



The Sylvan

NEWSLETTER OF THE
PENNSYLVANIA POETRY SOCIETY, INC.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

POINTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- Conference Hosts
- Chapter News
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I hope everyone is well and has recovered from the stresses of the impromptu winter we endured when we seemed to time-travel forward to a near-frozen future. I hope that when winter-time comes it will make up for its unwelcome October visit and slip away from us and leave us to face the warmth of an early spring.

The Ice Princess and the Ice Giants, frozen out of the annual celebration of All Hallows Eve, known locally as The Great Candy Grab, stormed into town and blasted Trick-or-Treat night into oblivion with their freakish snowstorm. No simple soaping of windows for them. Their tricks were more diabolical: limbs ripped from our trees; dents made in our cars; long and short power interruptions; travel and other inconveniences; forced to eat ten pounds of undistributed Halloween Trick-or-Treat candy (the first five pounds went down okay). This ghoulish and ghastly, unseasonable weather was seasonally befitting—the Nightmare of Halloween.

Seemingly a full season in the past, we made a return engagement to the Allenberry Resort on October 8th. The Fall Conference was one of those rare events that lived up to its hype. There were two superb workshops, very good food, sticky buns, coffee, and fine camaraderie. Even the forever-wet weather turned around to our wishes and wants. It truly was a time to render on canvas, write a poem about, or tuck

away in that special place where we keep other pleasant memories.

Speaking of writing poems, Marie Louise Meyers was the winner of the Challenge Poetry Contest sponsored by Keysner Poets. She read her poem "Autumnal Transparency" to the delight of all. Judges were Marilyn Downing and Lisa Farabelli, both of Keysner Poets.

Sandra Kolinofsky, Trena Pelham and Dr. M. PA. Sheaffer were the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prize winners, respectively, of the raffle open to all who had paid their 2011-2012 membership dues by the date of our Conference (attendees or not). Their prizes were to have their own poetry published in book form by the renowned micro-publishing house, AGEE Keyboard Press.

Steve Concert won the raffle held by Keysner Poets. He won the Longenberger basket donated by Keysner member Toni Carey.

Along with other attendees, I was educated and entertained by the two presenters of our workshops, both of whom are PPS members giving of their talents to the rest of us. Several attendees sought me out to express their appreciation for the workshops and to praise the presenters. I'd like to use this forum to personally thank Bert Barnett, "What age is your po-

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O N M E T E R & R H Y M E

John Holcombe: poetrymagic.co.uk

Poems need some supporting structure, and that in turn requires a decision: should you go for free verse or tackle the more demanding traditional forms?

Discussion

Meter is a systematic regularity in rhythm. It creates and organises content, giving emphasis to words or elements that would otherwise escape attention: the tighter the meter, the more expressive can be small departures from the norm. Meter gives dignity and memorability, conveys tempo, mood, the subtle shifts in evidence, passion and persuasion beyond what is possible in prose. In the hands of great master like Shakespeare, meter provides grace, energy, elevation, expressiveness and a convincing approximation to everyday speech.

Conventional English verse is usually (and confusedly) described in a terminology deriving from classical prosody — i.e. as iambic, trochaic, dactylic and anapaestic. For contemporary practice it may be better to consider meter under two headings: whether the syllables or the stresses are being counted, and whether these counts are fixed or variable.

Accentual verse has fixed counts of stress but variable syllables. Syllabic verse has fixed counts of syllables regardless of stresses. Accentual-syllabic is conventional meter, with both stress and syllables (more or less) fixed.

Accentual verse is found in popular verse, ballads, nursery rhymes, songs and doggerel. Syllabic verse as exemplified by the French alexandrine is not strictly

metrical, and twentieth century attempts to write a pure syllabic verse in English have not caught on. Accentual-syllabic was devel-

oped by Chaucer from Italian models, and became the staple for English poetry from Elizabethan times till comparatively recently.

Free verse originated in France around the middle of the nineteenth century, was championed (briefly) by the founders of Modernism, and has ramified into various forms, some of them indistinguishable from prose.

Traditional verse is overshadowed by the achievements of the past. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope and Wordsworth set standards difficult to emulate, and poets are nowadays hardly encouraged to try. Many of the better magazines — where the fledgling poet must start his publishing career — will not take traditional poetry, and those with more generous standards may still lack readers or editors capable of telling the good from the merely facile. Nonetheless, strict verse enjoys periodic revivals, and has been a feature of several twentieth century schools: the Georgians, Neo-Romantics, the Movement poets and the New Formalists.

