

STANZA

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 1

WINTER 2012

NEWS OF OUR NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be Saturday, 25 February 2012 [note this is 4th Saturday, not the usual 3rd] at the **Deering Wing of Dyer Library in Saco**—371 Main Street (Route 1). Dyer Library is easily located in the heart of Saco less

than five minutes from the Saco Exit of the turnpike (www.dyerlibrarysacomuseum.org). Saco Museum is housed in the adjacent building across the shared parking lot.

9:30 Registration and coffee
10:30 AM Contest—FORM: *Ghazals*, member judge Carol Bachofner
11:20 Member judge reads her own work
12:00 Lunch and **Silent Auction**

1:00 PM Contest—SUBJECT: “A Sense of Weather,” guest judge Dave Morrison
1:50 Guest judge reads his own work
2:30 Announcements and closing
2:45 Reading in the Round

Here is a poem written by Maggie in appreciation for the many years given by our dear **Jim Sargent** in his devoted editorship of the *STANZA*. Thank you, Jim, from all of us!

FOR JIM

Thanks for the way you've kept afloat
The sometimes leaky *Stanza* boat.
Editing chores you did not shirk,
But put your back into your work,
Toiling hard and toiling long,
Through swamps of sonnet, dirge, and song,
To make a readable report
Of all of a poetic sort
(Or unpoetic, if they fell
Into a dreadful, murky yell ...).

We did, and do, appreciate
The many dingy hours late
When you'd have rather been in bed

With sweet dreams running through your head,
Than struggling with computer trials
Stretching ahead for weary miles.
Long since, you've earned your leisure time
To roam at will through hours sublime,
And now it's someone else's job.
We hope your talented brain will throb
Day after day with verses fine,
That you may prosper—line on line—
And reap a harvest rich in song
Where rhymes disport and phrases throng
To leap like flowers from your pen—
Thence to the *Stanza*'s hallowed den!
There will your top awards fly high,
Like flags of triumph in the sky!

—by Maggie Finch

OUR NEXT CONTESTS

AM Poem— FORM: our own **Carol Bachofner** will be judging *Ghazals*. (ANY SUBJECT, limit of 24 lines)

Ghazal, an ancient Persian form featuring meter, couplet construction, rhyme, and refrain. Themes are traditionally unrequited love and loss, but in English the often-unifying theme is open to all topics, including sermons, lectures, and admonishments.

A ghazal is composed of **couplets**— at least five, preferably eight to ten. Essential is the **repeated phrase or word** (the **refrain**) preceded by a **rhyme**. The word before the refrain may be a **perfect** rhyme or an **imperfect** one, such as *pain* and *blame*. Rhyme and refrain are used in **both** lines of the first couplet; thereafter, they appear only in the **second** line. Thus, a 5-couplet ghazal will have 10 lines, one refrain occurring 6 times, and 6 rhyme words, each **IMMEDIATELY** preceding the refrain.

A ghazal is always written in meter. I would suggest a simple guideline: ensure that each line of the ghazal has the same syllabic count so it flows smoothly. The number of syllables per line may be chosen by the writer. Common counts may be 7, 8, 9, or 10 per line, though some shorter may work.

The first couplet (called *Matla*) defines and sets the mood for the whole ghazal. It has rhyme and refrain in both the lines. It defines the structure of the ghazal in the sense that the two rhyme words used in it must be followed in the rest of the ghazal: If the two rhyme words in the first couplet are perfect rhymes (moon, spoon), then a similar perfect rhyme must be used in all other couplets; if the two rhyme words are imperfect rhymes, such as watch and match, then

it is permissible to use imperfect rhyme words in the various couplets of the ghazal.

The final couplet (called *makta*) is a signature couplet, using the poet's name to give a more direct declaration of thought or feeling to the reader. (For this MPS contest, use a **pen name** for the judging.)

Here is one example of a ghazal with the refrain (“I do not know”) and obvious rhymes, emboldened.

