



The Sylvan

NEWSLETTER OF THE
PENNSYLVANIA POETRY SOCIETY, INC.

ON POSTMODERN POETRY

POINTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- Postmodernism
- Chapter News
- President's Fireside Chat
- Critique service
- Free eBook available from The Poetry Foundation

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John Holcombe, poetrymagic.co.uk

For Postmodernists the world exists only through our understanding of it, and the prime medium of that understanding is everyday language. There is no further or ultimate reality that words point to, and we deceive ourselves by seeking deep spiritual meanings in art. Artists make intriguing creations by juxtaposing contemporary images and concepts, but these have no deeper significance. Contemporary American literature is much too various to be called a movement, but can be broadly characterized as iconoclastic, groundless, formless and populist.

Elaboration

Postmodernism began in the sixties with Pop-Art, the Beat generation, the magic realism of Latin American novelists, and the Poststructuralist theories of Barthes, Lacan and Derrida. The angst of Existentialism, the brooding power of abstract expressionism, the worthy objectives of societies building on liberties hard won by Allied victory in 1945 gradually gave way to affluence. Wider travel, television reporting and photojournalism also showed the realities behind government rhetoric, and these realities came to undermine confidence in authority and public language. Underprivileged groups were championed by the young, disaffection spread, and a counterculture was appropriated by commerce. With the fall of class barriers the fine arts were attacked as elitist, as promoting

political repression and social injustice by their exclusive autonomy. The professions became more specialized, creating guilds of experts where entry was by approved study rather than wealth or family connections. The arts created hypothetical worlds of their own, protected by abstruse theory. As poetry became more iconoclastic and experimental, there were appeals to the irrational nature of man supposed by Freudian psychiatry. Devalued by an increasingly technological world, writers made themselves the spiritual guardians of language itself, championing the creative, and indeed arbitrary, nature over its powers to represent, analyze and discover. The appropriation took many forms. Foucault denounced the political repression inherent in public language. Geoffrey Hill wrote of words themselves as complicit with the holocaust. Beckett renounced the world and employed language pared down to its skeletal minimum. Larkin wrote a poetry that expressed the lowered expectations of the law-abiding citizen. Sontag argued for sensory renewal, which coincided with sex made increasingly an individual matter and possibly a consumer commodity.

Suggestions

1. Does the above make sense? If not, take out library books or subscribe to avant-garde magazines.
2. Study Postmodernism in general, and its application to poetry: That good

PRESIDENT'S FIRESIDE CHAT

I hope everyone has found the time and energy to snuggle up by the fire and create some poetry in between winter's serial chillers. And I hope those poetic creations found their way into PPS' annual contest or will fit the categories in the NFSPS contest.

Punxsutawney Phil, suffering from burrow fever, briefly stuck his head out, didn't see his shadow, and predicted there would be an early spring. I've been outside for the past six weeks shoveling snow, ice skating on my sidewalk (not on purpose), and belatedly spreading salt. I haven't yet caught a glimpse of my shadow, probably because I was so preoccupied with not falling down. Maybe Phil's right about spring coming early but he conveniently omitted a prediction about how spring would arrive; it probably will slide in on a squall of freezing rain.

I don't know about you but I'll take a ton of fluffy snow over sheets of ice any day. Either way, winter weather puts additional demands on our time and energies, and kinks in our aching backs. Unfortunately, those demands, for me, are met at the expense of writing poetry. By the time I get through cleaning the walks, etc. and applying gallons of liniment to my sore parts, I'm in no condition, or mood, to sit at my computer and create poetry.

Fortunately for me, there are contest deadlines in January (PPS) and March (NFSPS) that demand my attention and give me the incentive to create regardless of my condition. Each contest provides a wealth of categories that are inspirational and challenging. In addition, the poetry group I belong to, Keysner Poets, has a monthly challenge. Ann Gasser also provides PPS members with a challenge each quarter included with The Sylvan.

