sky pulled loose  
of the tallest pines. His was

the power and the glory  
where the land speaks  
only to itself  
and time is snowmelt singing.  
He stopped

here under cover  
of the Whip-Poor-Will's trill  
when it called down the stars,  
stopped where darkness

parted. The Screech Owl paused  
from pursuing shadows  
and from a branch that shivered  
just above the wolf

watched him licking moonlight  
from the final bone.

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# David Chorlton

## Early Summer

The mountains beyond the street  
float on a string of cloud, four peaks breathing  
the cool summer heights. There's yellow tape  
behind the Café Boa and questions  
on the parking lot that only  
Western Kingbirds know  
the answers to. They fly at inquiry level  
with oversight of everything  
between one set of traffic lights and  
the next: Stop, Go, Stop, slow down  
and take it easy on the freeway ramp where  
someone's always waiting  
for a good luck dollar.  
Showers and shade would be a blessing  
for the people moved from The Zone  
downtown where the homeless  
are loose change  
in a cash economy.  
Early morning, traffic  
in a hurry, finches singing  
and a glaze of light  
on the desert slopes all the way  
to the ridgeline as  
the sky pulls itself away and showers  
doves down on the world, doves

25

Continued on page 26

and shadows, doves  
with streaks of moonlight  
on their wings. Word has it  
there's no water in sight, but today  
smoke rises in the east to remind us  
that fire loves June  
and it's a long time to October.  
It's silent now  
in the desert west of the city, where  
plans have been drawn to build, build, build  
but the future has been booked  
and held without bond.

Two moths came down  
from the spirit world last night  
with their tiny wings spread on the water  
in a dish between the bougainvillea and lantana  
before turning into flakes  
of sunlight when lifted out to dry  
and returned to life. It's Thursday,  
the hummingbirds hatched in a thimble-  
sized nest on the front porch  
wait at the edge of the world  
for their first flight while  
the garbage truck takes Wednesday away  
until same time next week  
with a five dollar cover charge  
for line dancing at Cactus Jack's  
when all the stars in Heaven  
are rolling midnight drunk.

# Duann Black

## Calming Confidence

They told me then of many things  
I did not want to hear.

Like buzzing in my ear.  
It used to fill my heart with fear.

They tell me now of many things.  
I do not care to hear.  
They once lay heavy on my heart.

I came to you for peace of mind.  
You filled my heart with love.

27

Your peace and joy, your love and care,  
Dimmed the buzz and lightened my heart.

I tell them now I do not fear.

Where cares and fears were once the norm,  
Your calming confidence is my norm.

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# Duann Black



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

# Duann Black

## Future's Time

It's good to say things  
in the quiet  
when alone  
Lift your burdens.

Constant companions  
lost  
and loss

Photos never fade.  
Memories dare not dim.

Cancel them all  
loss  
and lost  
Forget the cost.

Smile today  
remembering again  
in the quiet  
An earlier gentle time.

Discover surprise  
explore love  
unexpected  
Love without resistance.  
Experience within our sight.

29

Continued on page 30

Traveling companions  
our path  
together  
Looking to the dawn.

Forward always  
before  
our eyes  
Breathless moments caught.  
Focused on life.

Searching  
for the voice  
we ever hear near  
Loss is behind.  
Lost is found in future's time.

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# Duann Black

## In Stride

When I'm blue,  
    thinking of you,  
I make it through.

Your love is a treat, turning sour to sweet.

Whenever I decide,  
    with you by my side,  
I'll take it in stride.

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31

# Duann Black

## Reavow

Love, the recurring renewal of friendship, passion, kindness, and trust.

Cultivate carefully its gentleness.

Within its tender arms, refresh your soul, your heart, your body.

Flooding memories melt our sense of self.

Together lives shared.

Tears and joy, struggle, pain and togetherness.

He said, she ignored.

He ignored, she said.

Yoked together, striving as one.

Reavow thy commitment to love.

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Thanks

I  
for the card.

No one should be left out of the pageantry,  
the distant lofty rites of Father's Day.

II  
We got out of bed this morning; night came sometime.  
In a little while I'll put my new proofs away.  
Then we'll get ready to go back to bed.

III  
I don't ache too bad by eventide.  
Mom says Hi; her sprained toe is a lot better.  
So's my bunion. I try to eat more fruit.

\*

I  
The *joie de vivre* you young ones miss these days!  
Still, I am dog tired this morning. Why?  
Time wallows when . . .

II  
When?

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33

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom



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

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Some

great minds think.

Ancient eyes cannot see, not always.

