

# CQ Library celebrates Poetry Month with 4 visiting writers

By Leah Mueller  
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*Logan Phillips*



*Julie Swarstad Johnson*

BISBEE — April is Poetry Month, a time when literary enthusiasts focus on the art of verse.

And every year, Bisbee's Copper Queen Library honors the month with a series of visiting authors. Writers host free talks or workshops for the community, focusing on a variety of literary approaches.

This year's lineup is nothing short of stellar, featuring four different Arizona-based writers. The series kicked off on April 1, but there was nothing foolhardy about it. A large group of participants showed up at the library, eager to put their pens to work.

Tucson-based author Logan Phillips presented his workshop, intriguingly named "Divinatory Poetics: A Workshop on Inviting Synchronicity into Writing."

Phillips is a poet, culture worker, and author of "Sonoran Strange" (UNM Press, 2015). He has worked on performances, music, and community-centered education projects in the US, Mexico, Columbia, and beyond.

His interactive project at the CQL was a resounding success.

"We had eighteen people at the table together, exploring how to allow what Jung called "meaningful coincidence" into our writing—following intuition and allowing mistakes to be revelations rather than errors. Everyone got words down on the page, which is always the main goal," he explained.

Phillips feels strongly that anyone can be a writer, provided they have sufficient enthusiasm for the task.

"Something I love about writing is that there's no need to aspire. Anyone can pick up a pen and explore their inner and outer worlds. So don't wait for permission to write, give yourself permission. Oh, and spend much more time reading books than you do looking at your phone," he advised.

Read more about Phillips and his work on his website: [www.dirtyverbs.com](http://www.dirtyverbs.com), or on Bluesky and Instagram: @dirtyverbs.

On April 8 from 4:00 PM—5:45 PM, Julie Swarstad Johnson will present her workshop and reading, entitled "The Night Sky in Poetry." Johnson encourages participants to reflect upon their own experiences with the night sky.

She'll read astronomy-themed poems by various authors and use them as inspiration for participants' creative endeavors.

"As a poet, I've spent the past five years learning and writing about the night sky and astronomy," she explained. "My key takeaway is that our connection to the night sky can help us understand both our place in the universe and our place here on Earth, teaching us greater care for the land and our communities."

Bisbee, with its high elevation and clear night skies, is a perfect place to commune with the cosmos.

"Bisbee is an official Dark Sky Community, making it the perfect place to connect with the stars. During the workshop, we'll use fun, approachable prompts to write about our personal experiences with the night sky. I hope participants will come away feeling inspired through poetry and with renewed excitement for the wonders of the night," Johnson said.

Johnson, also based in Tucson, is the author of "Pennsylvania Furnace" (Unicorn Press, 2019), as well as co-editor of the anthology "Beyond Earth's Edge: The Poetry of Spaceflight (University of Arizona Press, 2020). Her chapbook, "Orchard Light" was published by Seven Kitchens Press in 2020.

Read more about her on her website: <http://www.julieswarstadjohnson.com/>.

On April 15 from 4 PM—5:45 PM, Mari Herreras will present "Community Through Poetry", a workshop and reading.



*Mari Herreras*

Herreras is a fifth-generation Tucsonian and a former staff writer/editor for the Tucson Weekly. Her debut poetry collection, “At Grand and Congress” was published in 2023 by C&R Press.

True to its name, the workshop will focus on community, with the goal of inspiring participants to celebrate their lives, the desert, and its infinite variety of inhabitants.

“Poetry can be a transformative vehicle to create community and bring people together to strengthen their relationships to each other and where they live. My desire with the workshop is to create that community and relationship with everyone who participates,” she explained.

Herreras would like attendees to bring objects that express their concepts of community and place.

“We will put it (the object) on a table and do a few grounding exercises and then start writing together. One of the writing exercises will be done together and read at the reading that evening,” she promised.

Herreras’ Instagram handle is @TucsonAZMari.

If you’re still able to grasp a pen on April 22, you’ll have the chance to attend one more literary event. From 4:00 PM—5:45 PM, Kelsi Vanada will present her collage-themed workshop, “Piecing Poems Together.”

You may wonder what collage and poetry have in common. Now is your opportunity to find out. Vanada’s medium is known as “bricolage”, which means “construction of creation from a diverse range of available things.”

Vanada will urge participants to “find unexpected writing material where texts intersect and voices we love inspire us.” She has utilized the methodology herself and is eager to share her knowledge with others.

“This is essentially how I wrote my new collection, “Optional Saint”, by writing with and around scraps of the texts I was reading at the time. For the workshop, I've asked participants to bring some of their favorite texts, which we'll use in a variety of exercises to generate new poems,” she said.



*Kelsi Vanada*

In addition to “Optional Saint”, Vanada has authored the poetry chapbook “Rare Earth” and has translated seven poetry and creative nonfiction books from Swedish and Spanish. She holds MFAs from the Iowa Writer’s Workshop and the Iowa Translation Workshop.

Vanada currently resides in Tucson. Check her out on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/kelsi.vanada](http://www.facebook.com/kelsi.vanada), on Bluesky at @kelsivanada.bsky.social, or on Instagram: @kelsivanada.

All three authors will read from their own creations after their workshops have ended for the evening. Be sure to stick around to hear them!

All workshops are free, but pre-registration is strongly advised. They’re extremely popular and do tend to fill up quickly. Call the library at (520) 432-4232.