Each of us probably has favorite ways of keeping the writing spirit alive. My friend Marilyn Downing, a for-

mer PPS President, has formed an inner family group that consists of her with two of her daughters, Maureen and Colleen. They routinely throw challenges out that all three will write about and share with each other. Those challenges, and resulting poems, are vital connecting links between them as family members and as women. Despite their familial connection, their voices are very different and their poems are unique to each. In essence, they have formed a poetic workout group of their own design.

A couple of years ago, one of Ann Gasser's word challenges provided the impetus for Marilyn to draw her daughters into her poetic universe. Up to that time, neither Maureen, a psych nurse, nor Colleen, a corporate paralegal, had written poetry. These inner family challenges have since stimulated the writing of all three and have given each of them greater insight into the others' hearts and minds. In addition, Maureen and Colleen found a part of themselves they didn't know was missing. This year Colleen submitted poems in our contest, just as her mother has done for many years.

There are as many ways to keep our creative feet to the fire as there are poets, and more. Some will work for you and some will not. You'll need to experiment with various ways and means, both in and out of your personal comfort zone. Based on Marilyn's family poetry experience, and my own with Toni, my beloved, I can think of nothing more rewarding than inviting a loved one, or a close friend, into your own private creative space and being their guide into the enchanting inner-sanctum of poetry.

Richard Lake,
PPS President

*There is no frigate like a book to take us lands
away,
nor any coursers like a page of prancing poetry.
– Emily Dickinson*

POST MODERNISM CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)

poems negate themselves, obtaining an authority by excluding the outside. That they strive for autonomy, but are dislocated by shifted genre boundaries. That a poem is a sum total of tensions between mimesis and construction. That truth in poetry is not truth to the meaning of words — as it is in philosophy — but an artifact of literary devices or tropes. That they talk about themselves not to evade talking about the world but to enable that world. Be sure you understand the theory behind these statements, where it comes from, and why.

3. Commit yourself to a movement that champions the work you produce and/or admire.

4. Start submitting to small magazines. Attend events. Create your own circle.



EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello All,

Thanks for your diligence in getting the materials to me by the new due dates! I want to republish these for anyone who was unable to get through their newsletter last quarter.

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.

Would also like to remind everyone that the newsletter advertising space is only for events in which members of PPS are featured, or events hosted by one of our chapters.

As always, I want to know what you're up to! Please send announcements, reviews, news!

Please also note that our newsletter is published online every quarter at www.nfsps.org/pa, so if you miss one, please find it there.

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



SAN ANTONIO POETRY CONTEST

Sponsored by the UTSA Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and the UTSA English Department, The San Antonio Poetry Fair proudly announces its Fourteenth Annual SAPF Contest. The national contest has cash awards totaling \$350! Please see www.sanantoniopoetryfair.com for entry details. Deadline is June 15; electronic entries only.



HELP WITH OUR ARCHIVES

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

ANONYMOUS LIMERICK

A tutor who tooted the flute
Tried to tutor two tooters to toot,
Said the two to the tutor,
"Is it harder to toot or
To tutor two tooters to toot?"



FREE EBOOK FROM POETRY FOUNDATION

Excerpted from a press release from poetryfoundation.org, used with permission

CHICAGO — The Poetry Foundation, publisher of Poetry magazine, is pleased to announce the publication of the e-book *Blueprints: Bringing Poetry into Communities*, co-published with the University of Utah Press. A project of the Poetry Foundation's Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute and edited by inaugural director Katharine Coles, the book brings together noted poets and community leaders to discuss the inventive ways they've introduced poetry to diverse communities. The essays include tips, program ideas, and successful methods for bringing poetry to people, while the book's final section draws from the strategies discussed in those essays to offer a flexible toolkit for individuals and organizations interested in bringing poetry into their own communities. Essays and contributions come from poets associated with the following programs and organizations:

- Elizabeth Alexander, Cave Canem
- Lee Briccetti, Poets House
- Alison Hawthorne Deming, University of Arizona's Poetry Center
- Dana Gioia, Poetry Out Loud

