

Executive Board 2020

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Poetry Society of Michigan



"Encouraging Poets Since 1935"

December 2019

President's Message

Thanks to all who attended the Fall Meeting arranged by **Joe and Mary Kelty** at the Swedish Club of Detroit, and to **Ed Morin** for inviting our guest speaker **Mary Minock**. Mary's talk about how poetry infuses memoir—and vice versa—was insightful and motivating, and if you weren't able to attend and didn't get to hear Mary read about her mother and Elvis, you should definitely locate a copy of her memoir *The Way-Back Room* and read it yourself.

There was something delicious at the meeting for everyone food-wise, and I hope poetry-wise as well! For me, the drive back to Kalamazoo was especially beautiful when my GPS took me the not-freeway way. So much corn! So many pumpkins! An unexpected color tour!

Congratulations to the newly elected Executive Board, which may look a lot like the previous one. Since we were re-elected by acclamation we must be doing something right! (A nice way of saying—I think—that no one else volunteered . . .) Still, we've made some real progress in the past couple years—especially with contest coordination and membership management and the By-Laws revision—and I'm looking forward to another two years of working with such a good group of Michigan poetry enthusiasts.

I'm especially pleased that **David Jipson** has agreed to take on the webmaster duties (with a grateful nod to **Janeen Restall** for graciously keeping us online for an interminable "interim") and for **Phillip Sterling** for assuming the role of Recording Secretary in addition to his Newsletter editing. And while I was sorry to hear that **Debra Briggs** was stepping down as Membership Coordinator, it pleased me that **Debra Belcher** is willing to accept the position—not that the members of PSM will notice, as both Debras have shared the responsibilities (with **Susan Anderson**) for some time already.

Looking ahead, Phillip has just confirmed plans to hold the April meeting in Mt. Pleasant, to be co-hosted by the Central Michigan University creative writing program. Watch for more details in the March Newsletter. (The Lansing Poetry Club is interested in hosting the Fall 2020 Meeting, and the Third Thursday group in Cadillac has shown interest in April 2121 . . . Yippee!)

As many of you know, my husband broke his ankle the day before the PSM meeting, requiring surgery, and so I'll be spending at least part of my holidays as a caregiver, but I wish the best of holidays for all of you, and hope for many good poems in the New Year!

—Elizabeth Kerlikowske

Peninsula Poets Members Edition Call for Submissions

Beginning **December 15**, PSM members may submit up to three unpublished poems (with contact information on each poem) for possible inclusion in the Spring issue of *Peninsula Poets*. Deadline is **February 1, 2020**. Email poems (all in one file, please) to editor.psm@gmail.com. (Members who do not use email, may submit by snail mail to PSM Spring Edition, 2272 114th Ave., Allegan, MI 49010. Include a SASE for notification.) Please visit <https://poetrysocietyofmichigan.com> for full membership details. Questions? Contact Melanie Dunbar at editor.psm@gmail.com. We are looking forward to reading your work!!

News from the Treasurer

Thank you to everyone who has renewed their membership for 2020! We are so happy you are continuing on with us. If you have not yet sent in your dues of \$30 for the new year, please do. We don't want you to miss out on any of what is to come. A reminder of all the benefits of membership: you will receive this awesome *PSM Newsletter* quarterly, our Spring & Fall editions of *Peninsula Poets*, and opportunities to have your work included in those publications. Membership with the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS) is also included, which brings you their newsletter (*Strophes*) and national contest information, not to mention news from other State societies, plus inspiration and instruction for writing.

Speaking of writing, we hope that you are! And we hope you will consider submitting lots of work to the NFSPS annual contests that will be open for submissions from January 1st. thru March 15th. PSM is also looking forward to seeing your submissions for our Spring *Peninsula Poets*, our members edition!

I wish you all a joyous Holiday Season and look forward to a new year of PSM!

— Susan Anderson

New PSM Executive Board Elected by Acclimation

As the slate of candidates nominated for election at the Spring Meeting of the Poetry Society of Michigan was unopposed, members in attendance voted by acclimation to accept the Board as presented in its entirety (and thus avoid the expense of balloting).

