

STANZA

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY

VOLUME 33, NUMBER3

December 2025

A Winter Workshop with President Jenny Doughty

Winter Workshop: “Imagery”

Saturday, February 21, 2026

10:00 to 3:00 with a 45-minute break for lunch

Workshop Presenter: MPS President, Jenny Doughty

Location: The home of Alice Persons, 16 Walton Street, Westbrook.

Limited to the first 8 members who ask to participate. Should you be granted a space and find yourself unable to attend, do make that known so that someone else can take part. Please arrive no earlier than 9:45 a.m.

NOTE: There are cats at this location.

BRING: \$5 registration fee to cover expenses. A notepad and pen. Bring 10 copies of a poem on which you'd like feedback.

Tea, coffee, water, and cookies provided but please bring your own packed lunch.

RSVP to Jenny at jennydoughty@icloud.com or 207-699-9243.

FORMAT: Maximum of 8 people

EMPHASIS: A.M: The morning part of this workshop will discuss the use of imagery in selected poems and include ways we can improve our own choice of imagery. **P.M.:** The afternoon part will include discussion and feedback on poems brought by attendees.

January Members-Only “Reading in the Round” on Zoom

Saturday, January 17 – 9:30 to 11:30

You're invited to our next online Reading in the Round on Saturday, January 17. All participants are welcome to share three or four poems, depending on what we have time for within the scheduled two hours.

On November 12, we tried a Wednesday evening “Reading in the Round” for the first time. There were about the same number of participants as we've had on Saturday mornings.

We will soon be asking members for their preferences for the April reading.

- Should we schedule it for Wednesday, April 8th or Saturday, April 11th?
- If on Saturday, should start time be 9:00 or 9:30?
- If on Wednesday evening, should start time be 6:30 or 7:00? For a Wednesday evening reading, we suspect an earlier start might be easier for folks.

The Poet's Corner: free online events

You're invited to register for free online events sponsored by [The Poets Corner](#). Coming up:

- **Sunday, January 11, 2026, 4:00-5:30 p.m.**

To Phrase a Prayer for Peace with Donna Spruijt-Metz & Mark Burrows

- **Sunday, January 25, 2026, 4:00-5:30 p.m.**

Rupture and Repair: A Reading and Conversation with Miho Nonaka and Katherine Larson, hosted by Main Poets Society member Jefferson Navicky

September 2025 CONTEST WINNERS

Contest: Prose Poem Portrait

Judge, Carol Bachofner

1st Prize—Jeanne Julian

Self Portrait as Constellation

Usually lurking below your horizon, I-wish-I-may-wish-I-might catch your eye. You need to make an effort to find me, even when I do rise above upstart city-glow. But connect the dots—my faint, ancient stars—and you'll soon discern my outline. In some cultures, a diva wielding a tennis racquet. In others, a crone offering a platter of freshly baked sugar cookies. Start by locating Rigel, in the left foot of lazy Orion. From there, gaze upward. You'll see the star Avoirdupois marking my middle—with a magnitude *brighter* than Virgo's brightest—*ha!* Above that, Greylock, Cataract, and Rhytid, haloing my head. Lower, trace the sprinkling of twinkles forming torso and legs (Titanium, the dimmest, figures in the Legend of the Knee Replacement), and leading to Revlon, the red dwarf of my toenail. From where you stand, these luminous waypoints surround an apparently empty black hole. But only because you're stuck in place and time. Marvels swirl within, behind, my outer space: fecund nebulae, magnetic explosions. I contain multitudes, as Whitman said (rather presumptuously, at age 36). I've been around the cosmic block, let me tell you. Remember, you're late to my light: looking up, you're looking back. Billions of years. Old is relative. And I've never felt better.