Free verse is very confused field, not properly understood or linguistically mapped. Adoption may be more about pamphleteering and cultural allegiances than poetic ends. Some of the speech rhythms claimed as "superior to meter" are not rhythms at all but an enviable dexterity in idiomatic expression.

Meter is not diametrically opposed to free verse. Many contemporary poets write both, or served an apprenticeship in strict forms before creating something closer to their needs. Nonetheless, in the absence of this ability to highlight and compound meaning, free verse is often driven to expand in other directions. It prizes a convincing exactness of idiomatic expression — the line seems exactly right in the circumstances: appropriate, authentic and sincere. It operates closely with syntax. It adopts a challenging layout on the page where line and syntax are rearranged to evade or exploit the usual expectations.

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GETTYSBURG POETRY
SOCIETY NEWS

NEWSLETTER
DUE DATES

Linda Clarke

Members of the Gettysburg Poetry Society continue to support our three meetings per month schedule. Plus, several of the members, calling themselves The Traveling Troubadours, have performed at local nursing homes each month. GPS member Constance Trump suggested the name and it fits us perfectly. The definition of troubadour is a writer or singer of lyric verses. The Traveling Troubadours' presentation includes seasonal and patriotic poetry and songs. We are blessed with wonderful readers and vocalists! And we have met some fascinating residents!

GPS is pleased to announce several new members, some who communicate with us through email! And, we were sad to see some of our treasured members move on. Nonetheless, we have tremendous member support for our January poetry presentation at the nearby Mother Seton Shrine. And we are hoping for lots of entries in our contest category of Pennsylvania- Narrative.

Our GPS membership would like to apologize for having such a poor showing at the Allenberry event this autumn. Our thanks go to Bert Barnett for presenting and Dana DeSimon for supporting that event. Weddings, anniversaries, and church events had us already scheduled. We are looking forward to seeing everyone in the spring! And, mark your calendars for the first weekend in November 2012 when GPS hosts the Pennsylvania Poetry Society autumn conference!

CARLISLE POETS
NEWS

Susan Vernon

The Carlisle Poets Workshop finished off their summer activities at the Poetry in the Garden at Piatto. In September, members met at Carlisle Arts Learning Center to write poetry in response to the work of artist William Kocher.

The landscapes of Kocher's "Town and Country Nocturnes" were an exploration of his ideas on atmosphere, tone, and transition between times of day. The poems will be displayed locally in Carlisle alongside photographs of Kocher's paintings.

Please remember these due dates as we go into 2012.

Contact people for each chapter should submit chapter news by the fifth as noted below. We would love to have chapter news for each newsletter.

At this time, we are *not accepting poetry submissions*, but would very much like reviews of poetry readings (500-700 words), news items about chapters and members (100-200 words), announcements of events sponsored by PPS chapters, or featuring PPS members.

All submissions may be edited for content or space concerns.

- For the Winter Newsletter, the due date will be February 5.
- For the Spring Newsletter, the due date will be May 5.
- For the Summer Newsletter, the due date will be August 5.
- For the Fall Newsletter, the due date will be November 5.

Please email all submissions to april.line@gmail.com.



*Carlisle Poets will host the
Spring Conference.*

*Registration and programming information
will be available in the Winter Syllabus:
the first of 2012.*

*Gettysburg Poetry Society will host the
Fall Conference. Keep alert for
registration and programming information.*



RHYME & METER
CONTINUED

(Continued from page 2)

Suggestions

Experiment. Weigh up the pros and cons.

Traditional meter and stanza shaping confer certain advantages, and certain disadvantages.

They:

1. Please the reader by their display of skill, their variety within order, their continuity with the admired literature of the past.
2. Help the actual writing of the poem, either by invoking words from the unconscious, or by pushing the poem into new areas to escape the limitations of the form.
3. Provide a sense of completeness impossible in free verse. The author knows when the last word clicks into place.
4. Enforce dignity, emotional power and density of meaning.
5. Are more memorable.

The difficulties are equally apparent. Strict forms are:

1. Taxing to write, requiring inordinate amounts of time, plus literary skills not given to everyone.
2. Much more likely to go wrong and expose the blundering incompetence of their author.
3. Inappropriate to the throwaway nature of much of contemporary life.

EDITOR'S CHOICE:
LANGSTON HUGHES

Growing up largely in poverty in pre-abolition America, Langston Hughes had no reason to have any sense of humor or success.

Still, he published more than 20 works of poetry, a novel, and an autobiography in his lifetime. He is one of the finest Modern writers of poetry: his work remains relevant.