Congratulations to the new and reinstated members of the Executive Board, who will serve a two-year term: **Elizabeth Kerlikowske** (President), **Jennifer Clark** (Vice President), **Susan Anderson** (Treasurer), **Phillip Sterling** (Recording Secretary and Newsletter Editor), **Debra Belcher** (Membership Coordinator), **David Jipson** (Webmaster), **Melanie Dunbar** (Contest Coordinator and Peninsula Poets Editor), **Inge Logenburg Kyler** (Historian), **Jerry Lang** (Parliamentarian).

PSM Members are encouraged to contact any member of the Board with questions and concerns. [Contact info is listed on the masthead, the website, and Facebook.]

Notes from UP North

The City of Marquette Arts & Culture asked the **Marquette Poets Circle** to participate with a skit and installation in the October Spectacle, a city-wide parade and arts festival. Dressed as characters from Alice in Wonderland, MPC led the audience in a read-a-long of “Jabberwocky.” For the installation, they held a Mad Poets Tea Party in the park.



The Dallas Chamber Choir performed “White Stones,” with poetry by Marquette Poets Circle member, **Esther Margaret Ayers**, composed by her son Thomas LaVoy during their recent program titled “Refuge” at the 2019 Texas Choral Directors Association convention.

Milton Bates held a multimedia book launch for his new collection, *Stand Still in the Light* (Finishing Line Press) as part of the **Bards & Brews reading series** at the Ore Dock Brewing Company in Marquette on Nov. 21st. He was joined by **Janeen Pergrin Rastall**, reading from her chapbook, *Objects May Appear Closer* (Celery City Chapbooks, 2015).

The **Marquette Poets Circle Holiday Open Mic** will be Monday, Dec. 2nd at 5:30 PM in the Great Room, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, 201 E Ridge St., Marquette. Everyone welcome! (Bring some poems and a dish to share.)

Translation

Four stanzas of firewood
stand in our backyard,
half-cords bracketed
by cribs of criss-crossed logs.

Between those end-stops
the rounds and splits speak
a common language, maple,
audible on windless days.

This is what they say:
Once we were a living body
basking in the solar fire,
our leaves articulate as tongues.

Now we are only bones,
moldering and all but mute.
Speak for us, set us aflame,
and we will keep you warm.

Milton Bates
from *Stand Still in the Light*

Give a Gift of PSM Membership!

It's not too late! Renew your membership by December 31—or gift a membership to someone you know—to assure your inclusion on the 2020 roster of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. Membership forms are available online. Checks in the amount of \$30 (made out to *Poetry Society of Michigan*) may be sent to:

Membership 2020
The Poetry Society of Michigan
PO Box 1035
Cadillac, MI. 49601

Traveling Trophy Fall 2019



Congratulations goes out to **Diane DeCillis**, whose poem about “Peeps” won the Traveling Trophy at the Fall PSM Meeting.

3rd Annual Robert Burns Dinner Brethren, MI

The **3rd Annual Robert Burns Dinner** will be held **Saturday, January 25, 2020**, beginning at 3 p.m., at the **Brown Township Hall** (8233 Coates Highway, 6 miles northeast of Manistee). Co-sponsored by the **Spirit of the Woods Music Association** and the **Third Thursday Poetry Group** of Cadillac, the evening consists of participants sharing poems, songs, and a potluck dinner.

Free and open to the public!

You are asked to bring a poem or song—by any author—and a dish or beverage to share. For more information about activities and events hosted by Spirit of the Woods Music Association check out their website at spiritofthewoods.org. or call 231-477-5381.

For more information about the Third Thursday Poetry Group, contact **Susan Anderson** (231-429-2443).

News from the River Junction Poets

The annual **Christmas Party** of the RJP (combined November/December meeting) will be held Thursday, **December 12, at Zuel Library**, starting at **6 p.m.** [Please note that the day of the week and time is different than usual.] The business portion of the meeting will be brief and consist of the election or reinstatement of officers, choosing a poem for the “20/20 Vision” theme for the Spring Performance, and collection of dues. Attendees are asked to bring a winter or holiday poem to share. There will be plenty of food!

Director **Annie Ransford** hosted a Roethke German Christmas Open House at the **Roethke House** (1805 Gratiot Ave, Saginaw) on Tuesday, November 26, from 5 to 7 p.m. There were Christmas treats from Hamilton Bakery and mulled cider available. German students from SVSU sang carols. A good time was had by all!

