

Georgia Poetry Society

Summer Quarterly Newsletter

New in this issue . . .

Community Wise will focus on poetry-related happenings.

Poetry Matters explores the meaning of poetry in the lives of Georgia citizens.

Now it's your turn! Turn to the end of the newsletter and *meet the challenge*.



Mark your calendars for the Summer Quarterly meeting on July 23rd.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings,

It's summer! I hope this message finds you all enjoying family and friends. And I hope you're back to having some fun as we come out of two years of shutdowns, gas price increases and an ever-changing social landscape.

As the new president of the Georgia Poetry Society, I have been learning new things about the organization's history and how it has maintained itself over the last 43 years. Our past presidents Julia Knowlton and Steven Shields brought us out of the pandemic with great ideas on how we should move forward. I thank them and wish them good health and prosperous futures.



As I write this, I have to refocus my thoughts from where I was just two months ago. I was the happy-go-lucky VP of this organization, working in my community of Augusta with local school-age kids. I was also working on a short film I produced with my son. A month later I sit as your president-- quite the time to be in this position. We are at a crossroads; our country is facing many challenges. Our society is struggling to come to terms with loss, grief and uncertainty. This is where we as poets must rise to the forefront and bring light to some in darkness.

I recently completed Amanda Gorman's master class. In it she reminds us there is always light if we can only choose to see it and if we are brave enough to *be* it. I look forward to meeting all the poet lights out there. Let us move forward with renewed purpose to be the light that shows others the way through our words.

We have our quarterly meeting coming up on July 23rd. I have been told by The Reach of Song 2022 editor, doris davenport, the anthology will be ready. I have also collaborated with the Morris Museum for a great exercise. More will be coming on this. Feel free to send me ideas of what you would like to see happen with your organization. Then let's do it. It is a great honor for me to be the new president of the Georgia Poetry Society.

-Lucinda Clark
President, Georgia Poetry Society

Tell me More, Mel Ruth

Congratulations to GPS Secretary Mel Ruth on winning the 2021 Cow Creek Chapbook Prize for *A Name Among Bone*. Besides serving as secretary, Mel is also a professor, mentor and student. Recently, Mel engaged in a little Q&A with your GPS newsletter editor.



E: Can you identify a specific event in your past that sparked your interest in poetry?

M: It's actually a funny story. I didn't start out a poet. When I decided on a creative writing concentration in undergrad, I chose fiction—though, truthfully, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I took an introduction to creative writing class, and it was awful. The teacher was so out of touch and would argue with the students over their own work. I almost dropped out of the creative writing concentration and switched to literature. Luckily, I didn't. I decided to give it one more try and took another creative writing course the next semester with Dr. John Nieves. I'm so glad I did. I ended up writing in three different genres that semester, as I still didn't know what I wanted to do. When it was time to decide on future classes, John pulled me to the side and said I had a lot of poetic potential. He pretty much dared me to take a poetry class. Not one to back away from a challenge, I took the class. My first poetry class experience was difficult to say the least. I was overwhelmed by how much I didn't know and how far behind the other students I was. But I am nothing if not determined, so I put in the work, took more poetry courses and eventually caught up. I realized then that poetry would always be a part of my life. To this day, John and I laugh about how my poetry career began on a dare and progressed out of a need to prove to everyone I was just as good as they are.

E: What's the first poem you remember affecting you deeply?

M: The first poem to affect me deeply is actually the first contemporary poem I remember reading. I was sitting in my first poetry course, unsure I belonged there. It was then that John handed out "Hush" by Jake Adam York. And then he read. I could feel the melody in his voice. The desperation. "Hush" is a horrifyingly beautiful poem about a Black mother trying to calm her child and tell him it's just the wind when in reality a white man is setting fire to their house. Like much of York's work, it's haunting. I went into the class assuming we'd read Shakespeare. I left the class buying all of York's work and studying it furiously.

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E: *Do you have someone in your life who acts as your sounding board?*

M: Yes and no. I mostly rely on my peers and professors in school to bounce off ideas and work through drafts of my poems. I wish I had a personal contact outside of school to work with, but I have found it difficult to make that contact.

E: *Just for fun, borrowing from the Bernard Pivot questionnaire, what's your least favorite word?*

M: I have a love/hate relationship with the word "juxtapose". On one hand, it's a beautiful word with a useful meaning behind it, but on the other, it's become so overused in writing classes that I get tired of hearing it.

