

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Pete talks about The Club of Bad Writers**
- **New to blogging and/or author websites? Look inside...**

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ISSUE 9

NOVEMBER 2007

Pie From the Sky

I've been having conversations lately with some forum members who've voiced complaints in regard to trolls on our forum. For those not in the know, Wikipedia defines internet troll like this:

An **Internet troll**, or simply **troll** in Internet slang, is someone who intentionally posts controversial or contrary messages in an on-line community such as an on-line discussion forum with the intention of baiting users into an argumentative response.

After being active on various internet writing forums for about four years or so now, I'm quite familiar with the troll, and have even been accused of being a troll myself. Some trolls are very obvious and intentional; others just don't possess the social skills to realize that everyone perceives them as an asshole. The reason I've chosen to address this issue, though, is because of the complaints

from people who say these trolls are changing the vibe of LiteraryMary and such.

A lot of people want me to ban these trolls straight up. I can understand where they are coming from; however, LiteraryMary is a public forum that attempts to embrace the controversial fringe rather than shun it, along with attempting to guide people along on their way to publication, not to mention have a little secksy fun along the way. I feel for everyone when I see that someone is posting and making our established members angry, but in the future, I also hope to see everyone rise to the occasion.

A troll can change the vibe of an internet forum so long as the members give that troll the power to do so. That is the goal of a troll. To submit to this, to allow ourselves to engage in arguments with these people, to actually become angry, is merely doing exactly what

Sweet Words of Pie and Gravy From Your Admins

they would like you to do. To ban them gives them a reason to shout 'censorship!'

Don't get me wrong, I will ban when it is necessary, but I don't like to use a ban unless I absolutely have to. I personally would always rather choose to beat a troll at its own game, to starve them out or even (and I've actually seen it happen) guide these people toward becoming decent contributing members. So before you decide the forums have changed, before you decide to walk, consider how much you love me. Because if you leave the forum due to a troll, you are only punishing yourself by starving your brain and heart of much needed interaction with ms. vodka.

On the topic of forum tension and anger, I would like to address those who participate in our lovely 'Point, Counterpoint' debate forum. Debate is debate. What goes on in debate should

Pie from the Sky

Continued

not affect how you view people on the forum, whether or not you can be friends with people on the forum, it should not effect you personally and you should most definitely not take it away from your computer or allow it to make you want to leave the forum.

There was a time when I thought I hated Hodge, truly. However, the only interaction I had ever had with him was in debate. Then I slowly started to get to know him away from debate and was like 'OMFG he's actually a really smart, funny, nice and sort of cute guy!' (Sorry Josh, to blow your cover) Point is, people are not only their opinions in debate. I mean shit; sometimes I'll find myself debating things just because it's more challenging to take the opposing side. Anyways, if you can't debate and not take it personally, maybe you should consider spending more time in Word Games, or Junk in the Trunk, or sending me PMs praising my poetry and my beauty.

Anyways, that's all I really have to say this month. I hope to lure back any of you who have left because of controversy or tension and would like everyone receiving this to know that my email (jenifer.wills@gmail.com), and my private message box are always open to anyone with a complaint, concern, suggestion or just if you need someone to talk to.

One last thing I'd like to address this month is the issue of first rights and the internet workshop forum. A few people have expressed concern in regard to losing their first publication rights by using our forum to workshop their pieces. I can understand where publishers are coming from in this regard; I mean why would people want to buy a publication because your stuff is in it if they can just access it on the internet for free?

There are a few ways to go about using our forum and avoiding this issue. First of all, we have a private forum. It's titled 'Secret Bonus Track'. If you post there you will not lose your first rights at all, ever. The forum is invisible to everyone but members, which includes any bots or spiders which might search your stuff up and stick it in their cache. If you have posted there and don't feel that your work is getting enough critique in that section, feel free to PM away. PM the people whose work you most admire or identify with, bomb staff, whatever...