The first **River Junction Poets** meeting of 2020 will be held on **Wednesday, January 22, at 7 p.m.** (the regular day and time) at Zuel.

RJP member **Marion Tincknell** was a winner in the Saginaw Art Museum’s Write From Art contest, which challenged poets to write an ekphrastic poem about one of the Museum’s works of art. Congratulations Marion!

Snowflakes

Not slowly wrought, nor treasured for their form
In heaven, but by the blind self of the storm
Spun off, each driven individual
Perfected in the moment of his fall.

Howard Nemerov (1920-1991)
from *Gnomes & Occasions* (1973)

Along Poetry's Path

By Ron Weber

Many years ago, when I finally internalized this thing called poetry and could no longer deny it as a defining part of my life, I found myself obsessed with the insights one encounters—like signposts—along poetry's path. I'm referring to the many observations, perceptions, assertions, judgments, declarations, sensitivities, points of wisdom, and personal discernments one gets from other poets. These words often help give form, substance, and meaning to the curse of verse that has afflicted me ever since.

I don't mean from just the poems themselves. I read every interview of a poet and every article by a poet I find along the path, and I write down those words that mean the most to me. As a result I have ended up a chronic jotter of notes and quotes taken from other poets. What follows, in no particular order, are a few of my favorites:

Robert Pinsky: "Poetry fills a human appetite: it matters the way cuisine matters beyond nutrition, or lovemaking matters beyond procreation. Like music and dance, it is at the center of human intelligence."

Jane Hirshfield: "As long as poems are read at weddings and funerals, and exchanged between lovers, and given to people in times of duress, poetry is doing its work."

Charles Simic: "Of course poetry is irrelevant to the 'real' world of power politics, but so is philosophy, painting, music, and any other human activity where something genuine can be found."

Edward Hirsch: "Poetry connects us to what is deepest in ourselves. It gives us access to our own feelings, which are often shadowy, and engages us in the art of making meaning."

Christian Wiman: "In the end we go to poetry for one reason, so that we might more fully inhabit our lives and the world in which we live them, and that if we more fully inhabit these things, we might be less apt to destroy both."

Patricia Hampl: "Poetry's essence is not to show or tell, as we say of fiction, but to reveal."

Peter Fallon: "Poetry's become like Amnesty International or Greenpeace. Few people would dispute its merit. But they don't actively support it."

Robyn Hammer-Clarey: "Lyrics can lift one's heart, prose can make one think, and speeches can move one to action. Poetry can do all three."

Simon Armitage: "If every person in the country was buying poetry and it was available on every street corner . . . Poetry probably wouldn't be doing its job."

U.A. Fanthrope: "People in love or in mourning do feel that they must rise to a big occasion, when they must use the best language there is. Ordinary prose, which is used for instructions on how to clean the cooker and so forth, won't do."

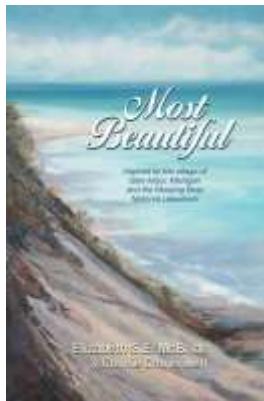
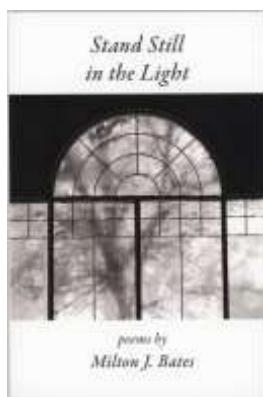
Gwyneth Lewis: "Writing poetry is the best way I know of untying the knot of obsession. It's cheaper than therapy and better for you than getting drunk."

Finally, I'll close with one that I feel is most sentient for those of us involved in this lover's quarrel with mankind as we strive to touch a heart, a mind, a soul.