Following is a humorous piece by him, inspired no doubt by the frustration a writer feels when untrained amateurs insist on bogarting the craft.

I hope you will laugh as I did.

How to be a bad writer (in ten easy lessons):

1. **Use all the clichés possible**, such as "He had a gleam in his eye," or "Her teeth were white as pearls."
2. If you are a Negro, **try very hard to write** with an eye dead on the white **market** – use modern stereotypes of older **stereotypes** – big burly Negroes, criminals, low-lifers, and prostitutes.
3. **Put in a lot of profanity** and as many pages as possible of near pornography and you will be so modern you pre-date Pompeii in your lonely crusade toward the bestseller lists. By all means be misunderstood, unappreciated, and ahead of your time in print and out, then you can be felt-sorry-for by your own self, if not the public.
4. **Never characterize characters**. Just name them and then let them go for themselves. Let all of them talk the same way. If the reader hasn't imagination

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C H A L L E N G E P A G E S N A F U

Dear Contributors to the Challenge Page,

It came to my attention shortly after the Summer issue of *The Sylvan* that only half of the challenge page had been printed, and that some of the poems submitted by you were in absentia.

Thank you all for your understanding, and please find a four-page special edition of the Challenge Page enclosed.

This special edition features all of the poems that were not printed last time.

Best Regards,
April Line, Editor

N E W M E M B E R S

Welcome, New Members. We hope you'll be edified by our poetic congress, and enjoy our publications, conferences, events, and community.

Anne Heard Flythe, Spotsylvania Courthouse, VA
Louisa Godissart McQuillen, Phillipsburg, PA
Karen Snyder, Red Lion, PA
Virginia York, Carlisle, PA
Charles Firmage, at large.
Toni Carey, New Cumberland, PA
Philip McDonald, Fairfield, PA
Janet Jai, Pittsburgh, PA.

C A R L I S L E P O E T S
C O N T I N U E D

(Continued from page 3)

At the November Meeting we elected the following officers: President-Susan Vernon, Secretary – Janet Manwaring, and Treasurer – Angela White.

Plans are being made to host poetry readings with musical interludes at First Night Carlisle 2011. The site will be the same one we have used in past years at the Ephraim Blaine House on Hanover Street. Join us for a pleasant and entertaining evening for your New Year's Eve celebration.

L A N G S T O N H U G H E S
C O N T I N U E D

(Continued from page 4)

enough to make something out of cardboard cut-outs, shame on him!

5. **Write about China, Greece, Tibet or the Argentine pampas** – anyplace you've never seen and know nothing about. Never write about anything you know, your home town, or your home folks, or yourself.

6. **Have nothing to say**, but use a great many words, particularly high-sounding words, to say it.

7. If a playwright, **put into your script a lot of hand-waving and spirituals**, preferably the ones everybody has heard a thousand times from Marion Anderson to the Golden Gates.

8. If a poet, **rhyme June with moon** as often and in as many ways as possible. Also use thee's and thou's and 'tis and o'er, and invert your sentences all the time. Never say, "The sun rose, bright and shining." But rather, "Bright and shining rose the sun."

9. **Pay no attention really to the spelling or grammar** or the neatness of the manuscript. And in writing letters, never sign your name so anyone can read it. A rapid scrawl will better indicate how important and how busy you are.

10. **Drink as much liquor as possible** and always write under the presence of alcohol. When you can't afford alcohol yourself, or even if you can, drink on your friends, fans, and the general public.

P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E C O N T I N U E D

(Continued from page 1)

etry. Prospective on what you write," and Nancy Henry Kline, "Shakespearean Sonnets" for jobs well done and to pass on to them the praise expressed by others. It never ceases to amaze me how much talent we are blessed to have within our own organization.

My personal thanks to all members of Keysner Poets for sponsoring our Fall Conference and for providing us with an entertaining and educational poetic experience. Thanks, also, to all of the attendees who gathered to celebrate and live our passion for poetry and enthusiastically participate in the workshops, the meetings, and in all of the activities that made up our day for poets.

I'm pleased to announce that Carlisle Poets has offered to sponsor our Spring 2012 Conference to be held at Allenberry, in all probability, on one of the weekends in the latter part of April. Gettysburg Poetry Society (GPS) has offered to sponsor our Fall 2012 Conference in Gettysburg. There will be more information on both of these Conferences in our Winter 2012 newsletter.

I am most grateful for all of our Chapters and their members who sponsor our Conferences and who work so hard to create a unique poetic experience for the rest of us to enjoy.

