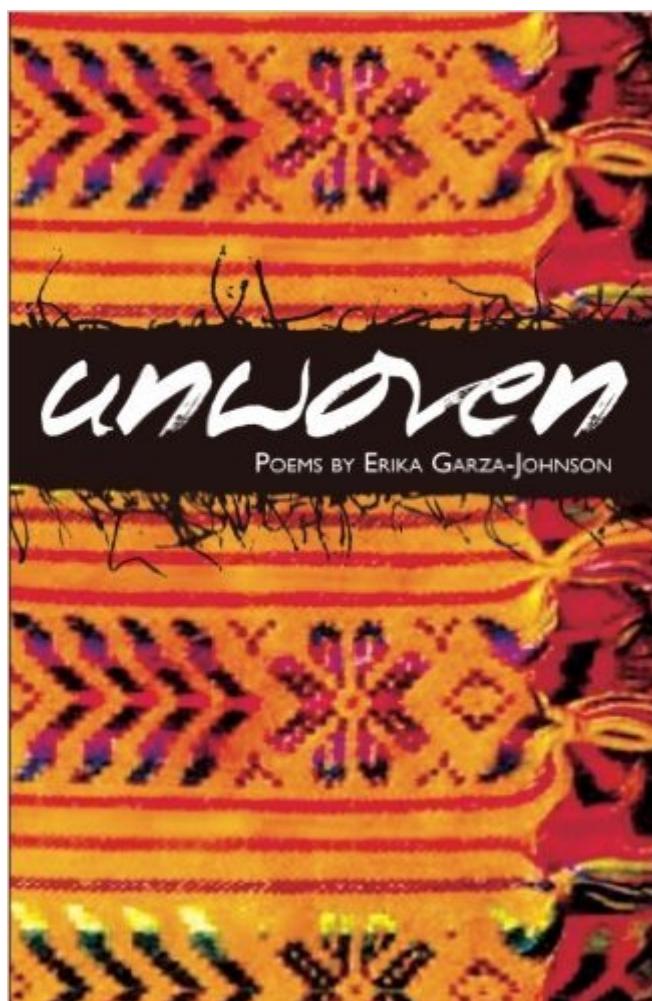


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# Unwoven



## Synopsis

The first poetry book from one of the most distinctive voices in South Texas, *Unwoven* is an unflinchingly honest exploration of Chicana womanhood along the border, a scattering of quetzal feathers and jade that celebrate the achingly lovely paradox of life on the edges and in the middle. Playful, artful, and wholly memorable, these poems prove Erika Garza-Johnson deserving of her enduring moniker: La Poeta Power.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (10 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,208,069 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #128 inÂ  Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > United States > Hispanic American #107847 inÂ  Books > Literature & Fiction > United States

## Customer Reviews

This collection of poetry is one of the most unique I've read. Taking the journey with the poet, you feel you can barely take a breath before the landscape changes, the characters shift and switch places, the past has replaced the present and the present the past, you are here and you are there at the same time, in a quest for identity that only a person living in the land of multiplicities called the "border" can fully relate to. As maddening as such multicultural ensemble of influences and references may be, you are compelled to hear the voices coming from four directions, and in the end the fragmentary nature of the poems does achieve coherence. The voices become one, at once celebratory and mournful, and it is the reflection of one conscience that accepts multiplicity as a way of being. Haunted by La Llorona and Tacuache, obsessed with language and poetry and armed with an expansive heart, this voice will not let you leave the book without engaging with it. You feel as if there is a constant dialogue with you, personally, speaking to you until you are willing to let your guard down and break the borders of emotion, prejudice, and selfishness.

Unwoven is a truly wonderful collection of poetry. Erika Garza-Johnson or La Erika offers the reader poems like threads that speak about the experiences of being a woman, mother, teacher, lover, as well as the Chican@ experience in the small border towns of south Texas. In Unwoven, Garza-Johnson deals with themes of identity, gender, race, place, and culture among others. The poetry is candid and down-to-earth; powerful without resorting to clichÃ©s or heavy metaphoric language. Garza-Johnson demonstrates that she is an adept poet as she skillfully weaves voice and meaning in a variety of poetic forms, from prose poems to list poems. I highly recommend Unwoven to anyone doing cultural studies and to anyone who loves poetry as well as those who might not know yet that they love it. Congratulations to La Erika and FlowerSong Books for publishing this amazing collection. We need more books like this one.

Erika is both charming, funny, and kind as a person...and these distinctive qualities ring throughout these powerful works. It is safe to say if you enjoy Sylvia Plath's rage, or envision Latinas a certain way, this collection will startle you and bring you challenges. This isn't a woman writing simple and pretty things. This is a collection that races with brutal honesty, yet celebrates life's pleasures and jokes, and doesn't ask the reader to confine him/herself to stereotypes. Garza-Johnson will ask you to let go of those stereotypes you hold, and realize the full humanity of those you seek to label, and she does this in a strong, hopeful manner. This book is as natural an enjoyment as a challenge.

Post-chicana poetry at its best--or maybe it's THE best since I can't think of any other post-Chicana poets. The publishing info says the book is printed in English but there's plenty of Spanish here. It also says she's "Hispanic American," but it's clear from the poems in the book La Erika hates labels. "Hispanic" in her poems translates as "hispanic." This is poetry for everyone who hates those "multicultural" books with quilts on the cover.

Erika Garza-Johnson's debut, Unwoven, is a collection of poetry that refuses to be labeled. It is an anthology that explores the author's identity and plays with a variety of genres. At times, it is autobiographical, contemporary, a saga, or a narrative. At others, it is an observation, a mystery, a drama, or a reflection. But most of all, it is a collection of love poems. I have known my comadre, Erika, for almost a decade. We've traveled together all over the valley and central Texas for poetry readings and workshops. I've heard her voice deliver those punches in her work up close and know the shifting of her borders are obvious with her spoken word. Erika has one of the greatest stage presences I've encountered because she does not shy away from the

intentions of her poetry. After reading Unwoven, I can honestly say her words vaporize from the page and into one's perceptive consciousness. So honest and with the lenguaje that is typical of a South Texas community. The rhythm a pattern of words that make it simple for others to comprehend our Tex-Mex slang. From writing about "Heridas Abiertas" to "Pinche Princesses", my comadre reveals her love. For her family, her community, her culture, her experiences. Sometimes it is not so obvious. Sometimes, her love is coraje. Sometimes, her love gives you the finger. In all possible explorations of her work, one cannot mistake how she has unwoven her world to share it with her audience.

Erika has been a great influence in the growth of the poetic boom along the border of south Texas. A chicana-beat poet de primera. Unwoven comes at you with masterful code-switching and pure truth. Reading this collection, is entering into the life of a poet that has poured herself on paper for us. Here you find Ginsberg meeting with La Llorona at a supermarket in Texas, a true florilago of forgiveness and pinche revolution.

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