But who's still more prescient  
than some initial Mind, a couple hundred millennia

evolving in morning twilight gone opaque—  
stars, the Missing Way erased by dull misuse.

\*

In papyrus photocopied, Sappho  
might sing once more, in shredded stammers

35

the songs we cannot stop cupping an ear  
to listen for, tattered breaths of fossil notes.

Radiant lyre—rotten wood, all strings long long lost,  
just a whisper of your thrush-flight trill again?

Wear the fossil-mask to person out such notes  
as sound may need to wither toward its echo.

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## MMeettiinnngg

In some distant galaxy  
in some distant universe  
in some dimly imagined space  
in some distant haze of eremitic particles  
all in vaccua next to oblivion,  
in motley kaleidoscopes of dimensions  
connected in the falling dream of time,  
possibilities of being somewhere,

36 a photon or an electron from some part  
of some part of what is  
what's left of what used to be me  
comes to a breathrest  
between glitches among dimensions  
and stops for a nanomicrosecond  
at a flash of behest of what  
is another such glitch  
and each of us gets to mutter  
in the same already defunct  
nanomicrominiopportunity—

\*

So, uh, well.  
You too, huh?  
Yeah.  
So . . . ?

Continued on page 37

u        h        ?        h        u        h        !  
                 \*

So then, how many multi-quadrillions  
to what ultimate ten to the what?-th power  
packed into the realms of galaxies  
spread out into the extent so far  
in elastic space, expanding  
into how many dimensions of dimensions  
and each electron flitting unimpeded  
through all of it,  
each electron utterly alone.  
The price we pay for *amnestia*.

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37

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Once More?

I was alone again,  
sitting around, my mind-boots  
up on the cracker barrel that insulates  
us all from the interior rumblings of my noggin,

when I recalled some of the chats  
I have had lately  
with my physicist and poet chums—  
The Big Pointless Question:

38 what will exist, after the Anthro-Bang subsides,  
to volunteer for the next evolutionary sortie?  
The Tardigrade is a pretty good candidate,  
or some species of Rotifer.

Worst come to whatever,  
we can be sure.  
We can be fairly certain there are Bacteria and Archaea  
living so far from the center of action (and final re-action)

that they won't get the news of the Big Demise up top  
maybe for a billion or more  
of what one invasive species used to call  
“years.”

Continued on page 39

They won't be reflecting and questioning and commenting  
on what their descendants may (or may not) discover.  
So I am leaving a few words behind  
for the sake of . . .

well . . .

Yeah . . .

You know?

. . . ?

I could music it, perhaps,  
but music is far from our End-o-Daysical spin  
into whereneverway back beyond dark  
black nothing, the extinction even of oblivion.

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Woolpower

height has such a poverty  
of reservoir

Archie Ammons, "Sorting"

An old man jouncing toward us  
on the passenger side of a battered golf cart.  
He took no particular notice of any or all of us.

40 The cart stopped, shuddered and snorted.  
The old man pushed and eased out of the thing.  
The driver stepped behind him  
and helped him off with a worn plaid sports jacket,  
its plaid a ghost out of dim sight and time,  
then on with a brown sweater that had surpassed worn  
when it might have been another color, or none.

He stepped stooped, lunged a bit toward us.  
Nodded. Some of use nodded back.  
I did not know whether I deserved  
to be a part of the nodding party.  
My father stepped, obeisantly? politely anyway,  
away from my experiment in standing where I stood,  
distanced somewhere over there, I think.

Continued on page 41

My father beckoned, I obeyed,  
and my father introduced me to Henry Luce.  
Henry Luce nodded. If he spoke at all,  
he was somewhere else when he did it,  
and he spoke to someone where he was.  
A man used even or mostly to commanding shadows.

Somehow, I didn't feel honored in the presence.  
I didn't think I was expected to feel much at all.  
A crotchety old man who could rest easy in his crotchets.  
That I was only one of the things he could easily dismiss,  
and did, annoyed a little, but more than a little  
I was honored, as included in the common disdain.

I could also rest easy, as one of the crotchets,  
comfortable in equal presence cast away with  
some fellow derelict's yarnbare sweater.

41

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# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Betters

*En coup de dés*

Mallarmé

Before I am asked again—  
again why I plunder and plant the allusions,  
the names, the quotations,

the arcana—Books XIV and XXIII,  
Perfect Joy, The Madman, the other Perfect Joy  
The Sleepless Night,

42 and above all  
“Be sure to hold your mouth right.”  
You must learn to hold your mouth right—

let me admit; no, allow me to declare  
that I sometimes need to show off.  
I do, I do. And I do.