Richard "Dick" Lake, President
Pennsylvania Poetry Society

H E L P W I T H O U R
A R C H I V E S

PPS asks your help in completing our archive sets of *Prize Poems* and *Pegasus*. If you have any of the following copies you would like to donate, they would be greatly appreciated:

Prize Poems for the years 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1979, 1983, 1985, and 1989

Pegasus booklet for 2000, 2001, and 2004

U P D A T E Y O U R I N F O
W I T H P P S

It's that time of year again!

Please make sure your information on file with PPS is current!

Direct changes of phone number, email address, or physical address to Ann Gasser. Her contact information is available on page 8 of this newsletter.

M E M B E R P U B L I C A T I O N S

Two Member publications to announce:

The manuscript, "Word Ghetto," by Loretta Diane Walker won the 2011 Bluelight Press Book Award. It will be published in the fall of 2011. To order contact Loretta at 4315 Esmond Drive #1605, Odessa, TX. 79762. [432-552-9934](tel:432-552-9934), Walkerld1@aol.com

Imogene Hunt, a member at large, will have 2 poems published in the Gettysburg Poetry Society's upcoming anthology. *Almost Time Enough*. The titles are "Quilting the Wind" and "Emergence."

R E F E R E N C E W E B L I N K

Here is link to Richard Love Peacock's essay on "The Four Ages of Poetry" : <http://www.thomaslovelovepeacock.net/FourAges.html>

This is the essay to which Bertram Barnett referred in his presentation at the October meeting at Allenberry.

AMERICAN LIFE
IN POETRY

CRITIQUE COMMITTEE
GUIDELINES

Column 346

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE

It seems to me that most poems are set in spring or summer, and I was pleased to discover this one by Molly Fisk, a Californian, set in cold midwinter.

Winter Sun

How valuable it is in these short days,
threading through empty maple branches,
the lacy-needled sugar pines.

Its glint off sheets of ice tells the story
of Death's brightness, her bitter cold.

We can make do with so little, just the
hint
of warmth, the slanted light.

The way we stand there, soaking in it,
mittened fingers reaching.

And how carefully we gather what we can
to offer later, in darkness, one body to another.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org), publisher of Poetry magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2010 by Molly Fisk from her most recent book of poetry, *The More Difficult Beauty*, Hip Pocket Press, 2010. Reprinted by permission of Molly Fisk and the publisher. Introduction copyright © 2009 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.



Electronic Submission is now encouraged!

Please be green and email poems as file attachments (no more than three at a time during any 4-month period) to april.line@gmail.com in either .pdf, .doc, or .docx format.

Poems will be emailed to critique partners, and your feedback will arrive electronically, still within 30 days.

See below for guidelines for paper submissions to the critique committee.

Poets may submit three poems (each no longer than one page) to the Critique Committee during a four-month period.

- Poems, maximum of three
- Two 9"x12" manila envelopes and a check or money order for \$3.00

Mail all items to
April Line
1164 High St.
Williamsport, PA 17701

**Poems will not be critiqued if postage does not accompany the submission. For speed and ease, please include the postage fee of \$3.00 with your poems.

Once Line receives your packet, your poems will be sent to one of the volunteer critique partners.

Our volunteers will return your poems to you within 30 days of receiving them.

ANONYMOUS
LIMERICK

A staid schizophrenic named Struther,
When told of the death of his brother,
Said: "Yes, I am sad;
It makes me feel bad,
But then, I still have each other."

-- Anonymous



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ABOUT US

Founded in 1949, PPS, Inc. is a non-profit group of poets and aspiring poets, most of whom reside in PA, who are involved in poetry at local, state, and national levels.

At the local level, active chapters hold monthly meetings and workshops, sponsor poetry readings and contests as well as print anthologies of members' poems. Some members serve as contest judges and teach poetry writing in schools, colleges, retirement communities, etc.

At the state level, one can join PPS, Inc., either as a member at large or as a member of a local chapter. All chapter members must be members of PPS, Inc.

A new chapter can be formed by five or more PPS members who have a slate of officers and by-laws compatible with those of PPS, Inc.

At the national level, the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS) describes itself as "An educational and literary organization dedicated to the writing and appreciation of poetry in America." Its four-day annual conventions are held in a different state each year and offer workshops as well as intellectual and creative intercourse among members of state poetry societies.

Contact Nancy Kline to become a member or join online by visiting www.nfsp.com. Click "State Links" and then "Pennsylvania" to access our site.



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