The Stranger at the Gate

Who cares about the stranger at the **gate**? I do not know
 The poor orphan, abandoned to his **fate**? I do not know
 Where once I had the answers, now my mind is full of doubt
 How do these certainties **depreciate**? I do not know
 From noon till night our ardent looks would scandalise the town
 Why is it that your eyes are filled with **hate**? I do not know
 It used to be that man respected man for what he did
 These days are we just numbers on the **slate**? I do not know
 The wisdom of the years is something valued now by none
 The butt of standing jokes, this balding **pate**? I do not know
 The saqi¹ turns his back; how many skins will be required,
 oh my love, this unholy thirst to **sate**? I do not know
 Once upon a time Amir was counted a believer
 To every question now I simply **state**, I do not know

¹Saqi: a wine-server in a medieval Persian tavern

PM Poem— SUBJECT: **Dave Morrison** will judge our poems (ANY FORM with a limit of 24 lines) on “**A Sense of Weather.**”

DETAILS from February guest judge Dave Morrison for the **SUBJECT** contest:

Ideas of Weather:

I definitely relate to internal weather; the changeability of our internal states and moods, be they gentle or violent. I often think about my own internal weather and describe it as such, remembering mostly that it changes and moves on. As a kid I would go to visit family in northern Vermont on Lake Champlain, and we could watch a storm move across the lake and see it coming.... I think that vision stayed with me. So, without being too restrictive about the subject, I guess I would suggest to our fellow writers to consider weather as an agent for change, bearing in mind the mirroring of external and internal weather....

DEADLINE—25 January 2012

ADDRESS—

Maggie Finch
 1463 Washington Street
 Bath, ME 04530

INSTRUCTIONS:

- ONE POEM PER CONTEST (no fee)
- 2 COPIES OF EACH POEM (only ONE of each identified)
- ENVELOPE: Letter-size (long, #10), marked “CONTEST”
- SIZE: Maggie requests, *please* do NOT use a larger (manila) envelope!
- **INCLUDE SASE!!!!**

ABOUT THE JUDGES

Member Carol Bachofner: _____

Award-winning poet Carol Bachofner has written poetry since the age of six. She is a passionate lover of words and poetic structure. Her poetry has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Cream City Review*, *The Comstock Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Bangor Metro*, *The Connecticut Review*, and others. She was a finalist in the Maine Literary Awards 2011.

One of her poems has recently been chosen by Maine Poet Laureate, Wesley McNair, as part of his "Take Heart" project. Bachofner has published three poetry collections: *Daughter of the Ardennes Forest* (a memoir in verse), *Breakfast at the Brass Com-*

pass: poems of Mid Coast Maine, and *I Write in the Greenhouse*. Her latest collection, a look at the Native American concept of time, *Native Moons, Native Days*, is forthcoming from Bowman Books. Bachofner, a Maine native in both senses of the word (a lifelong Mainer and an Abenaki) holds an MFA in Poetry from Vermont College. She teaches poetry in the conference and workshop setting, has edited an online literary magazine (*Pulse*) since 1997. She is a poetry coach and manuscript editor. Bachofner inaugurated Poetry Month Rockland in 2010 and serves on the school board for RSU 13.

Guest judge Dave Morrison: _____

Hailed as *A hearty weed in the garden of American poetry*, Dave Morrison is no stranger to the world of publication. His work has been published widely in literary magazines and anthologies, and has been featured on *Writer's Almanac*. After years of playing guitar in rock & roll bars in Boston and NYC, he currently resides in Camden, Maine. His seventh poetry collection is *Clubland* (Fighting Cock Press 2011), poems about

rock bars. This volume is "part deux" of his previous collection. Morrison's poetry spans both free and formal verse, the latter a rather new adventure over the past two years. A veteran music and poetry performer, he now makes the circuit of readings in the Mid Coast and elsewhere. Morrison's sense of humor and awareness of the quiriness of human beings makes his poetry an ever-present snapshot of what makes us tick (and tock!).

October Workshop (Report from Carol B.)

Our first ever MPS Fall Writing Event was held on October 15th at the Rockland Public Library.