2nd Prize—Sara Lynn Eastler

Ghost Fruit

None of us could make sense of mom's tricks. The ritual way she pulled her favorite record from its sleeve, eyes lit like she was seeing a loved one, not sun reflected off vinyl. She brushed its grooved surface with velvet, set it to play, and swayed her hips. We knew not to interrupt her. If we did, she would perform her matronly duty, then return the needle to the start and rock—eyes closed, pillow cradled to her chest. None of us could make sense of her choice of family portrait. She hung the one that was too bright, our faces overexposed in studio bulbs and mom with an artifact of light in the crook of her arm. Beside the portrait she fixed its opposite, a painting of four pieces of fruit in complete darkness, no table cloth or basket to hold them. She'd never say why the painting spoke to her with its unlucky number of fruit, unmooored and shadowless in a dark, oily background framed in stressed, gold baroque. It had an odd space where its maker buried a fifth fruit under layers of paint and removed the stable surface underpinning everything else. The year her knuckles swelled with arthritis, I sheared the roses back, sprinkled salts on the ground, and raked out a heart-shaped stone. It was engraved with the name of a brother I never knew. He lived two days. When the clouds grew thick, she set her chair in the garden so close to the roses that thorns scraped blood from her arm, record needles scratching the song right out of her.

3rd Prize—Julie Meyer

The Caterpillar

I have the same unruly thick eyebrows of my mother, black as a void, now sprouting grays, incongruous geysers. My fine-pored skin has turned thin under the eyes, where dark veiny pools pulse like the tide. When I laugh the creases around my mouth wriggle to life, reminding me of my children as babies, my wiggle-waggle fishy babies. When I laid them in the bed, I'd sing them to sleep. *Little babies in the bed, I love my fishy babies, wiggle-waggle, fishy babies, wiggle waggle, I love you.* Now they are all grown up. My face slips downwards on my cranium, not yet as wrinkled as a pug's muzzle. In my seventh decade I have a front row seat, as if sitting at the edge of the ocean watching a receding tide. My mother and my grandmother watched their memories disappear, skiffs racing the tide out. Something slipped inside the soft gray matter of their brains. It inched along like a caterpillar eating freely, laying a trail of debris. I rock my memories like babies, tell them it will be okay. *Shush now, I've got you. No caterpillar can eat away a human heart.*

**1st Honorable Mention—Laura Buxbaum
Fritzi (1894-1982)**

Blue-veined, silver-skinned, shining. Frieda's hands. How lovely to be old and beautiful. My hand in hers, soft. *Grandma cookies*, butter and almond, shaped into letters – each child's initials. Those fluent fingers. Filled crystal dishes with strange hard candies smelling of lemon, smelling of liquorice. Hovered over Scrabble tiles, rearranged letters on her rack – *clack clack*, winning in English (Yiddish, Russian, Polish all forgotten). Now, her daughter, my mother, slides those tiles – her hands browner, stronger, but (like mine) veiny, tendinous. Our fingers spell out the days left to us. I remember a dark room. Disinfectant masked the smell of letting go. Her hoarse breath. I think I held her hand.

**2nd Honorable Mention—Gus Peterson
Anxiety as Bald Spot**

See? It also starts small, peeking out from beneath its follicular thicket. How it trembles but grows. Becomes nickel, quarter, a silver dollar heavy in the palm of its head. Now watch it mature beyond currency. See: vernal pool, the thawing pond you were dared to walk upon once in late February, its eye weeping with astonishment beneath the sun. All it wants is to join the world. All it wants is news of forward progress. Tired of looking back. Tired of heeling first, every step a leap of faith. If it had known, it would have known earlier. Pressed the razor to your head. Professed its faith. O empty plate. O fullest moon. I confess: one day you will part this silvered sea. Everywhere an ebbing, a letting out by taking in. Know this crown contains nothing. Know this and you will learn to let go of me, as I have of you.

**3rd Honorable Mention—Laura West
Gutsy**

You've got guts. And that's a good thing too. That elongated leathery pouch awash with transmitters tapping the telegraph of your nerves: the gab of GABA, the serendipity of serotonin, the dope of dopamine. All players for your attention in the brain of the belly. You've got a gut feeling. From a snake-like somnolence in digestive bliss to a gut-wrenching anxiety, this fantastic flux of thoughts and moods have you in its grip. Who's responsible? Who's to blame for these unwanted states of being that hijack your sense of self? Don't look for a brawny opponent. Look to the tiny, in the microbiome of countless biota, microscopic microbial colonies craft your experiences in the brain of the belly.

