

The DarkPoetry Almanac

October 31, 2009

In this edition: A masterful poem, a workshop on poetic diction, some news about the goings-on at DP including the new DarkPoetry Council (and a new Councilor), and upcoming events.

A Poem

The final poem composed by Edgar Allan Poe was this, "Annabel Lee." It makes use of an unusual meter, called an "anapest" which gives it its rolling and rocking feel.

Annabel Lee

Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849)

It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of ANNABEL LEE;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and she was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea;
But we loved with a love that was more than love-
I and my Annabel Lee;
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,

In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsman came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
Went envying her and me-
Yes!- that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we-
Of many far wiser than we-
And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling- my darling- my life and my bride,
In the sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

Workshop

This month's piece is written by Matt Steven ([DarkPoet](#)) and is about poetic diction:

In this workshop I'll talk about what poetic diction is, how it affects your reader, and how to avoid writing utterly horrible and gag-worthy poems. Of course, if you actually *want* to write nausea-inspiring poetry, I'll tell you how poetic diction can help you do that too.

So what is “poetic diction?” Within it you have the beginning of the word “dictionary,” and that seems like a pretty good clue. So you might open the dictionary to “diction.” There's something about intelligibility of speech: nope- ah, there we are: “the manner in which something is expressed in words.” So poetic diction is about word choice: choosing the right word for the right moment. Or the wrong one.

So let's talk about a few ways to utterly ruin your poem through bad diction so you can avoid that screeching tire sound as people flee the scene of your [vogon-esque](#) poem. Wrong diction will guarantee that you fail to connect with your reader; whether you use cliché, overly informal or profane language, or even odd choices of word ordering.

Oddly enough (ring any bells?), a cliché is a predictable phrasing so well known to everybody, that even in the best of cases will evoke an audible groan from a reader, and in the worst, cause them to run for their lives. But wait, there's more! (ding! ding!) Clichés are not limited to common turns of phrase, there are also Internet clichés, and even DarkPoetry clichés. Pay attention as you read other works: do you often run across a particular phrase and feel a gag reflex? Avoid using cliché, and anything like cliché at all costs (ding!). Instead you should be using plain, natural language to communicate your poem. Let the imaginative parts of your poem be in the meaning, not in the delivery.

Now to diverge from standard poetic practice for a moment: Most poetry experts would disagree with what I'm about to say. Overly informal language, including well chosen profanity, do in fact have their place in Dark Poetry. A particularly good home for this kind of thing exists in the cathartic or venting poem, where the main point is to construct a metaphor for something going on in your life and redirect your bad energy

into that instead. Nothing says bad energy like a well placed vulgarity. But if you're writing a poem for someone other than yourself and your intimates, be particularly cautious about becoming informal, using chat-speak "r u sure?" and especially profanity. The line between profanity and cliché is very thin; be careful how you walk it.

But let's not get too high and mighty... I admit that I have been particularly guilty of the last diction crime on the list: reordering words just to make a verse fit a particular scheme of some sort. Readers are not dumb. They recognize this sort of slapdash approach and will turn the page on you for it, and most deservedly too. If you can't make the line you want in that spot fit, invent a new one! Or break the scheme! Or do anything, just don't fly off the handle and spout a nasty line of [Yoda-talk](#) just to make the rhyme or meter hang together.

So, Luke, you now hold the force in your hands. You're well armed with the knowledge of good diction: Avoid cliché, use informal language and profanity with great care, and use natural word phrasing so that the words get out of the way and the thought can be communicated.

News

The month of October was a good one for DarkPoetry's development. Due to an employment change I was able to put in over 10 hours per day and managed to get an enormous list of things done, from bug fixes to critical missing features. Some of the big ones: Gold members can again post audio works, long-term login works (for Full/Gold members), and a lot of other stuff listed in the "[DarkPoetry News](#)" forum.

In November, the plan is to spend a lot of time on making profiles more customizable. Members can currently fully customize their profile css file, but that means you need to know css of course. That's no good for most folks, so it is the mission at this point to make customizing easy and fun.

Are you a Facebook (tm) user? "Fan" the "[DarkPoetry](#)" Facebook group and stay up to date on day to day happenings on DarkPoetry.

People and Events

Do you have an event you'd like to share next month? Please [Dpmail](#) with your announcement.

DarkPoetry Royalty becomes DarkPoetry Council

While DarkPoetry has enjoyed the air of a medieval fiefdom for many years now, it seems that a renaissance is in the air, and political change sweeps the land. The few charged with moderating the site, formerly called "Royalty," are now to be called "Council." This term is intended to reduce the "social distance" between you and they, and better reflect what they are here to do: Represent the interests of the site's membership and provide a quickly available resource for members to go to when they need help. Of course, from a strictly government civics point of view, we have not progressed straight into a representative democracy, but rather a constitutional monarchy of sorts.

TropicalSnowstorm Appointed Councilor

[TropicalSnowstorm](#), aka Steve, is the newest appointee to the DarkPoetry Council. He has provided DarkPoetry readers with a plethora (now there's a cliché for you) of great poetry over the years, and has consistently supported the site in many ways.

Steve is a well traveled guy, and judging by his poetry, full of wisdom about human nature and the world at large. I feel that he will be someone that all DarkPoetry members will be proud to have in a leadership position.

Feel free to congratulate him with a [barrage of dpmails!](#)

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