Now, if you still want to use the public forums but don't want to worry, there are a couple of steps you can take. First of all, use a forum name instead of the name you use to submit your work and set your email address to

private or use an email address which is different from the one you use to submit. That way, if someone you've submitted to searches your name or email address, your work won't come up.

Also, title your piece on the forum differently than you intend to submit. That's something I almost always do anyway. That way if someone searches your title, it won't come up. Last, delete your pieces before you submit them. I know Rooze deletes each piece long before she submits them. I delete mine when I submit them. It's worth mentioning also, I have never had any trouble in regard to publication and using LiteraryMary, and, yes, I am published... asshole. I've never known anyone else who uses our forum who has had complications with publishing due to their work having appeared on our website either. So, ladies and gentlemen, post away. We got your back.

Much Love,
ms. vodka





The Club of Bad Writers By Pete

I've noticed a strange delineation between writers of prose and writers of poetry. Very few, I think, can write both well (or in some cases either). And the few of them who do both well tend to be the aberration instead of the norm.

I think perhaps it's something of emotion versus logic affair, sort of a Mr. Spock versus a menstruating woman.

(My money would not be on Mr. Spock. I can just see him Vulcan death-gripping his temples and saying, "I know I was too logical, you're right honey!")

But both have rules of structure and timing that when ignored; tend to create something less than desirable. Writers have wrestled with these differences as well.

Noah Webster said that, "Prose, is the natural language of man."

Whereas Tom Leonard, a Scottish literary said,

"poetry is quintessentially contrapuntal the square root of poetry is an ever-evolving quark whenever

Vergil looked in the mirror, he beheld an epic Latin poet

poetry is all the juicy bits in the juiciest order poetry is jellied religion

pascal: if your labourers complain too much, try taking them to a poetry reading."

So those who write prose have to find beauty and love in everyday things, where people that write poetry have to turn beauty and love into everyday things. They seem, with a cursory look, to be the opposite side of the same manhole cover.

For instance, here is my entry into a contest where we had to submit a poem;

I cannot say I've ever met a road I didn't like

The pavement grooved from heavy travel,

The carnival moves for movement's sake

A carousel whose horses roam the pivotal.

I joined the calliope with uncreased brow

To capture the azimuth of my affection

She grabbed my heart with her endow

the human cannon of Miss Direction.

As the troupe leapt from town to town

I conquered the love of my Susana

She told me we would become my bride, down

On the long dusty roads of Texarkana.

Our three sons now work the fairway hicks

While my wife and I make teriyaki sticks.

I'm sure most people who write poetry better than I (most everyone), are sitting in the corner with blood leaking out of their eyes. (People who write prose have long since started playing mumbely-peg with an electric carving



The Club of Bad Writers (Ctd.)

By Pete

knife held laterally to their hand)

But after writing this, I came to realize that I had joined a very admissible club.

The Club of Bad writers.

They pervade like dog vomit stuck to the bottom of your flannel slippers and act as if Love really is a subway token.

Aching and burning with writings that make their way out of the digestive system of life, only to end in a little "Thluppp" at the end of the large intestine.

You know what I mean, because we've all been members of that open club. We've all been guilty of writing that nasty little fan-fic or that "Ode to Mrs. Small" that was taped on the fridge for almost two years brandishing the red "A". Somewhere in everybody's document files lurks the beast lying in wait like some malformed genetic mistake.

You open the doc and cry, "Oh God! This is fucking hideous," and quickly close it.

But it's probably not necessary to

delve into your own lobotomized excursions to experience the pain.

The year 2052 is when, according to Bob Young CEO of Lulu, "Authorgeddon" will occur. That's when the number of new books published in a particular year will actually outnumber the number of people that read books.

As stupid as it sounds, the number of books published in 2004 reached over 195,000 while the number of people that read at least one book a year dropped to 164 million. In that year alone the amount of published books grew by sixteen percent.

Makes the whole "I'll read yours, if you read mine," scenario much more plausible. But the connotation of "The world ending because there's too much to read" isn't really a situation that bothers anyone unless you're Burgess Meredith and your glasses just broke on the library stairs.