E: *What would you like GPS members to know about Mel Ruth?*

M: I'm not sure, honestly. It's always so hard for me to talk about myself. I guess I most want people to know I am extremely enthusiastic about poetry and easy to approach, so if you ever want anyone to take a look at your work, feel free to shoot me an email.



MEMBER NEWS ITEMS

Congratulations to our members on their recent publications and awards!

- ∫ *Of Poetry and Poets* by Lou Jones won the 2021 Charles Dickson Chapbook Competition.
- ∫ *Poem at the Edge of the World* by Julia Caroline Knowlton was published in March and is available on Amazon.
- ∫ doris davenport, editor of *The Reach of Song 2022*, was invited to participate in this year's Juneteenth celebration on The Hill in Cornelia, Georgia. doris read from her classic collection *SOQUE STREET POEMS*, 1994. doris also completed the AJC 10K Peachtree Virtual Run/Walk.

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Lucinda Clark's Poetry Matters Project collaborated with Augusta University STEAMIFY program's Spoken Word winners at the Morris Museum.



ALL GPS MEMBERS . . .

Please remember to submit your news items for
the Autumn newsletter by August 30th.

I welcome any feedback on the new sections of the newsletter.

Let me know if you have suggestions of people to interview or
places to explore. After all, this is YOUR society.

Send news, feedback or ideas to newsletter@georgiapoetrysociety.org

SUMMER QUARTERLY MEETING INFORMATION



Date: July 23rd at 11am ET

Location: Morris Museum of Art in Augusta, Georgia

Address: : [1 Tenth Street, Augusta, Georgia 30901](#)

Also on Zoom:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMrd-uqqzwrHNRJW23qFRI9doeD7yNM4nfj>

Schedule of Events

- 9:30 Call to order and announcements
- 9:40 Open mic
- 10:00 Reading: TBD
- 10:30 Reading: TBD
- 11:00 Closing announcements and adjournment

Community Wise

Poetry and Nature in Harmony



Glenlake Path



“Improbable Grace” by Andrea Jurjevic



In May 2022, Georgia Poet Laureate Chelsea Rathburn collaborated with the Georgia Center for the Book and the Dekalb Library Foundation to create [poetry trails](#) around the state.

The trails feature poems by contemporary Georgia writers—Maggie Blake Bailey, David Bottoms, Rupert Fike, Jericho Brown, Carlos Andres Gomez, James Davis May and others.

Poems are displayed on plaques at various spots along the trail, inviting visitors to pause for a moment in the serenity of Nature and contemplate the word images of Georgia’s diverse poets.

Poetry trails can be found in Decatur’s Glenlake Park, Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area and the Michelle Obama Trail at Georgia State University - Perimeter College Decatur Campus. Plans are underway for a future trail in Eatonton, home of the Georgia Writers Museum.

Poetry Matters

While the notion of poetry trails enlightening the masses is exhilarating, let's shift focus from macro to micro. In my quest to understand poetry's effect on the individual, I put on my interviewer's cap, yet again.

Meet Amy Smith, local musician, songwriter and multi-media artist. Currently, she performs with musical groups Vintage Vixens, Maria Gabriella Band and BENT. Amy also plays solo acoustic sessions as "Gypsy Wolf". But her creativity doesn't stop there. Her Gypsy Wolf Designs, LLC, in keeping with her "Renaissance woman" nature, offers anything from handmade jewelry, sculpture and painting.

I recently had the pleasure of engaging in a Q&A session with Amy.



E: Let's start with the obvious: Who's your favorite poet?

A: Stephen Crane

E: What's your favorite poem?

A: "In the Desert" by Stephen Crane

E: How were you first introduced to poetry?

A: My 9th grade Language Arts teacher, Miss Wilson, was a remarkable and passionate educator. She was wonderfully fearless and always challenged us to use words to build whatever our imaginations allowed. It was very freeing. With her, nothing was taboo. She ignited a fire in me that has never diminished. During my freshman year, she was so impressed with a short story I had written, she asked me to submit it to a literary review. I was quite surprised when it garnered a very high mention. Later that year, she assigned a 12-poem book that was meant to be a collection with a running theme. She was so impressed with what I turned in, she used it as an example. I still have that book to this very day. Her direction, encouragement, intensity and fire for the art of language is the genesis of my inspiration.

E: Have you written any poetry of your own? If so, what was your inspiration?