- Robert Hass, River of Words
- Bas Kwakman, Poetry International
- Christopher Merrill, University of Iowa International Writing Program

The contributors to *Blueprints* draw from a wealth of experiential learning to provide encouragement for budding poetry communities and arts administrators. Robert Hass writes about his work with River of Words, an organization that encourages environmental awareness through the arts, and the lessons he's learned about running a successful nonprofit. Elizabeth Alexander, who read at President Obama's inauguration and is a supporter of Cave Canem, discusses her own search for community as well as the importance of togetherness and safe spaces for creative expression. And Lee Briccetti of Poets House in New York City reminds organizers that fostering an environment conducive to the appreciation of poetry can achieve immeasurable results. She offers words that any community builder might live by: "You can't create love. But you can create the conditions for love."

The book is available to download for free from www.poetryfoundation.org.

CHAPTER NEWS

Linda Clark

The **Gettysburg Poetry Society** is pleased to start 2011 with a total of 16 members as well as many others friends who have attended meetings over the past two years. The group continues to meet three times a month! Some people go to choir practice every week; we go to poetry practice and have very devoted members! Our first meeting each month continues to be geared to poets and lovers of poetry. It features a theme along with a short business meeting. Our second meeting of the month is our workshop session which features a GPS member as leader. February's leader, Constance Trump, challenged us to write a poem about a passion. In March, Sandi Polvinale will combine poetry with music. Our third meeting of the month is a critique session geared toward poets. Our second and fourth Tuesday meetings continue to be held at the Adams County Library, while our workshop continues to be held at Battlefields and Beyond Mili-

tary Bookshoppe at 777 Baltimore Street. Check our website at gettysburgpoetrysociety.webs.com and come visit our group!

We look forward to our role in the Gettysburg Arts Festival in June. We are fortunate to have talented, motivated poets with lots of ideas. Also, our own Sandi Polvinale will be displaying some poetic artwork in Gettysburg's First Friday events in both February and March.

Keysner Poets

Henry Spottswood has had "Life in the Mountains" and "Fall Cleanup" accepted by The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume III: Contemporary Appalachia.

Carlisle Poets

Carlisle Poets also has a new contact email address: carlislepoets@gmail.com

MICHAEL HOOVER BIOGRAPHY

Michael Hoover is a local poet and has served at the borough of Hanover's poet laureate. He has been writing since the sixties, has taught, and has completed graduate work.

He has been seriously writing poetry and reaching out to fellow poets since the mid nineties, and has exhibited his photographs locally and had his creative writings published.

You can visit him online at www.michaelhooverpoetry.com



HOTEL CARLISLE

This year's spring conference is being hosted by Carlisle Poets at Hotel Carlisle in the Embers Convention Center located at:

Hotel Carlisle
1700 Harrisburg Pike
Carlisle
717-243-1717

Rooms: \$83.99/night
PPS reserved rooms nearest to conference area for both Thursday and Friday nights.

Directions are available at www.hotelcarlisle.com
Conference questions and dilemmas can be fielded by carlislepoets@gmail.com



PAM BARNEY BIOGRAPHY

Pam Barney is a member of Carlisle Poets and is retired from the Department of Defense Education Activity, and has been a secondary teacher of English, American, and World Literature, Composition, Creative Writing, and Social Studies including AP US History, Geography, and World History. In 1999 she was the DoDEA Teacher of the Year. Since she retired, she has run short story workshops at Moreland Elementary School for grades one through five, and done workshops for a summer program for youth composition.