So what percentage of those books are actually just fodder for Ray Bradbury's 451 pile? Probably a high one.

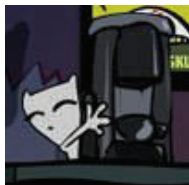
It's up to us as writers not to just churn out the dyspeptic, melodramatic crap that won't test the limits of readers. Poetry and prose writers are really brothers-in-arms in a field that can be numbered in the millions.

If you write only prose, try to write a haiku or if sonnets are your strong suit, write a short about the bus stop or your Aunt Mabel who collects cat hair.

Don't worry, bad writers pervade the business and there is always room for one more (Most are published by the New Yorker). No one will chastise you (someone actually tried to help me fix my poem train wreck, God bless her) and most all experimentation will help you become a better writer.

It may not be much, but it's one way to strengthen your craft and give new depth and meaning to your work. It may be the only way to distinguish you from thousands of others.

Now where did I put my anapaestic dimeters?



Hot Cakes

Introduction to Author Websites/Blogs

The internet can be a great way to promote yourself. More and more authors are straying away from the publishing company's profile page to have their own personal sites. Having your own site can be a wonderful way to promote yourself and your writing.

Things you need to decide are:

- if you are going to pay or not.
- if you want to try to make money off it.
- what you want in your site.
- how much of it you want to do yourself.
- whether you want your own domain or not (which will work into whether or not you want to pay for the site itself).
- how much space you want/need.

You should also consider the amount of experience you have with HTML and/or CSS, working with images, and basic graphic design.

If you're thinking about creating an author site, it's better to start thinking about this sooner than later because websites take a while to build. Having a well thought out site map, even just loosely written on a piece of paper, rather than something just slapped together shows.

BLOGGER

Having an author site for yourself (and your latest piece of work you're promoting) can be quite important in getting word out about you *and* your books. Even if you're unpublished, having an author site can show a publisher that you already have and are more than willing to promote yourself and your work.

Blogger.com is a popular choice for many people, and is the way I got started in blogging. An easy to navigate and visually pleasing site, I recommend blogger to those just starting out in blogging and/or in HTML.



When you sign up with Blogger, it's easy to find your way around with easy-to-understand-and-read terms and fonts. For the new blogger, it's as easy as signing up with a valid email address, picking your blog title, template, and URL, and then going off to post!

The blogger unfamiliar with HTML can step in and start posting without having to worry about any bits of code. However, the basic codesmith can easily switch over to the "Edit HTML" tab and give it a go.

After Blogger's recent switch to "the New Blogger," it's even eas-

Silver Talks About...Anything She Can Think Of

ier to make your blog your own - no HTML experience needed. All you need do is drag and drop elements as you want them to look, and you can have a preview.

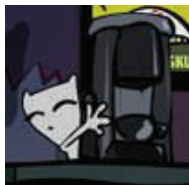


For the HTML dabbler, this can be a good thing as well because you can drag and drop the main elements as well as add your personal touch in the raw template.

If you're looking to make a little cash with your blog, you're likely thinking to go the popular way of Google adsense. Blogger has that covered in an easy add-on in the drag and drop template manipulation section. All you have to do is sign up for it.

However, Blogger has its down points as well.

To sign up for the new Blogger, you have to have a Google account or you will be signed up for one. This isn't a strong negative, but if you're like me, you groan at



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the thought of signing up for yet another thing you won't use. I have yet to explore to see exactly what I can do with my new account with Google.

Blogger's main function is for its users to be able to blog. Your posts will go up in diary style format and will be archived all the same. If you want a Bio page, Blogger does give you a profile page. However, it is meager and if you want something more, plan on having a blog all about you with its own unique URL just sitting there.