Twelve participants registered for the workshop with ten in attendance. It was a very exciting workshop for all. We covered miles of poetic ground in contemporary psalm and elegy, with a little aubade at the end of the day. Most participants had never written a psalm or an elegy before, but by the end of our session, all had created amazing first attempts at both. Participants shared their efforts and I must say I was thrilled to hear such wonderful works-in-progress. I hope MPS will consider this a success (I do!) and keep it going into the future. And watch for a special treat in the Winter Edition of my online zine, *Pulse*: our workshopers' poems! www.heartsoundspressliterary.com

Longfellow Days 2012: Poets in the Community (note from the late Herb Coursen—see last page):

4 Feb. Brunswick Inn, Park Row. Poetry Roundrobin with Leila Percy. Anyone is welcome to come and read a poem and get comment from the others there. 1400 (2 pm).

Formal readings (free and open to all) will begin at 2 pm in the Fireplace Room of the Curtis Library, Pleasant St., Brunswick (across from the Post Office).

Each poet will read a short poem by Longfellow, a poem by Emily Dickinson, and 10 minutes of his/her own work. We will have a discussion after the readings.

5 Feb. Herb Coursen, Helene McGlaufflin, Ricardo Zarate, Jr.

12 Feb. Rob Farnsworth, David Moreau, Alice Persons

19 Feb. Annie Finch, Bob MacLaughlin, Kevin Sweeney

Alternate: Carolyn Frost

Fall 2011 Contest Winners

First Prize, Terza Rima: Douglas Woody Woodsum

On the Death of Amy Winehouse

I, too, have seen the darkest dark, shining
Iridescent like a raven's feather
In the sun. I have felt the untwining

Of my mind, stormwrecked by psychic weather,
And I have tried to laugh it all away
Faking that I'm keeping it together.

So often the ones we thought were OK
The ones who helped us laugh and sing and drink . . .
So often the one thing they needed to say

Never got said or got said with a wink.
Listen closely. Watch closely. It is there:
A welling tear can be erased with a blink.

I blink, you blink, we all blink; what's more rare
Is the unblinking gaze on both foul and fair.

Second Prize, Terza Rima: Ellen Taylor

That Fall

When my father lost his job, that dark fall
he rose for tea, knotted his tie, pulled out
of the driveway at 7:00, to forestall

suspicion. He'd drive for miles, park, then scout
help wanted ads, make calls from a phone booth
with a roll of dimes. There was not a doubt

from his seven children or wife. His truth
was circling ads, dialing slow numbers,
each one draining his bank of hope and youth.

At sunset, he'd drive home, his day a blur,
to his children's play, wife's peck on the cheek.
Smile. "What's for supper?" It didn't occur

to us, his situation was so bleak,
his staging was flawless, week after week.

First Honorable Mention, Terza Rima: Anne Rosenthal

To every thing a season...

It's time to write a terza rima verse
I do believe I really must abstain
There is not much in August could be worse

To do so I'd give my brain an awful strain
If truth be known it's not a summer thing
You're puzzled. Let me hasten to explain.

A rima has to have a bit of bling
And terza rima more than double that
It might be more appropriate for spring

In spring I'd gladly spread the welcome mat
I'd twine my way with glee among the terza
Taking care the rima didn't splat

Perhaps it would go vice then go versa
The rima winding left and right about
No need at all to grumble or to curse a

Terza rima poem soon would sprout
No summer fall nor winter inhibitions
Just spring and bling and quite a bit of clout

So season guides completion of the mission
I think I'd send it out for an audition.

Second Honorable Mention, Terza Rima: Gerald George

Terza Rima Rap:

Elegy in a Country Churchyard

What are they doin here in Far Rockaway?
This a potter's field for puttin down the poor?
Boys from the hood now stuffed in the clay?

Young boppers been in a hell of a war
but it wasn't way off in a bomb-battered land,
and it wasn't the kind they give you medals for.

They didn't get carried with some brass band
and high-flyin flags down Fifth Avenue
in uniforms lookin all spiffy and grand.

One died from sniffin way too much glue.
Been workin all night and needed some fun.
What he could have become he never ever knew.

Another one might have found a piece of the sun
if he hadn't pulled a knife in a fight in a bar.
He took a bullet from a police gun.

Others went down (it wasn't very far)
when gun-totin gangs on the street all drew
and blasted each other to Zanzibar.

