**Song of the Saguaro Boot**

Seth Peterson

It starts like any scar: with a wound

carved so different each time

it could be a fingerprint.

Even though anyone can cause a wound,

it’s usually the same mouths

fashioned into daggers.

The pain as the flesh peels into hooks

& falls at your feet.

The emptiness as they shove off freely

from the dripping hole. Your body

is made for healing, even if it can never fill

a hole that large, it can harden the walls so well

it becomes a home.

& just like that, they flutter back

to ask for forgiveness—& you’ll give it—

having many mornings left.

You will hold them, & their children, too.

That hollow will fill

until it overflows, emptying itself

fresh into the air. You’ll have ages left.

The years may pass & someone new may

recognize your beauty.

Say *This is just the kind of scar I’m looking for*.

But nothing lasts forever, even you

will fall. After your flesh decays, the knuckled scar

will unbuckle from your woody skeleton.

All that agony & emptiness & joy will look perfect

in a palm, or a pocket, or even on a shelf

where it will continue as the sound of wind

carving through lips—

in *oohs* & *aahs*

—a sound heard so often

in its belly, it may begin to think the sound

its name, or else some ancient word

for both indescribable wonder

& pain.