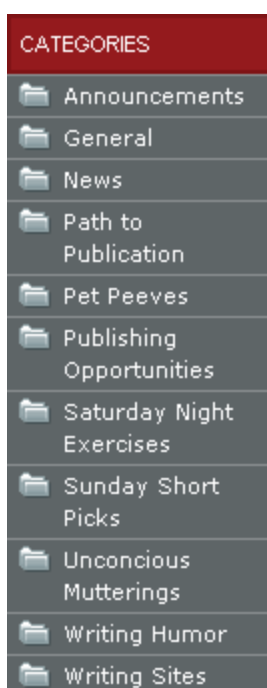
Finally, Blogger is meant mainly for blogging, as I said above. Thus you have a blog, but that's about all. If you have seen other author sites and like the idea of having a page for your prose, a page for your poetry, a page for your blogging, etc, be prepared to have quite a few blogs. I know quite a few people who manage this and manage it well, but I prefer to have everything I want and need on one site, one URL.

Blogger is my definite recommendation for people starting out and those who want to start experimenting with template HTML. However, if you've been using it for a good amount of time now, I recommend branching out and trying a few other spaces so you can find your true fit for your needs.

WORDPRESS

My first experiences with Wordpress came with writing Fiction

Scribe for 451Press. I had never before used Wordpress and had barely heard of it. (It's no wonder with so many different blogging services.) As with everything, Wordpress has its positives and negatives, but I continue to use it for my blogging until I can get a website host.



One thing that is great about Wordpress is the easy to manage categories. If you're typing away and see your post doesn't fit in any of your current categories, then it's as easy as typing in a new category and adding it to the list - all of which can be done without

having to save the post or refresh the page.

Categories are a wonderful thing for both you and your readers. If you're looking for an older post or your readers want to read a specific category only, it's as easy as clicking on that category name.

What sets Wordpress apart from other blogging hosts is that you can have pages, which is one of the things that put me off from using Blogger. Not only do you have your main blog, but you can

have an about you page, a page for your business or online shopping, another page for your writing... The list goes on forever.



The ability to create and manage pages makes your blog more like a website and less like just another blog.

Finally, another big point in Wordpress' favor is the number of templates, a lot of which include customizable headers. A lot of blogging services have some nice templates, but Wordpress has a lot of professional looking templates. Along with that, I have never seen an easier method to put up your personal header. Wordpress gets definite points for that.

However, Wordpress is to Blogger what Angelfire is to Free-webs—Wordpress can get a bit complicated. There are a lot of options and things you can do with your blog, but it does take a while to get used to the navigation and exactly how things work. What I found to be the most frustrating is putting in separate categories for the blogroll. While mine looks like it should, it took me a long time to figure out how to make it that way, and I'm still not sure if I did it the way I'm supposed to.

I mentioned the templates as a



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positive feature above, but you should know that not all templates are created equal. Not all have color options, and not all have customizable header options. This isn't the most horrible thing in the world by any means, but you might end up finding a template you love but not being able to customize your header.

What about going directly into the template code and doing it there? That brings on my final criticism of Wordpress.

One of my largest annoyances when it comes to Wordpress is that you have to pay to get access to your template. There is no easy tab to click on to edit the code. Yes, there is a space for you to move around your sidebar widgets, but that's all the designing input you get when it comes to your template unless you pay the fee.

Overall, I'm quite pleased with Wordpress and will continue to use it until I get hosting.

FREEWEBS

I was introduced to [Freewebs](#) a few months ago by my friend Cody over at [Chaos Sword](#). Freewebs is the site I would recommend for the beginner in web design to the beginner moving into intermediate.

One of the first things I was impressed with after signing up with Freewebs is the vast amount of templates you can choose from. I

have no doubt you'll find something at least close to what you are looking for. They have everything listed in broad categories you can take your time enjoying going through.

If you like music and would like some on your site, I've never seen an easier way presented as the Freewebs toolbar on the top of every page you go into edit. On this same toolbar, you can easily add things like falling snowflakes or leaves. Just remember music can make your site load slower which may put off some readers.

