

STANZA

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY

VOLUME 32, NUMBER 1

Spring 2024

NEWS OF OUR NEXT MEETING

Our spring in-person meeting will take place May 18 at Christ Episcopal Church, 2 Dresden Avenue in Gardiner. On-street parking is available. This will be a hybrid meeting using our own recently purchased OWL. A link will be sent to all current members a day or two prior to the meeting. **If you plan to attend in person, please do let us know so our Hospitality Host can know how many to prepare for.** Guest judge and workshop leader will be Dennis Camire. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. The meeting will start at 10:00. There'll be a half-hour break for lunch and a 45-minute workshop beginning at 12:30. There will not be an attendance fee, but there will be a donation jar on the table with hopes of offsetting some of the cost of refreshments and renting the facility.

May Members-Only Contest

Times New Roman or Arial font preferred.

(REMINDER: Submission to a contest constitutes permission to publish.)

Deadline, April 18, 2024

Contest Details

Contest Poem — A Poem praising something antithetical to praise – 30-line limit

Writing Prompt: Recently, on Kelly Corrigan Wonders, a writer mentioned how, currently in American literature, there is a preponderance of what he calls “the pornography of pain.” In sum, he claims that there is an excess amount of literature that is esteemed, in part, because it is filled with despair and suffering. Though I love literature that explores our shadow side and that often, in turn, becomes a means of processing pain and suffering in a healthy way that can put them to rest, or make them less toxic to our souls, I thought I’d provide a prompt that partakes of the other pole in American literature: that of praise....or, if you like, “the pornography of praise.”

To that end, this prompt asks you to ponder an object, experience, or place that seems quite antithetical to praise and then to try and praise it. As many of you know, Neruda was brilliant at this with his odes to Common Things where he elevated a sock, an artichoke, a lemon, and a pair of scissors. Buddhists, too, are quite adept at finding the awe and beauty in the ordinary or the overlooked and, to that end, they cultivate “beginner’s mind” where one seeks to see something with the eyes of a child. Quite simply then, seek to praise something that is ordinary, overlooked, or seeming impossible to praise. Consider some of the following poems I’ve provided links to:

Neruda’s Ode to Common Things, Ode to Scissors, and Ode to an Artichoke :

[Meanderings and Muses: Ode To Common Things - by Pablo Neruda](#)

[The Doily Duck: An Ode to Scissors](#)

[Ode To The Artichoke by Pablo Neruda - Famous poems, famous poets. - All Poetry](#)

Sharon Olds’s Ode to a Composting Toilet:

[“Ode to a Composting Toilet” \(slate.com\)](#)

Barbara Hamby’s Ode to Untoward Dreams and Ode to My Prison:

[Ode to Untoward Dreams - Barbara Hamby](#)

[Ode to My Prison - Barbara Hamby - Literary Matters](#)

Regarding the format, obviously, the ode mode is very conducive to praise; **however, feel free to write in any form.** Indeed, there are quite a few sonnets and villanelles and first-person, free verse narrative poems that, when executed from a certain perspective and feeling, are filled with as much praise as any old ode. Choose whatever form, then, that speaks to you and try to choose a subject that seems almost impossible to praise. To that end, think of yourself as like an Olympic springboard diver where the degree of difficulty needs to be quite high in order to achieve the maximal score. Instead, then, of elevating and praising a honeybee (who we all agree is beautiful and sublime), try to elevate and praise a salmon corpse rotting in the understory, your father's aloofness toward you growing up, the failure of your first romantic love, the lawn mower that always breaks down halfway through a mowing, the blue jay eggs that did not hatch, etc.. Lastly, have fun! Indeed, if poetry is the one major creative endeavor of yours that eats up hours of each week, creating space for praise seems, in my humble opinion, a way of making this creative endeavor sustainable to the soul.

THE JUDGE

Dennis Camire is the author of the poetry collection *Anthology of Awe and Wonder* (Deerbrook Editions, May, 2024) and *Combed by Crows* (Deerbrook Editions) and teaches writing at Central Maine Community College. The former director of Maine Poetry Central and the founder of The Portland Poet Laureate Program, his work has appeared in *The Mid-American Review*, *Poetry East*, *Spoon River Review*, *Lothlorien Review*, *Alluvium*, *Amethyst*, *Café Review*, *Canary*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Speckled Trout Review* and on Maine Public Radio.