A: Heavens, yes, gobs of smarmy prose or incendiary critique, depending on my mood. I take inspiration from the natural world, primarily. My camping trips fill my head with tomes of heartfelt and joyous lines. I find the perfection of Nature to be sacred and long to capture it with words so others can feel that beauty through my eyes. Of course, love poems have filled the pages of my journals in the past. Either of longing or of profound devotion, that emotion has had its day in my writing. I am also inspired by all things fantastical and magical, be it unicorns and dragons or deep, dark dungeons. Who doesn't like to be the knight in shining armor come to save the day? My remaining source will always be religion, God and the devil, demons, injustice, death, war and hubris. Poetry comes from my emotional perspective, and I find myself divulging bitter commentary on those topics when confronted with the illogical and rude of this world. Thanks to Miss Wilson, nothing is taboo.

E: What influence has poetry had on your music? . . . on your life in general?

A: Lyrics, poems-- one and the same to me. Many of my songs were poems to begin with and then set to music later. Poetry taught me to expand my vocabulary so that I can use fewer words yet still

convey powerful thoughts and ideas. Most of my favorite songs have poetic lyrics. There are so many examples! Music of the 60s and 70s, particularly. I'm sure you can think of several.

Poetry is written emotion for me, and music is the sound of that emotion.

The more I think of it, I really do need to set "In the Desert" to music. Hard rock metal should suit it. I think I am going to enjoy that project. On my life in general . . . poetry has given this very clumsy girl the ability to dance with words and gracefully paint pictures of wanton beauty. It also provides a valve for my anger, the warlike power to carve great commandments and portents of doom. I can't quote any poetry without either crying or dancing or both.

E: How would you describe the relationship of poetry to music?

A: There can be poetry without music and music without poetry or words, but when they are combined, now that is a marriage of true minds. When I write lyrics for my original compositions, I want to write lyrics that can stand on their own without music. That is my desire for my art. Some music begs for meaty words, other songs just need "yeah, yeah, yeah". I find the songs that become truly iconic are songs in which the music and the lyrics match in quality. The sound of the music creates one layer of emotion. The sound then envelopes the words and melody to a point that the listener is guided to the songwriter's vision.

I take a lot of my songwriting from personal experience, capturing moments that carry strong emotion for me. One comes from a long drive back to Atlanta from Columbus, Georgia, in the middle of the night after a long gig. The lyrics were written as a poem initially. I used Drop D guitar tuning which sounds sparse and open like a desert. The words really guided the sound and feel of the musical accomplishment. This is one of my favorite songs of original work. I like it because I was able to bring a strong musical composition to a decent poem, and they work very well together. In contrast, my original composition, "Come on Darlin" is visceral and vampiric, with tribal drums and chunk guitar that breaks into a rock-out ending. Well, you just need to come to an MGB performance and check it out for yourself.



MEMBER CHALLENGE

Try this poetic prompt from your GPS President Lucinda Clark--
Before the next meeting, write a poem about one of the following photos:



Unknown
The Sunny South
c. 1889
Oil on canvas



Charles Frederick Naegele
September
undated
Oil on canvas



Delbert Buck
Woman on Horse
undated
wood, cloth, and acrylic



Lonnie & Twyla Money
Pig
undated
mixed media and painted wood



Lonnie & Twyla Money
Untitled (opossum)
Undated
Mixed media and painted wood



Alex Gabriel Bernstein



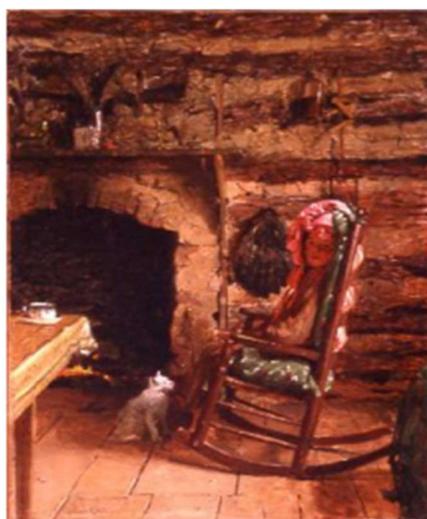
Edgar Nye, *The Bathers*, undated. Oil on canvas



William Aiken Walker
Boy with Goat
1872
Oil on board



Thomas Satterwhite Noble, *The Price of Blood*, 1868. Oil on canvas



Gilbert Gaul
Young Girl in Interior
1903
Oil on canvas

ENJOY THE CHALLENGE. BE PREPARED TO SHARE YOUR
RESULTS AT THE SUMMER QUARTERLY MEETING ON JULY 23RD.
SEE YOU THERE!