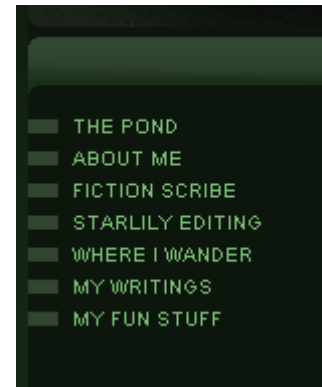
Where the beginner to intermediate comes into play is the option of switching back and forth between pure HTML and normal mode. There are many sites that allow you to convert your settings to pure HTML, but all of the ones I have come across don't allow you to convert what you're working on back out of HTML.

The down side to Freewebs was enough to put me off from using it myself, despite the ease of use. I've encountered "bugs" on a few sites, but this one was the most annoying: On one of my pages, a mystery section appeared, and I couldn't get rid of it for days.

Eventually I simply remade the entire page. While This wasn't a major problem - I could still view all the information on the page and it was safe - it was annoying to have to make a page over again.

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Also, a very minor timing thing but enough to be an annoyance, if you load the edit page screen make sure you don't start making any changes until the page is completely loaded.



If you make changes before it is completely loaded, your changes are immediately erased when it does load completely. The slower your connection, the more annoying this is.

If you have a lot of different works and would like to display them each on their own page, be warned Freewebs will only allow you twenty pages, which includes your home page (which you have to have), your blog, guestbook, and profile page. I had wanted to set up pages for each category of poetry as well as a separate page for my editing service, friends links, and forum stories, but it proved to be too much.

However, if you're only looking for a site with a few pages, this shouldn't be a worry.



Hot Cakes

ANGELFIRE

Angelfire, like Blogger, was a starter place for me when I wanted to learn more. Angelfire is where I first began truly experimenting with HTML.

What I first loved when signing up for Angelfire is how much I got to teach myself. Angelfire provides you with tutorials and easy instructions, but if you choose, you can make it a challenge for yourself.

Angelfire provides easy templates for setting up the basics for your sites so you don't have to deal with a completely blank page when/if you decide to switch over to HTML. This combination of easy format and pure HTML is a good learning tool but also an easy option for the more knowledgeable in HTML.

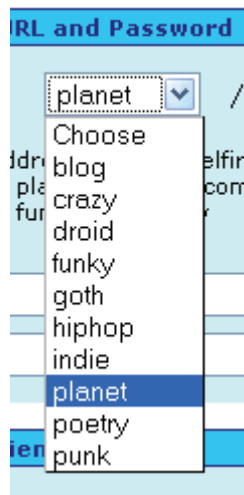
Whereas blog services allow you to host your blog with other programs, Angelfire is a program which allows you to host a blog. What's great about that is you're only dealing with Angelfire for all your needs.

Angelfire also provides a number of different plans (the second one up in price includes your own free domain name) so you can host your own site ad-free on your budget.

If you prefer using Microsoft Frontpage to create your sites, no worries; Angelfire supports the use of Microsoft Frontpage. You

can feel completely free to do nearly everything offline on Frontpage and then load your site into the system.

Angelfire lacks in a few areas, which might keep you from signing up with them.



Whereas many other sites give you a relatively original and short URL name - `http://yoursitename.blogspot.com`, `http://www.freewebs.com/yoursitename` - Angelfire makes your URL a bit longer, and a bit less... adult. You have to choose a word from the list at the left to be put into your site URL. So, instead of something like `http://www.angelfire.com/yoursitename`, you'll have something like `http://www.angelfire.com/planet/yoursitename`. While that might kind of work, it makes your URL longer and makes it that more obvious you're using free hosting.

One warning: If you're planning on switching to HTML, you can't

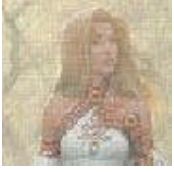
switch back. While this can be a great learning tool, perhaps you should consider having a page to experiment on to see exactly what you're getting into if you aren't completely comfortable with pure HTML.

Basically put, I probably wouldn't recommend Angelfire to a person who knows next to nothing about HTML. While it's not completely essential (and Angelfire provides tutorials), some basic knowledge at least is good. However, if you want to learn it as a learning tool, then it's as good a site as any for doing so.