Now they're out here cause that old corkscrew
called fate has taken each one's star down
—lights of hope they might've tried to pursue—
dumped in a dead-ditch far outa town.

Third Honorable Mention, Terza Rima: Marta Rijn Finch

Before Television

Although the weather-stick dipped down, the sky,
Despite a few high cirrus clouds, was clear,
So we left anyway, Lorraine and I,

At dawn. She'd seen the poster first appear
That spring while waiting in the local store—
Beside the window for the mail, at rear.

She spun around and grabbed my hand; we tore
Back up the aisle, dashing into the street:
The circus! Coming here! Our voices sore,

And hardly able then—for weeks!—to eat
Or sleep, we talked of little else all day
At school or doing chores. Yet bittersweet

Was our anticipation—the delay
Just barely long enough for us to earn
The cash we knew we'd need. (Back then, the pay

For berrying was not a sum to spurn!)
We started running when we saw the tents
And heard the barker's "Step right up!" Our turn

Came quickly at that hour. The elephants
All washed and mounted, ready for the big top,
Trumpeting loudly, added to our suspense.

Inside, at last, the thrills unfurled non-stop:
Tigers leaping through fire, a horse parade,
And high-flyers! We froze to see them swap

Trapezes mid-air. A chock-full clown-car made
A fine finale. Outside, no rain yet,
But thunder! We raced home to its serenade—

Tripping, laughing—a day we'd never forget,
And tumbled through the screen door, soaking wet.

First Prize, A Sense of Place:

Tom Lyford

Merrick Square Market —A Travelogue

The screen door slams and the headlines cry *Ike!* and *Ted Williams!* while the Philco way in the back cranks out “Ballad of a Teenage Queen.” My Red Ball Jets pat reverently over the oil-darkened hardwood past the register’s *ka-ching* promise of

Indian head pennies in your change, down the aisle of warped shelving stacked like the Walls of Jericho, the Prince Macaroni boxes elbowing the Campbell Soup cans, through the rice-banana apple-onion medley with its pungent tang of white cheddar from

the big cheesewheel-under-glass... past glass-bottled, fresh, white milk chilling in the refrigerated window display, bottle-capped with collectable, redeemable, half-dollar-size cardboard discs... and on down to the back where sea-glass green Coke bottles languish like

lobsters neck-deep in the ice water of the open-top, fire-engine red holding tank beneath the fading, once festive Fanta, Fudgesicle, Moxie and Necco signs... and all those dangling, amber, banana-curls of slime-gummy fly-paper, the houseflies raisin-glued above

the jaundiced jars of pickled eggs and pickled spiced sausages... and those fresh, wax-papered Italian sandwiches stacked above the meat counter calling my name —

Second Prize, A Sense of Place: Carol Milkuhn

The Zen of Berry Eating

In Maine, blueberries, plump and shiny, skin sun-kissed and sun-darkened, midnight in color and silken to the touch, are ready to be picked. If I were back in Maine, I would freeze them, well-wrapped against winter, so in a landscape smothered in snow, I could taste the soursweet melting of summer into fall, mellow and mild.

But I am in New York, this city of Big Macs, Burger Kings and superstores—so I buy blueberries, plastic-wrapped, heat-softened, squishy, and eat them on a bench in Central Park, so remembering the scratch of thistles, fingers stained purple,

and sunlight seeping through the black-veined, weightless wings of bumblebees.

Third Prize, A Sense of Place: Ellen Taylor

Postcard from 929 Calle Ejido, Montevideo

I live in the casita behind the main house. Downstairs, a kitchen of stone with purring fridge, two burner stove, two wooden shelves, two plates, two cups. The stairs to the second floor are almost a ladder. At the top, two rows of mango crates hold my orchard of books, a door straddles them and makes a desk. A vaulted skylight that can be opened like a drawer covers this space, and on starry nights I write beneath the smile of the Milky Way. Beyond this is a whitewashed room with padlockable door—narrow bed, shallow closet with muslin curtains and two happy windows that open to the court yard.