The Maine Prize Poem is Back: Open to All Maine Residents

In 2025, our Society regretfully suspended the Maine Prize Poem Contest, a state-wide writing contest we have offered since 2018. Now, we're excited to reinstate the contest for 2026. Our judge will be Meghan Sterling, author of four full-length collections, with *Sick Poems from the Lovebed* forthcoming from Harbor Editions next year. As in previous years, the contest will be open to all Maine residents, including seasonal (except for Maine Poets Society board members). If your entry comes to us with an out-of-state postmark, you'll be asked to enclose a letter verifying your address when resident in Maine. There'll be a category for published poets and another for poets who have yet to have their work published, with prizes of \$150 and \$75 respectively. We especially encourage those poets to enter who have not yet been published. And if you've had your poems in print—here's another great opportunity. MPS members will receive the information in an email sometime in early January, and you should feel free to share it with poet friends who are residents of Maine but not MPS members. We sincerely hope that our members with Maine residency will enter.

Gardiner announces first poet laureate

Meghan Sterling has been named the first poet laureate of Gardiner, Maine. She is planning a poetry festival to take place in Gardiner sometime in mid-May. Until then, starting in the New Year, once a month on Mondays she will host a poetry writing salon in downtown Gardiner from 5:00-6:30 pm. <https://meghansterling.com/>

Info to Share About our May 2026 Members-Only Contest

It's too early to submit poems for the May contest, but Mike Bove has agreed to be the judge and will present a workshop the day of the May meeting (May 16). The deadline will be April 16. The Spring *Stanza* will contain the information needed to submit a poem to our Vice President, Deborah Smith. Sharing this much early on gives all of us four months to be thinking about how and why we write poetry. You'll be limited to 40 lines.

Form: Ars Poetica (40-line limit)

Why write poems? What *is* a poem? The term *Ars Poetica* refers to a poem that explores or endeavors to explain the art of poetry: what it is, why it is, how it is. Write an *Ars Poetica* in any form. Here is one of three Mike has offered as an example.

Poet's work by Lorine Niedecker	He has also suggested "Of Modern Poetry" by Wallace Stevens and "Ars Poetica" by Czeslaw Milosz. Both of these longer poems are available online. Of Modern Poetry Ars Poetica? The Poetry Foundation
Grandfather advised me: Learn a trade	
I learned to sit at desk and condense	<i>It must</i> <i>Be the finding of a satisfaction, and may</i> <i>Be of a man skating, a woman dancing, a woman</i> <i>Combing. The poem of the act of the mind.</i> —Wallace Stevens, "Of Modern Poetry"
No layoff from this condensery	

What can you enter in a Maine Poets Society Members-Only Contest?

Previously published poems are not eligible for our contests. This refers to any poem that has already been selected for a curated public journal, forum, or format (print or online). Members *may* submit poems that they have shared on their own social media (such as Facebook, a blog, or open mics)

Note that work that has been predominately generated by artificial intelligence (AI) is not eligible for our contests.

May Workshop with Mike Bove Unexpected Detours: the Element of Surprise in Poetry



Again, this information is offered to you early and it will be repeated in the Spring issue of the Stanza. Something to look forward to.

Everyone knows we don't always end up in the same place we begin. In poetry, shifts in the journey keep readers engaged, interested, and excited. In this generative session, we'll examine and explore the poetic "turn" (traditionally called a "volta" in some forms): a shift in image, tone, or narrative in poems that lead the reader on a surprising journey or reveal an unexpected truth. With a variety of examples from which to draw inspiration, we'll explore the use of turns and craft our own poems that aim to surprise.

Publication and Member News

Poems:

Robert Allen's poems "Hi Test Woman" and "Shut In" were published in *WestWard Quarterly* (Fall 2025, Winter 2026). "Lovely Is the Hourglass," "Aunt Corky," and "I Am Green" were published in *Impspired* this fall.

Laura Buxbaum's poems "The Last Sweet Bite" and "Magritte's fish frees me from the walls of my mind" appear in the December issue of *Verse-Virtual* <https://www.verse-virtual.org/2025/December/buxbaum-laura-2025-december.asp?p=3&n=5>.

Jenny Doughty's poem "Tango" was published by *Gyroscope Review* (October 2025) for its issue on the poetry of mindful aging. "Visiting" can be seen in the winter issue of *The Northeast Coast*, which appeared at the beginning of December; and her poem "To The Deer That Ran In Front Of My Car" appeared in *Passager*'s collection of winners and highly commended poems in its 2025 poetry contest.