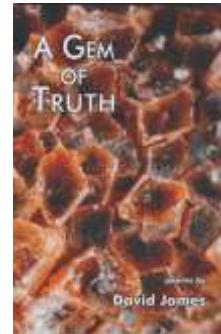
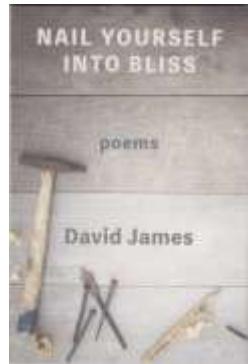
Ellen Hinsey: "But poetry is an independent ambassador for conscience: it answers to no one, it crosses borders without a passport, and it speaks the truth. That's why, despite talk about its marginalization, it is one of the most powerful of the arts."

The Printed Word

Milton Bates's new collection of poetry, *Stand Still in the Light*, is now available for \$18.95 from **Finishing Line Press** (finishinglinepress.com/product/stand-still-in-the-light-by-milton-j-bates). "Stand Still in the Light is a book of witnessing and of remembering," writes **Eleanor Berry**, past president of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies—not to mention a book of *places*, "especially the deeply known and loved north woods of the poet's later years and the intensely experienced Vietnam of his youthful military service . . . The young man who, home from war and walking once-familiar Berkeley streets, wondered 'where he was, where on earth he was,' becomes a poet able to 'sit perfectly still, / observing how the birches / catch light from the water.'"



Elizabeth S. E. McBride announces the publication of *Most Beautiful*, a collection of poems inspired by the lakeshore and small towns of Leelanau County, Michigan, including Sleeping Bear Dunes. Accompanied by the artwork of **Connie Cronenwett** the book is "luminous," writes former PSM Honorary Chancellor **Jack Ridl**: "Elizabeth McBride's elegant and earthbound writing creates that uncommon experience only a fine artist can give us." *Most Beautiful* is available for \$14 from **The Poetry Box** (thepoetrybox.com) or directly from the author (elizabethmcbride.writer.com)



David James announces the recent release of TWO new collections of poetry. October saw the release of *Nail Yourself into Bliss* from **Kelsay Books**. "These evocative and impressive poems," writes Lee Upton, dignify the act of yearning while upending received wisdom." The book is available from \$14 from the publisher (kelsaybooks.com), Amazon, and other retailers. In November *A Gem of Truth* was released by **Main Street Rag**. "The poems in *A Gem of Truth*," writes Bob Blaske, "focus on our hopes, our thoughts, our fears, our doubts—the secrets we do not even whisper to ourselves." It is available from the publisher (mainstreetreagbookstore.com) for \$14.

Phillip Sterling's new book *Short on Days*, scheduled for publication by **Main Street Rag** in March 2020, is available to pre-order (for a limited time) at the advanced sale price of \$7.25 (plus S&H). "Phillip Sterling has filled his February to overflowing," writes **Eric Torgersen**, "with forty twenty-eight-word poems not only of time but of place (fences, sap buckets, horses, wind off lakes) in which, against our expectations, stasis is nowhere. That these are also love poems—to place, to time, to loved ones human and otherwise—adds much to their impact." Place orders soon at mainstreetragbookstore.com



Sharing (the Spirit)

I just returned from “sharing my work” and “defending the art of poetry” to eleven guys who attend Bible Study with my husband every Wednesday morning at 6:30 a.m. at Bob Evans. Yes, it was a shock for me to get up early enough to meet with them—probably the hardest part of meeting with the guys was setting the alarm to get there in time. And yet, I’m glad I was able to share, glad I was invited. The experience, I think, was rewarding for everyone.

The group had been studying the book *Haunted* by Richard Harries. They knew I was a writer and had asked me to attend and talk about my writing. They had some good questions!

I shared with them the work of the State Poetry societies. I am still a member of the Pennsylvania Poetry Society (which just sent me a certificate for “long time service,”) as well as our own Poetry Society of Michigan. I told them about the year PSM state hosted the National Convention. They were interested—and impressed!

It was not the typical writers gathering, to be sure. But I’ve found over the years that it can be a challenge for poets and writers to find ways to share our labors. Sometimes it means looking “beyond the box.” In fact, that’s what I told the guys this morning, that that’s what poets from all walks of life strive to do, to “look beyond the box” with all their musings and works.