AGENDA AND WORKSHOPS

Friday April 15:

2:00 p.m.—5:00 Informal gathering
facilitated by Richard Lake

Saturday April 16:

10-11a.m. – Business Meeting
11a.m. – 12p.m. – reading of Prize Poems
12-1p.m. – catered lunch at the hotel
1:15-3p.m. – Workshops

Pam Barney: Finding Importance in the Ordinary

Michael Hoover: The Magic of Synesthesia

3:00-3:30p.m. – Completion of Prize Poem readings



SPRING CONFERENCE: APRIL 15-16, 2011

_____ I will attend and have lunch (enclose check for \$20.00/person).

_____ I will attend and not have lunch (no registration fee, conference is free to members)

_____ I will attend and arrive April 15; let me know about dinner.

_____ I will not attend.

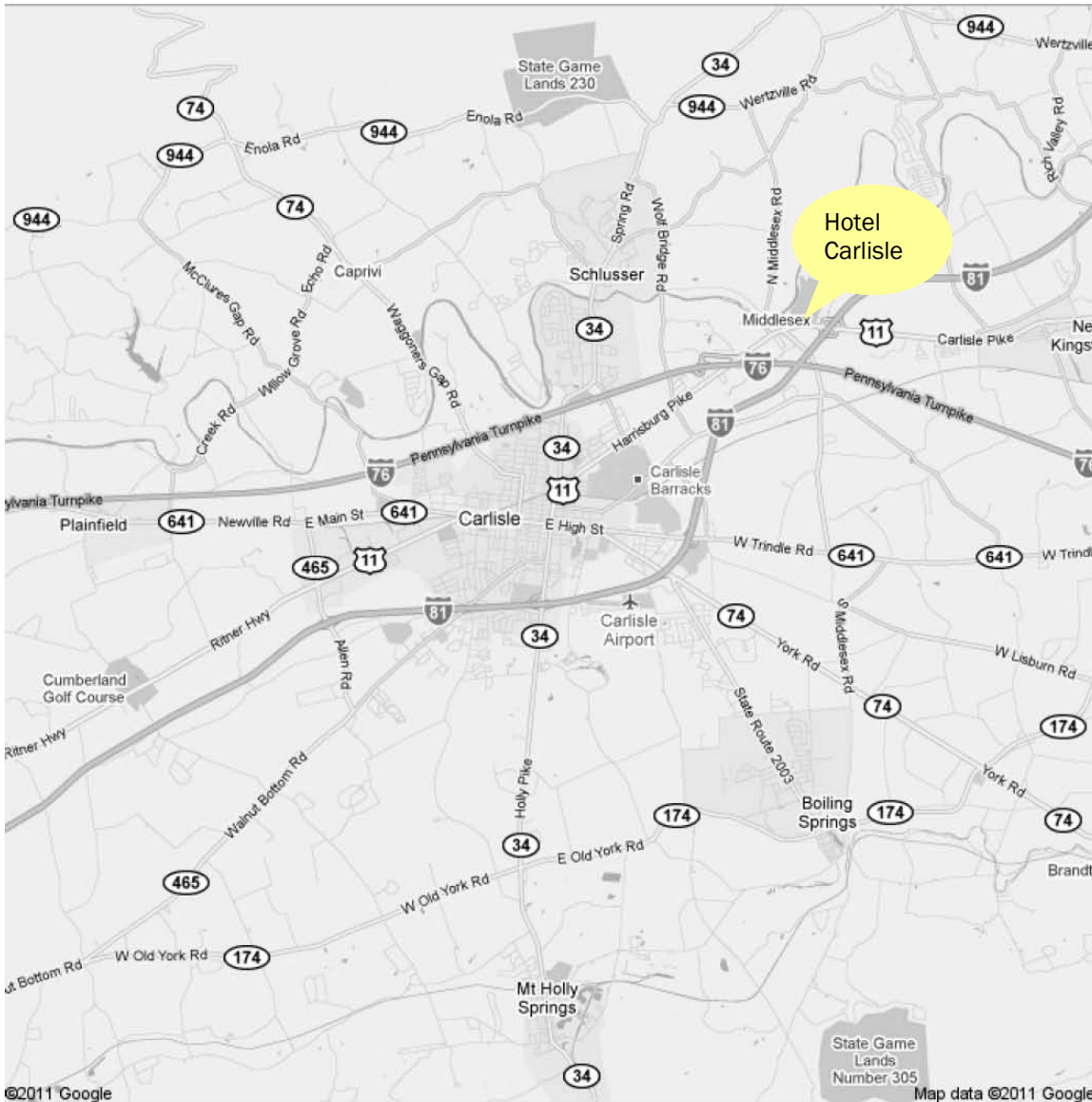
Email address _____

(Your e-mail address is for PPS, Inc only and will not be shared with or sold to third party vendors.)