Richard Foerster's poem "Anxiety Dream: After Seeing the Banners Unfurled from the Museum's Façade" will appear in *The Big Brutal Act Anthology* (Small Harbor Publishing, 2026). "Satin Bowerbird Blues" will appear in *The Color Wheel* anthology (Terrapin Books, Spring 2026).

Alice Haines' poem "The Grand Jester" was recently published in the 2025 print issue, *Relief: A Journal of Art and Faith*. "Lost" received 3rd Place in the 16th Maine Postmark Poetry Contest judged by Tim Seibles; she recited it at the 2025 Belfast Poetry Festival.

Dr. Emory Jones's recent successes include "Sacred Music" and "Thanksgiving," published in the *Illinois State Poetry Society Member Poems 2025*; and "The Rabbit Patch" and "Spring Acrostic," published in the March 2025 edition of *Pennsylvania's Poetic Voices*.

Jeanne Julian's poems "They Never Said" and "Self-portrait as Constellation" (the latter printed in this issue of *Stanza*) were accepted for publication in the April 2026 issue of *Does It Have Pockets* (which does consider previously published work, within guidelines). "They Leave the Potluck" can be seen in [*The Northeast Coast, issue 2*](#).

Jim Krosschell recently published poems in [*Portrait of New England*](#), *North Dakota Quarterly* 92:1/2, [*Sage*](#), [*Glass Gates*](#), and [*Wayfarer*](#).

Carl Little's poem "The Reveal" appears in the anthology *Echoes in the Fog: Literary Reflections on the Liminal Spaces of Maine's Coast* (12 Willows Press), edited by Steven Long.

Nancy Orr's haiku "my father's viewing" and "after the viewing" were published in *Memento: An Anthology of Poems on Grief* (Ambidextrous Bloodhound Press, 2025).

Isis Phoenix's poem "My Grandmother's Violets" was published in *Kakalak Anthology 2025* (Moonshine Review Press); and "Kite Strings of God" was published in *New Generation Beats 2025 Anthology* by New Generation Beat Publication.

Craig Sipe's poem "Smoke Detector" will be published in an upcoming issue of *Spank the Carp*.

Nancy Sobanik's poems "Terminal Velocity" and "Something Like This" were published by *Jackdaw Review* in Issue III, October 2025. "How the Bumble Bee Sleeps" was published by *Silver Birch Press, Bugs and Insects Series* (September 2025). *The Orchards Poetry Journal* will publish "Pulling Taffy" in Winter 2025; and *Mobius: The Journal of Social Change* will publish "It Is In Your Spirit or It Is Nowhere" in an upcoming issue. "Self-Portrait as Beach Glass" was a finalist in the Belfast Poetry Festival Maine Postmark Contest 2025.

And This:

We announced last issue that John Seksay's poem "Cutting Edge Crafts" took 1st Place among the 85 submissions to the Eastport Poetry Contest. Other MPS members whose work appears in the book, titled *Worklife, Lifework* (which contains all 85 submissions), are Timothy Barlow ("Widow's Walk"), Sally Rowe Joy ("To Each Her Own"), Isis Phoenix ("Asana Exposed"), and Deborah Smith ("Cataloging My Museum Memories"). Congrats to all.

Books:

Jenny Doughty's book *As For The Rose* will be published by Main Street Rag in February. It is currently available on a pre-order discount, <https://mainstreetragbookstore.com/product/as-for-the-rose-jenny-doughty/>. You can also see a video of her reading three of the poems at https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=B_eozB7x0_k.

David Sloan's seventh book, a retrospective collection of articles and talks on Waldorf education, is entitled *Keeping Ideals Intact: A Waldorf Teacher's Forty-Year Perspective*. It will be available on Amazon and on the publisher's site (waldorfpublications.org) this month.

Nancy Sobanik's chapbook *The Unfolding* was a semi-finalist in the Open Chapbook Competition by Finishing Line Press and will be published in May 2026.

Colleen Teasdale Filler's book *What The Pause Gives* is available through the publisher:
<https://www.finishinglinepress.com/product/what-the-pause-gives-by-colleen-teasdale-filler/>

Member News:

Richard Foerster served as the Poetry Editor for *Ten Piscataqua Writers 2026* (tenpiscataqua.com), a biennial anthology featuring writers residing in towns adjacent to the Piscataqua River in Seacoast New Hampshire and Southernmost Maine.