But more, I feel a need,  
the tiring joy of a weary responsibility,  
generations long, a compassion

out of impious devotion to our ancestors in art,  
and to the art, to introduce passers-through  
in my poems to the minds of my betters.

Continued on page 43

\*

*Our* betters!

For every person named,  
every accomplishment of every person, each antecedent.

And my interior, anonymous, truly self-satisfying better,  
the dictionary, the boosted little ego,  
every entry I can that I have read through and through.

And toyed with. Savored. Fed sparingly.  
Kept watered, gently.  
& sometimes even lern to spel in. From. At.

Talked back to, reconciled with—most words  
worn, discolored, rubbed smooth  
like sepia names of old ancestors, forgotten

43

and found again and again and again:  
Penelope, Ciara, Emily, Vera-Agnes, Carol.  
And again and again!

Voices: Eumaeus, Zhou, Fu, Hugh, Cal, Jim.  
First though, the hand pressed against the cave wall  
whose mortal and silent re-invention

I will to memory, or no voice after.  
The keepers of Horse, Bear, Thrush, Quail. The Aurochs.  
Consider too the ironic new future of the improbable Water Bear.

Consider moreover that the dictionary,  
its daimons of words,  
of dead mouths and ears and mouths to our ears:

pencil and paper refuse utterly to be chiseled into Scripture  
Everlasting. The Rock of Rules would erode in good time.  
Questions composed slantwise like midrashim,

to fool out the hint of possibility or blind future  
and the better hint, indifferent providence  
dice-tossing the gentle grace of futility.

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44

# Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Eumaeus, Stokhastes, and Thrush

*Stokhastes:*

If one day people begin to read  
those Earth-and-Night-bound poems  
and if people should gather—  
but alone and apart, I think—pretend  
to mime the old man's vulpine selenitas,  
then we will all have earned, maybe,  
the posthumous distinction of having changed  
nothing in the ways of people or the winds  
or the arrangement of the cosmos.  
If no one ever reads the fading poems  
we can wager fate their accomplishments  
will be no less than the same.

45

*Eumaeus:*

Your accomplishment, thrush,  
is to leave of your still sad flute an echo  
in your hearer's being, soul deep.  
An accomplishment to be envied,  
emulated by the tone-free among us,  
echoed, loud and last, by forest-lost.

Continued on page 46

*Stokhastes:*

I am too nearly respired, probably,  
by the song of the empty echo,  
ever to envy the sweet air.  
Still, we share the breathing of it—like photons,  
free-range in every direction and dimension at once  
to meet at the same darkness, self-lit. We  
cannot be diminished from any satisfaction  
breathing among the ways of people,  
but borne of winds, the skies,  
and the arrangement and scattered  
dimensions of probable once How far?  
How long away from extinguished Why?

46

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# Editor's Note

Employing such strategies as rhythm, rhyme, voice and compressed imagery, our poets in this issue are tackling difficult issues while taking us on a global tour of humanity and the natural world: from the sunbaked lands of Uganda to the seemingly barren Sonoran Desert to the muddy banks of Indawgyi Lake in Myanmar to the sometimes unforgiving streets of Phoenix — and everywhere in between. For many of us, poems may come immediately to mind and write themselves; we just need to get out of the way. Other times, we have to excruciatingly squeeze out line after line as we wait for the most real, most truthful image, phrasing or emotion to bubble up to get us as close to possible to what we are trying to say. It may take time, but by its very nature, poetry allows us to get at the heart of themes we couldn't or wouldn't otherwise be able to explore. It's that crucible within us — within all of us — waiting to give if we take the time to listen and to heed.

47

**Rebecca “Becca” Dyer**

**Co-editor**

## Editorial Staff

**Editor:** *Rebecca Dyer*

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

**Publisher:** *Elena Thornton*

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

**Coming in Fall 2023!**

# **The Annual Blue Guitar Festival of the Arts!**

48

**Join us for an amazing showcase of the arts, with music,  
dance, cultural presentations, art activities for children  
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**For more information, go to The Arizona Consortium  
for the Arts website, [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org).**

# A Call to Poets

## For Summer 2024

Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, will seek poetry submissions for its Summer 2024 Issue from June 1 through July 4, 2024. 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)*

Unstrung • Summer 2023

# A Call to Writers for the Fall 2023 Blue Guitar

50 The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine seeks literary submissions for the Fall 2023 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 4. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work and must live part- or full-time in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For more information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

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

# Meet the staff of Unstrung magazine



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

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



51



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

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



# UNSTRUNG

A magazine of  
for and about  
poetry



Unstrung will  
return in  
Summer 2024