This weekend I am part of the local “house to house” holiday craft show, something I have been doing for years. I am fortunate to have a walk-in-basement in our old farm house, where people can come in and look at my books and watercolors. Many are repeat customers, who come just for inspiration or to talk craft. It’s not the typical poetry “box.”

A week ago I hauled some of my paintings and books to my church bazaar, where I had a booth. I only do that one every other year as, yes, it is a lot of work to do such things. But it’s an opportunity to share that’s worth the effort.

Through the years I have had hundreds of poems and writings published in many places, but now I am enjoying sharing my work through different, less expected channels. It’s very rewarding. I’m thinking of the little girl, age 11, who said, “I can’t wait to read your book of poetry” (which she had just bought at the church bazaar). Who knows but she could be a budding poet and might find some inspiration in our chance encounter!

There are many people of all ages who come to my home bazaar just to look, think, and, hopefully, get inspired. I believe that is part of my mission as an artist, to share the world of poetry and to be an inspiration to others, even if it means getting up at five a.m.!

—Inge Logenburg Kyler

Thanks*

Listen

with the night falling we are saying thank you
we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings
we are running out of the glass rooms
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky
and say thank you
we are standing by the water thanking it
standing by the windows looking out
in our directions

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators
remembering wars and the police at the door
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you
in the banks we are saying thank you
in the faces of the officials and the rich
and of all who will never change
we go on saying thank you thank you

with the animals dying around us
taking our feelings we are saying thank you
with the forests falling faster than the minutes
of our lives we are saying thank you
with the words going out like cells of a brain
with the cities growing over us
we are saying thank you faster and faster
with nobody listening we are saying thank you
thank you we are saying and waving
dark though it is

W.S. Merwin (1927-2019)

*from *Migrations: New and Selected Poems* (2005)

POETRY SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

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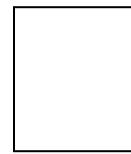
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an affiliate of

The National Federation of
State Poetry Societies
www.nfspa.com



Literary Locals: Writers Welcome

Bards of Bird Creek.

will meet for open poetry readings on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, *May through October* at 7:00 p.m. in the **Port Austin** Welcome Center. Open to all! Call (989)738-7641 to confirm dates or for more information.

Crazy Wisdom Poetry Circle

meets on second Wednesdays of each month, 7-9 p.m., for workshop and on fourth Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m. with a featured reader and open mic. Crazy Wisdom Book Store & Tea Room, 114 S. Main St., **Ann Arbor**, MI. See blog for details: <http://cwpoetrycircle.tumblr.com/>

Downriver Poets & Playwrights

meets regularly on the first Tuesday of the month at Bacon Memorial Library in **Wyandotte** from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Contact **Dennis White** at 734-755-5988 or denniswhite@mail.com for more information.

Rochester Poets' Society

meets at the Rochester Hills Public Library, in **Rochester**, from 1-3 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month. For more info Contact **Nancy Stevens** 248-217-4034 or email writings80@yahoo.com.

Marquette Poets Circle

meets on first Monday of the month in the Peter White Library Conference Room at 5:30 for workshop, 6:30 for Open Mic. For more info contact **Janeen Rastall** at janeenrastall@yahoo.com or 906-451-4473

River Junction Poets of Saginaw meet regularly throughout the year. For dates and times and other info, visit their Facebook page or call RJP President **Jim Fobear** at 989-714-5124.

Friends of Poetry – Kalamazoo.

For information about the many activities and gatherings of this group that has served the literary arts of the greater Kalamazoo area for nearly 40 years, contact **Elizabeth Kerlikowske** (mme642@yahoo.com) or visit their Facebook page.

The **Lansing Poetry Club** generally meets at 3 p.m. of the 3rd Sunday of the month at Dublin Square Irish Pub & Restaurant (327 Abbot Rd., **East Lansing**, MI 48823). For more info or to confirm a meeting, visit Facebook or email LPC President Ruelaine Stokes (ruestokes@gmail.com).

3rd Thursday Poetry meets the 3rd Thursday of each month at Horizon Books in **Cadillac** (with breaks in Dec. & June-Aug.). For info contact **Susan Anderson** at (231) 429-2443 (treasurer.psm@gmail.com) or Horizon Books Cadillac at (231) 775-9979.