Of course, if you want your own blog, there are other alternatives like livejournal, diaryland (if you want a rather unprofessional look, in my opinion), or even the very first ever blog portal—eatonweb.

It's up to you to explore and decide what works best for you, be it purely blog or more of a blog/website combo.





*I THINK that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the sweet earth's flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

~Trees by Joyce Kilmer

No, I'm not talking about Lord of the Rings and Ents here... though Treebeard was a pretty cool character. What I'm talking about is the healthy, massive, heritage Oak tree in my back yard.

I've no idea how tall or how old it is; the farmer who owned the land here back in the day—back when it was farm land and not houses on postage-stamp-sized lots, that is—planted it, and a Spruce, on either side of his driveway. Ages later, when they built this house, they were careful to keep the tree as is. I'm careful too. After all, I love the big old boy. And it actually works for its keep too, providing shade

Hawke's Sweet Slice

The Great Neighborhood Tree War

for this house and the nice neighbor's house as well. See, it overhangs the nice neighbour's fence, and has for years... long before I ever moved here, I'm guessing. But no one minded. In fact, the nice neighbor asked that the tree remain exactly as it is as well, which suited me just fine. I mean, it's not like I can jump on a ladder and trim it up anyway—it being the biggest somebitch within a five mile radius, matched only by the heritage Spruce, which is still alive and well in the nice neighbor's back yard, thank you. So, everything should be happily ever after, right?

Wrong.

The nice neighbor sold his house last Spring to a company based out of Sylvan Lake, who promptly turned it into a duplex and rented it out. Still, it shouldn't be a big deal, right?

Wrong again.

I received a letter from the city yesterday. Seems the company doesn't much care for my big old Oak tree. It wants the many massive limbs hacked off at the fence line between our two properties, which may or may not kill the old Oak outright. Now, it's a big deal.

Anyway. So I looked out today and noticed that the heritage Spruce in *their* back yard is half in *my* back yard, the Spruce



snug up tight against the fence between us, its limbs hanging well into my property. Hmm. Dilemmas, dilemmas. See, I'm thinking this could quickly become 'neighbor rage'—right? Yep, it sure could. Not that I have anything against the people living there. I don't. They only rent the place. No, it's the company from Sylvan that I have a problem with. Especially if removing the offending Oak's limbs (that are a good thirty plus feet off the ground and so are not in anyone's way nor apt to be a nuisance) ends up killing something almost as old as the town itself.

To me, writing is very much like a tree. It starts out as an sapling of an idea and, once planted, takes root and grows. Of course, not everyone will like every bit of your tree/work, including you. So some pruning will be needed, and that begs the question: how much? How much can one prune before the story isn't the same story anymore?—before you've killed or ruined it? That then dominos into the next question: should you write for the readers, or for yourself? Depends on how popular you want to be, I suppose. Like me and the overhanging Spruce I'm about to report. Oh yes, I'm not going to be very popular I think. But hey, all's fair in love and tree wars.



The First Ever Mackenzie King Nooberama Poetry Contest

A hush has fallen over the world of poetry as it breathlessly awaits the opening of the Nooberama quarter finals. Poetry journalists and critics from all over the world sniff sifters of cognac with far more thoughtfulness etched in their furrowed brows than ever before. Who is left? And who are the Most Excellent Eight as one witless wag recently dubbed them?

Rumours abound that a number LM collosi (collossusses?) have

been defeated in the early rounds. Who are they? Who is left standing? Or rather, seated, with pens and keyboards at the ready? Only one person knows, and he is not telling, unless an envelope stuffed with cash (Canadian Dollars only please) is sent to him in large unmarked bills. A bubble wrap envelope would be exceedingly nice, as he who knows enjoys popping them as a nominal, but highly entertaining form of therapy.

Another rumour is that there is a dark horse or two in the excellentsia. It is said they come from a universe far far away, known as the fiction section. Young upstarts and old stalwarts are also said to be amongst the jousting troubadors. Patience critics, wags, and contestants. The weekend approaches. The battle is joined. Destiny awaits.