During the weekdays I am teaching; on weekends I ride a black bicycle we call *La Negrita* all over the city. I am in love with the man who lives in the main house; he cares for me like a little sister and a lover, sings lullabies and tangos, but he also loves many other women.

On Sundays we go to a market on the edge of the city where merchants sell pineapples, hubcaps, tea, bootleg cassettes, monogrammed silver, screws, mismatched shoes with no laces. We bought a Victrola we crank up to play Carlos Gardél, and we tango in the court yard between the two houses, between the sheets hanging on the laundry line.

I've never been so happy. I have very little. I have almost everything I want.

First Honorable Mention, A Sense of Place: Cynthia Brackett Vincent

Questions About Home

When are you moving home? they will ask me.
In turn I say, *Have you heard the loon call?*
Have you seen scrape-marks of a glacier's teeth?
Cars whiz by their homes, their kids. Lightning speed.

In turn I say, *Have you heard the loon call?*
Is where you're from necessarily home?
Cars whiz by their homes, their kids. Lightning speed.
Blackberries ripen. We watch, wait for deer.

Is where you're from necessarily home?
Home is where your soul finally sees it.
Blackberries ripen. We watch, wait for deer.
Why Maine? What on earth made you move there?

Home is where your soul finally sees it.
I saw the woods like my father showed me.
Why Maine? What on earth made you move there?
The luminescent stars, moving us home.

Second Honorable Mention, A Sense of Place: Karen Lewis Foley

“Please Don’t Tell What Train I’m On (so they won’t know where I’ve gone)”

In my grandmother’s bedroom in the alcove
with the walls papered with light gray flowers
and the Old Rugged Cross in its thin frame
I lie on the rollaway cot and wait for sleep
beside the cedar chest which in my short memory
has never been opened and I always wonder what’s in it

Above the chest two casement windows open
on the night, the language of trees and roses in the dark
and then a faint sound, the freight train’s faraway whoa-oo
growing louder, steam driving, ratcheting louder
and louder, moaning closer to me on the track
behind the house across the street where Lily Ann lives

I can just make out through the window squares
the train lights’ stutter as the cars clacket by
moving on moving on moving on to some other part
of the known world I don’t yet know and won’t

for ten more years when I’ll pull my guitar over my lap
in a cinder block dormitory room and sing about seasons
and freight trains and lonely winds, someone loving
someone over and over and always needing to keep on
moving on.

Third Honorable Mention, A Sense of Place: Dita Ondek

Diana Nyad Swim

a hammerhead tiptoes
over marshmallow fluff
whitecaps, self-tangling
raspberry silk curtains billow

Diana can imagine each stroke
of the clock at midnight
balls flying out of Fenway
her water-wings unfurled

upon ocean linoleum
aquavit, turquoise, ultra-marine,
periwinkle noodle corkscrews
sing along 'Ticket to Ride'

stroke, strike, story
CBS reports (--60--) 30 hours
paddling with no regrets
urchin glitz, sea star bling

Board Members

Maggie Finch, co-President maggimer@gmail.com

Marta Finch, co-President moimarta@comcast.net

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Sally Joy, Publicity jsjoy@roadrunner.com

Elizabeth Berkenbile, Round Robins (through 2/2012) eberkenbile@gmail.com

Carol Bachofner, Programs mim47@me.com

Maine Poets Society lost an important member this past week when Herb Coursen, author of over 80 books---31 of them poetry and many on Shakespeare---died in his sleep at 78. For many years Herb hosted the poetry readings for "Longfellow Days" at Brunswick's Curtis Library, and included a number of MPS poets as participants. He was judge for our dramatic monologue contest in February 2010 and took time to assemble the information for this issue of the *Stanza* for us in his last few weeks. We mourn his passing.

Dues Reminder:

Our calendar year ends 12/31. If you have not sent in your dues for 2012, please do so. (It is especially important to send by 2/28/12 in order to be eligible for NFSPS-sponsored 2012 contests.) Send \$20 (payable to MPS):

Cynthia Brackett-Vincent
PO Box 187, Farmington, ME 04938

STANZA, Maine Poets Society
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Warren, ME 04864

FIRST CLASS

Stanza is the tri-annual
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since 1936

FMI or to join, write
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