Anthology of Member Poems Underway, Commemorating 90th Anniversary of MPS

The Maine Poets Society is looking forward to celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2026 with the publication of a new anthology of poems by current members. The call for submissions went out in August, and the anthology committee was delighted at the response. Poets were invited to submit anywhere from one to five poems, from which a maximum of two each would be selected.

This project is the latest in the periodic publication of Maine Poets Society anthologies. The archive of these collections includes, for example, *Juniper and White Pine* (1962), *Rock Ledge and Apple Blossoms* (1971), *Salt Spray and Pine* (1978), *Coming Home Twice* (2005), and *Maine Taproot* (2010). The inspiration for the title of the 2026 book will emerge, the committee says, as the final selections are compiled into a whole.

Well over 50 member-poets shared their work. The quality and variety of these poems made challenging the narrowing-down of those that will appear in the anthology's pages. From free verse to rhymed stanzas to haiku to prose poems; from pastoral scenes and seaside meditations to political statements and laments; from expressive studies of family, aging, technology, and depression; and from rocks to clouds, the poetic forms, styles, and subject matter engage and intrigue. The announcement of which poems will be included will come soon. For now, the anthology committee is immersed in the tasks of formatting and layout.

To make the book as affordable as possible, MPS will use a print-on-demand model and does not intend the publication as a money-maker for the Society. Its purpose is to commemorate the enduring legacy of Maine's poetry tradition and to highlight the talent and commitment of today's member writers across the state and beyond. The anthology is expected to be released in spring 2026, to coincide with the Maine Poets Society's general meeting in May. We are excited about the prospect of seeing our members' poems in print and celebrating this milestone anniversary together.



President's Ink December 2025

Homo sapiens is an art-making species. In June I was in the Dordogne valley in France and saw for myself the art created by neolithic people painting on cave walls. Horses and cattle sprang to life; handprints attested to the humanity of their creators. Those of us who have raised children have seen them draw and build, heard them make up songs and sing them. We may remember our own childhood experiences of doing those things.

As we head towards the holidays, let's take time to consider our own contributions to the world's art. Most of our work won't survive the way those cave paintings survived—paper and print and digital storage aren't as long-lasting as stone—but art doesn't have to be eternal. Isn't it enough to put the unique productions of our hearts and minds out there to share with others? Isn't that as much of a gift to the world as anything we might unwrap from the pile under the Christmas tree even if only our families or our fellow-poets read it?

Our Anthology Committee has been working on the contributions from MPS members, and we are confident that by the time of our ninetieth anniversary next year we will have a book we are proud to put into the hands of our members. I hope you will all be proud to buy copies for yourself and to share with loved ones. All of us on the committee read all the submitted poems and gave careful consideration to which poems to include and how best to share them with you all. So much love and thought went into the poems we read that I think this anthology is a real tribute to the skill and heart of our members.

As President I was tasked with writing the introduction to the anthology, and I chose to keep it short and simple. The words of the poets are more important than anything I can write. Our Secretary, Jeanne Julian, has been diving into our archives, which are held at the Dyer Library in Saco, and will be writing a short history to be included. To be honest, one of the reasons the history will be short is that she and I discovered when we looked at them that there are very few records in the archives! We are attempting to remedy that by including some of our more recent copies of *Stanza*, but storage space at the library is very limited. I am hoping there will be room to include a copy of the anthology.

Archives and records of our work, such as our 90th anniversary anthology, are a gift we give to the world and the future. I like to think that in another decade we will have a centenary celebration and another anthology to add to that. Whether I will be around to read it is another matter completely, and there will undoubtedly be another President writing her column for *Stanza*, but I live in hope.

Jenny Doughty

“People imagined poems were wispy things, she said, frilly things, like lace doilies. But in fact they were like claws, like the metal spikes mountaineers use to find purchase on the sheer face of a glacier. By writing a poem, the lady poets could break through the slippery, nothingy surface of the life they were enclosed in, to the passionate reality that beat beneath it. Instead of falling down the sheer face, they could haul themselves up, line by line, until at last they stood on top of the mountain. And then, maybe, just maybe, they might for an instant see the world as it really is.”

—Miss Julie Grehan, in *The Bee Sting*, by Paul Murray

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

FIRST CLASS

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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.”