

Winning over the Wicked Web – Submissions

by Anne Stewart

Or should we say ‘The Wonderful World of Web’? It looks fairly certain, barring a sudden and entire crash of civilisation, that concerns over the environment will put paid to paper and post – eventually – and the www is steadily gaining respectable literary ground so, if you have internet access then, like Jenny Josephs’ plans for wearing purple, why not ‘start practicing now’?

There are a growing number of online writing communities, schools and e-zines, and the count of journals and competitions accepting entries online is also increasing. OK, so the internet literary landscape can be hard to navigate. It’s hard to tell the mountains from the chasms; i.e. the ‘respected’ from the ‘out to get your money-grubbers’ or those simply naive bloggers and/or web-masters who merely imagine they have an audience from those with a genuine audience, so what we – I’m definitely included – need, is practical advice on where best to air our ideas and submit our poetry.

Whatever site you might consider submitting to, you need to ask the same questions as you would before submitting to a paper journal or competition. Do you admire the poetry they’re publishing? Would you be in good literary company? Do you respect their policy, credentials and/or choices?

But where on earth do you start? Well, mailing lists and social networks are a good way of receiving both personal recommendations and calls for submissions: e.g. the Second Light newsletter, Facebook friends and groups (though Facebook isn’t for the technically confused, not without advice from a savvy friend). Getting onto the mailing lists of competition organisers and journals will bring calls and deadlines e.g. The Bridport Prize, Coffee-House poetry (aka Troubadour), Magma. It’s best to be selective, however, if you want to avoid masses of incoming mail.

Sites focussed on poetry and other writing often have a links page and/or a competitions listing that you can browse at your leisure, without having to have mail filling up your Inbox, e.g. *poetry pf*, the Poetry Kit, Mslexia. The Poetry Library (Southbank) has an online site for looking up poetry magazines so you can see samples of what they’re publishing, submission guidelines and links to their websites. Kudos Writing Competitions can be viewed online or delivered by subscription.

Or ignore all of these, think of your favourite journal, competition or organisation, add the word ‘poetry’ and Google it – there aren’t many who don’t have their own website (and I say ‘Google’ deliberately because it’s ferociously fast and it’s finely focussed) – click on the link to their official (! that’s very important) site, and see what they have to offer. Simple. And once you’ve decided to send a submission, as ever, you need to comply with their submission guidelines. It’s just as tough editing online journals as it is paper ones.

A few words for the rightfully cautious. If you have doubts about the site or links, they’re probably well-founded and it’s best to exit that site. And if it’s too late and you find yourself looking at something nasty, like one of those flashy horrible pop-up windows with poker dice or smiley faces ‘**you can download FREE!!!!**’, all you have to do is position your cursor over the title of it in your task-bar at the bottom of your screen – or over the title bar of the offending window – select ‘close’ from the shortcut menu, and resolve never to visit that blasted site again.

May the www look favourably upon us all...

Websites (note locations are correct at time of writing):

- www.seconlightlive.co.uk (join mailing list link is in the left-side menu)
- www.facebook.com (register and start slowly, finding your way about, inviting friends 1 at a time, best not to accept 'Friend Request's except from those you recognise and best not to select the option for Facebook to 'invite all friends from your contact list')
- www.bridportprize.org.uk (and select tab 'enter online', where you can register and this puts you on the mailing list)
- www.coffeehousepoetry.org (and select 'sign up for our Newsletter' at top right of page)
- magma-poetry.com (and sign up to 'Receive Magma Newsletter' at bottom right of page)
- www.poetrypf.co.uk (and click on 'eventslisting' or select the 'links' button in the left-side menu)
- Google 'The Poetry Kit' (and e.g. click on 'competitions' in the contacts in the 'official site' link)
- www.mslexia.co.uk (and see 'submit' or 'resources' for example)
- www.poetrymagazines.org.uk
- www.kudoswritingcompetitions.com

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