HOW TO SUBMIT

Only current MPS members are eligible and only one entry per person is permitted. Note that Times New Roman or Arial font is preferred.

If submitting by USPS: Mail to: Gus Peterson, 12 Middle Street, Randolph, ME 04346
2 copies of your poem (ONE with your name; one without) in a letter-size (#10) envelope marked "CONTEST." **Must be postmarked on or before April 18 to be considered.** Please be sure to enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Email entries must be sent as an attachment on or before April 18 to mainepoetsociety@gmail.com. In the upper right-hand corner, include your name, address, telephone number and email address. **Please send the poem in a .doc, .docx or .rtf format. Do not send it as a .pdf.** We suggest **Member Contest Entry May 2024** or something similar in the subject line.

A Reminder of NFSPS Contests

Just a reminder that membership in the Maine Poetry Society includes membership in NFSPS. The 2023-24 contests are now open with a March 15 deadline (50 of them, including one which we sponsor, but do not judge). The Maine Contest theme is "The Face of Climate Change in Nature."

Sponsorship for these contests recurs annually. The Maine Poetry Society will have a contest in the 2024-25 cycle with the theme "On the Street Where You Live."

Jenny received an email from Mark Graham of One Page Poetry

He said they had an amazing turnout for their 2023 One Page Poetry contest, with the three winners receiving \$4,500 in prizes and \$6,500 going to the two charities that they support (the World Wildlife Fund and Oceania). Their 2023 Anthology, featuring the top 100 poems, reached #1 on Amazon's poetry anthology list. All proceeds from entry fees and the sale of the anthology go to those charities. This was shared on our Facebook page. Submissions are currently being accepted through September 30. **It costs to submit poems, but for those interested: An opportunity!** <https://onepagepoetry.com/submission/>

Cost of Living Hitting You Hard? Can't Afford our Membership Fee? We Can Help.

At the annual meeting in the fall of 2023, the Maine Poets Society board voted to underwrite membership for folks who may find joining MPS cost prohibitive. Because we value the engagement of Maine poets of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, we decided to offer a waiver of annual dues for those who are facing financial hardship. It is our hope that no writer need forego MPS membership only because they can't afford it. The waiver is good for one annual membership. A recipient may reapply when membership renewal is scheduled. Current members or prospective members may apply at any time during the calendar year. It's not necessary to provide a reason for applying, but if you wish to provide a very short statement of need, you may. Names of applicants and recipients will be held in confidence by the Society. We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity when needed. Email our treasurer at netmotel@gmail.com for more information.

April is National Poetry Month!

According to the Academy of American Poets, which launched the initiative in April 1996, "National Poetry Month is a special occasion that celebrates poets' integral role in our culture and that poetry matters. Over the years, it has become the largest literary celebration in the world." [Poem in Your Pocket Day, on April 18](#), encourages the sharing of poems in person and in social media.

It has become a tradition among some poets to attempt to write "a poem a day" in April. If you'd like to try to meet that creative challenge, these resources provide prompts to help get you going:

- [Writer's Digest](#): Robert Lee Brewer offers fun and inspirational prompts every day in April.
- [NaPoWriMo](#): posts a daily prompt and features a different participant each day, as well as a daily poetry-related resource.
- [A teacher's blog](#): you can find 30 days of themes, styles, and examples from poetry luminaries on a site designed for teaching poetry to a young audience. Brush up on metonymy and synecdoche! Other poetry resources on this page, as well.

Links for Opportunities and Events

[2024 Camden Festival of Poetry](#)

[Workshops with Dawn Potter](#):

- Structure and Song: An Introductory Chapbook Seminar. A three-session seminar introducing some first steps in organizing a sheaf of poems. Dates: May 5, 12, and 19, 1-4 p.m. ET, on Zoom. Cost: \$200
- From Draft to Dream: Revising into the Unknown. A day-long class is for anyone who is looking for new ways to step into existing poems. Date: June 2, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., on Zoom. Cost: \$75

Opportunity Grants Available

Opportunity Grants of up to \$100 (some of which could be used for gas/travel expenses) are available for any type of online or in person poetry seminar/workshop experience. Members who joined or renewed MPS membership for the current year by the end of January may apply. Individual members can only have one grant in any three-year period. The grant recipient is required to write a short piece for *Stanza* afterwards to tell other members about their experience.