Deadline for reservations: no later than 12:00 noon on April 11, 2011.

Send Checks Payable to PPS, Inc to

**Nancy Kline (PPS Treasurer)
1040 Dogwood Drive, Box 125
Cornwall, PA 17016**



MAP TO HOTEL

Proper directions can be found

- by entering 1700 Harrisburg Pike 17015 at maps.google.com,
- by visiting the hotel's website at www.hotelcarlisle.com,
- by calling the hotel directly at 717-243-1717

This map is provided for reference and orientation only, not to be used as exclusive source of navigational information.

AMERICAN LIFE
IN POETRY
COLUMN 299

CRITIQUE COMMITTEE
CHANGES AND
ANNOUNCEMENT

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE

Here's a poem by Christopher Todd Matthews that I especially like for the depiction of the little boy who makes more of a snowball than we would have expected was there. This poet lives in Lexington, Virginia.

Eating Them As He Came

Dark by five, the day gives up and so do I,
stalled at the top of the stairs I forget what for,
adrift in a scrap of dream that's not a dream
exactly but a stupor, unrefined. I go astray
in old routines, I dare myself to reconstruct
the rules of old invented games—that one
of throwing snowballs at the roof, to watch them
shrink as they rolled down, spinning to their pits,
to see the force that made them briefly a thing
so neatly undone. Today an old friend's tiny boy
lobbied me to pitch some snowballs at him. I bowed
to his dense little will. But planned to miss.
As I packed and flung each one to its unpacking,
he hunted down the humble bits and crumbs
of every impact, as they ran from him along
the icy slope, and gathered and carried them
back to me at the top. Eating them as he came.
So that's how you get to the marrow of breakdown.
I forgot. That you could put what's left to your lips.

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Poets now have the ability to submit submissions electronically.

In order to do so, please 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. At which point, 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 are entitled to submit three poems (each no longer than one page) to the Critique Committee during a four-month period.

When snail mailing, include:

- Poems, maximum of three
- Two full-sized manila envelopes and a check or money order for \$2.50
- Mail all items to April Line 217 Lincoln Ave Williamsport, PA 17701

**Poems will not be critiqued if postage is not paid in advance. For speed and ease, please include the postage fee of \$2.50 with your poems.

UPDATE YOUR INFO

As we do the annual work of updating membership records, we note how many incorrect mailing and e-mail addresses and phone numbers we have on file!

If you have moved or changed e-mail providers since you last paid your PPS dues, please take a moment send updates to Richard Lake, Ann Gasser or (treasurer here) (contact info on page 8) so that you can continue to take full advantage of your PPS Membership.



PPS CONTACTS

President: **Richard Lake**
Immediate-past President: **DeAnna Spurlock**
Vice President: **Lynn Fetterolf**
Immediate-past Vice President: **Janice Freytag**
Recording Secretary: **Ann Gasser**
Corresponding Secretary: **Janet Manwaring**
Treasurer: **Nancy Kline**
Historian: **Toni Carey**
Trustees:
(2014) **Catherine Hoffman, Susan Vernon**
(2016) **Walter Brandenburg,**
Mark Starkweather

(2017) Membership Committee:
Nancy Kline, Chair; Kara Valore,
Marilyn Downing,
PPS Publicity Chair: **Linda Clark**
Pegasus Contest Chair: **Marilyn Downing**
Prize Poems: **Ann Gasser**
Endowments & Audit: **The Trustees**
The *Sylvan* Editor: **April Line**
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Gettysburg Poetry Society (GPS): Linda Clark, 717-337-9093



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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