Up to \$500 in total a year is available for grants – first come, first served. If interested, go here to print out an application: <http://mainepoetsociety.com/PDFs/2023-MPS-Opportunity-Grant-Application.pdf> Or go to the Maine Poets Society website, click on the Membership tab, and then on "a Membership Opportunity Grant Application."

— John Seksay, Treasurer

An Opportunity to Be More Fully Involved in the Maine Poets Society

Would you like to be more engaged with Maine's poetry community? We invite you to take the next step by joining the Maine Poets Society board. We'll be looking for a treasurer and a vice president in the near future, so we'd especially welcome a volunteer with bookkeeping skills and a volunteer familiar with technology (for our hybrid meetings). A willingness to organize member contests would be a plus.

Our board is fairly informal; our shared responsibilities occur regularly but are not too time-consuming. As a board member, you'd be expected to attend about four in-person meetings a year and provide input for our promotions and publications on an ongoing basis. You'd also have an opportunity to assist with administering the Maine Prize Poem Contest in spring. As an MPS board member, you'll be able to become better acquainted with other writers; assist with activities like contests, readings, and gatherings; and help generate ideas about outreach and programming.

Like all other state poetry societies, the Maine Poets Society relies on the work of volunteers to keep things running smoothly and provide a focus and a forum for the many poets around our state. That's even more important in Maine, where poets can feel separated by geography. The board enjoys working together to help bring other poets together. Please consider becoming a member of the MPS board!

Did you know? The Poets Laureate of Maine

In looking for inspiration, Maine poets would do well to dip into the work of the Pine Tree State's poets laureate. The honorary position was established in 1995. To be considered for this appointment, poets must be full-time Maine residents and have a distinguished body of poetic work. Poets laureate are appointed for a five-year term and may be reappointed for a second term, but for no more than two consecutive terms

Here are the poets, the dates of their terms, and a sample collection for each:

Kate Barnes 1996-1999 *Kneeling Orion* (2003)
 Betsy Sholl 2006-2011 *As If a Song Could Save You* (2022)
 Wes McNair 2011-2015 *Late Wonders: New & Selected Poems* (2022)
 Stuart Kestenbaum 2016-2020 *Things Seemed to Be Breaking* (2021)
 Julia Bouwsma 2021-present *Midden* (2018)

Practice by Betsy Sholl

It all clouds, crowds back—my sister
 hunched over the keys, cluster of notes
 her hands can't reach or make fast enough.
 She tries over and over that one tiny patch
 of Bach pulled out from the rest like rubble
 at the shore we poked through for treasure.

“If you are squeamish,” Sappho says,
 “don't prod the beach rubble,” Sappho
 who lived by the sea, soaking in its rhythms,
 that first heavy wave shush hitting shore,
 then the next softer shush and again, shush.
 How my sister shushed me over and over

as she prodded those keys, until finally
 a cloud would burst, her fists would slam
 down in a crash of sound, a wail of how
 she'll never get it right, never be good
 enough, it's too hard. But then the storm
 would pass and she'd be trying again.

For years I heard only repeated pieces
 like our old Evinrude refusing to start,
 the choke not right, the engine not
 catching, no sputter and shift into glide.
 I had no clue what magnificent cargo
 my sister was trying to haul, what was

inside the piano and inside her, depths
 the ocean only hints at tossing up rubble,
 fragments of Sappho, notes my sister now
 lifts off the page, pours through her hands,
 until if you didn't know you'd think
 it was always easy, always whole.

Maine Prize Poem Deadline – March 30

It's not too late to submit poems for our 2024 Prize Poem Contests. Open to all Maine residents whether members of MPS or not. Feel free to share the information and invitation with poet friends.

THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY PRIZE POEM CONTESTS 2024

The Maine Poets Society is proud to present our seventh annual **Maine Prize Poem Contest**, open to all Maine residents. There are two categories: one for poets who have been previously published and one for those who have not. This year we are pleased to announce that we have increased the amount of the prize awards to \$150 and \$75 respectively. The deadline is March 30, 2024.

Guidelines

- Open to all Maine residents, including seasonal, except for Maine Poets Society board members.
- Entries must be postmarked between January 15th and March 30th, 2024.
- There is a \$6 entry fee for the \$150 prize poem contest, and a \$3.00 entry fee for the \$75 contest for previously unpublished poets.
- You may enter up to 4 poems. Each poem requires a separate entry fee.
- Previously published poems are not eligible. Publication in a newsletter or an online workshop does not count for this purpose.
- Topic and form are left open, but there is a 50-line limit, not counting title and epigraph. Entries exceeding this will be disqualified.

Submission Process

- Please send **two** copies of your poem, one identified with your name, mailing address, email address and telephone number and which contest you are entering (previously published or not previously published) and **one with no additional information**, to MPS Vice President Gus Peterson, 12 Middle Street, Randolph, ME 04346.
- If your entry will be postmarked out of state, please enclose a letter verifying your address when resident in Maine.
- Mark your envelope CONTEST.
- Enclose a check payable to Maine Poets Society, with 'Contest entry' on the memo line. Entries will not be returned, so please retain a copy.

Judge

Our distinguished judge for the \$150 prize poem contest in 2024 will be Judy Kaber, winner of last year's Prize Poem contest, and former Belfast Poet Laureate. Judy has published poems in numerous journals and anthologies and is the winner of several contests. She is the author of three chapbooks.

Presentation

Our prizes will be presented at the 2024 Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance awards evening. The shortlists will be announced beforehand by email and on the MPS Facebook page.

Feedback from Jenny's Winter Workshop

Jenny Doughty convened a workshop on Jan. 27 focusing on rhythm and cadence in free verse. Participants enjoyed the review of basics of meter, and then studied how meter carries and deepens the poems of several well-known writers. Participants also had the opportunity to read and share feedback of their own poems.

~Kathryn Tracy

Publication & Member News

Poems:

Robert Paul Allen had two poems accepted by *Impsired*: “Off Course” will appear in April 2024, and “Grandad’s Hands” appeared in December 2023. His poem “Full Circle” will appear in *Lips* in Spring 2024, and “Sticky Buns” appeared in *Silver Birch Press* in October 2023.

Dr. Emory Jones continues to have impressive success in having his poetry published and in placing or winning in a number of poetry contests. Recent successes include “Eyes of Love,” which won 2nd Place (Alfred Von Brokoph Award) in the 2023 Florida State Poets Association Contest; “Sacred Music,” which won 3rd Place (Agates Category) of the 2023 League of Minnesota Poets Contest; “Wise Men,” which was published in *Pennsylvania’s Poetic Voices* (December 2023); “Forever Faun,” which won Honorable Mention in the 2023 Nebraska Poetry Society Contest; and “Divine Sculpture,” which was published in *Pennsylvania’s Poetic Voices* (January 2024).

Jeanne Julian’s poems “Elisabeth Thible,” “Sleuth at the Seance,” and “‘An Artistic Eye’: Bayard Wootten, photographer” are included in the anthology *Power of the Feminine I, Vols. I and II*. “Looking for Loveliness” and “Weight” are in *The Kleksograph*, issue 13. *Twelve Mile Review* (winter 2023) includes her poem “Taking Stock,” and “Preview of Post-mortem” will appear in *Amethyst Review* in mid-April.

Elizabeth Koopman’s poem “Ghost Music” appeared in the February 2024 issue of *Abandoned Mine Review*.

Gus Peterson’s “Therapy Poem” will appear in the next issue of *Frost Meadow Review*, and his poem “Ode to a Hygienist” will appear in this year’s issue of *The Poeming Pigeon*.

Anne Rankin has five poems coming out this spring. Two will appear in *Kelp Journal*: “A Lack of Stars” and “Morning Dog”; the other three will be published by *Does It Have Pockets?*: “The Illusion of Finding the Therapeutic Dose,” “On the Other Side of Blood,” and “Dog Gone Grief.” Next September, *Rattle* will publish her poem “Possible Reasons Why.”

Mark Saba’s poem “I Could Live There” is in the current issue of *Pittsburgh Quarterly*. His poem “Switching Glasses” was published online at *Gas: Poetry, Art and Music* and nominated for Best of the Net. This spring, his poem “Morning Sheds Light” will be read on Maine Public Radio as part of its *Poets from Here* series.

David Sloan’s poem “Lines in Algonquin” was recently selected by *New Millennium Writings* as the winner of the 56th New Millennium Award for Poetry. The poem appears in his first collection, *The Irresistible In-Between*. He received the \$1,000 1st Prize, and publication online and in-print. [INFO](#)

Books:

Mike Bove’s latest poetry collection, *Soundtrack to Your Next Panic Attack*, was published this month by Kelsay Books. He will participate in a reading event for the book with poet Steve Langan on April 4th, 6:00 p.m., at Back Cove Books in Portland.

Mark Saba has two short novels forthcoming: *Mirror, Mirror* (Running Wild Press), and *The Shoemaker* (Casa Lago, an imprint of Bordighera Press).

Member News:

Mike Bove has been awarded a writing residency at Acadia National Park. As part of the park’s thirty-year Artist-in-Residence Program, Mike will serve as one of five artists for the 2024 calendar year. <https://www.nps.gov/acad/learn/news/20240226.htm>



President's Ink Spring 2024

In the UK, where I grew up, they have just celebrated Mother's Day, and the two of my children who live there sent me cards and called me, which was lovely. On that side of the Atlantic Mothering Sunday (as it is still sometimes called there) is always celebrated on the fourth Sunday in Lent so the date changes from one year to the next. I only learned recently that the reason it is associated with Lent is that in earlier times it was a day when it was your mother church - the church in which you were baptised - who was visited and honoured. It coincided with the middle of Lent and was a day when you were allowed to have a respite from the fasting that was traditionally associated with Lent, and the Bible readings for the day all had associations with mothers.

Later it became a day when domestic servants were given a day off to visit their mother church, usually with their own mothers and other family. The practice became more common, and more associated with mothers rather than the church, in response to the popularity of the American Mother's Day, and in fact is now generally called Mother's Day in the UK these days. When I was a small child in the 1950s there was still a tradition of baking a cake called a Simnel Cake for the day, and even when my children were small in the 1980s churchgoing children were given spring flowers like violets and daffodils to give to their mothers.

You may wonder what all this has to do with poetry. In the last couple of years my poems have done a lot of mining of my childhood and the area in Yorkshire where I grew up. I suppose it is because I am getting older that my thoughts turn back to impressions that I gained and things I experienced as a child and adolescent. Sometimes this works well for me as an inspiration, although often I feel that I should be looking more to things around me.

It's very hard to write poems about one's parents and childhood without descending into sentimentality, and I have always tried to avoid that. But if we can manage as poets to look at those experiences of childhood and the family we grew up in with clarity and without sentimentality, those images can present themselves in a way that our everyday lives now do not. This applies whether you have had a happy childhood or not. Wordsworth in his Preface to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* wrote that "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility", and if you read his poem "I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud" you will see him doing exactly that in the last stanza. You will note that he does not elucidate whether emotions that give rise to poems are positive or negative, although in this poem about daffodils I think they are obvious I think few of us have grown up without some experience of both those types of emotion, and both can be grist to the mill of our poetic imaginations.

I wish all of you a happy spring and summer, and hope to see as many of you as can make it to our next hybrid in-person and Zoom meeting in May.

Jenny Doughty

For oft, when on my couch I lie
 In vacant or in pensive mood,
 They flash upon that inward eye
 Which is the bliss of solitude;
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,
 And dances with the daffodils.

William Wordsworth

STANZA, Maine Poets Society
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FIRST CLASS

Stanza is the tri-annual
newsletter of the
Maine Poets Society
promoting good poetry
since 1936

FMI or to join, write
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MPS website (MainePoetsSociety.com)

MPS Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1747588905507733/>. When you indicate an interest in joining the group, Jenny or Jeanne (as Administrators) will be able to confirm your request. You can also search within Facebook for Maine Poets Society. Choose the option that says “public group.”