



June, 2018

## The Connecticut Poetry Society Newsletter

The CPS website is <http://ctpoetry.net/>.

While you're online, *Friend us on Facebook.*

### CPS Honorary Board

Rennie McQuilkin, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2015-2018

Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2001-2006

Vivian Shipley, Connecticut State University Distinguished Professor at SCSU

### CPS Officers

Co-Presidents: Tony Fusco & Pat Mottola

Vice President: Victor Altshul

Secretary: Christine Beck

Treasurer: Mark Sheridan

Contests: Joan Hofmann

Webmaster: Tony Fusco

Membership: Tony Fusco

CRR Editor: Ginny Connors

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

Program Director: Victor Altshul

Board Meeting Coordinator: Julia Paul

### Interested in Getting More Involved?

We are looking for someone to take over as Membership Chair. If interested, please contact Tony Fusco or Pat Mottola. This is an important role!

### Presidents' Message

"Green was the silence, wet was the light,  
the month of June trembled like a butterfly."  
—Pablo Neruda

Dear CPS members, summer is upon us and butterflies will soon abound. On reading about these delicate creatures, I cannot help but connect them to our writing process; the butterfly "suspends itself by silken threads and sheds one last time to reveal skin that will harden to form the chrysalis or pupa. Days, months, or even years later, depending on the species, a fully developed winged adult emerges." Oh, so it is with our poems! We are forever revising, until lo, the butterfly emerges to spread its beauty to the world. Dear poets, let summer alight like a butterfly and may your words take wing! And remember: *The summer night is like a perfection of thought.* —Wallace Stevens

### Rennie McQuilkin Stepping Down

Due to illness, Rennie McQuilkin is stepping down as the state's Poet Laureate. We echo the Connecticut Office of the Arts in thanking him for all he's done for poetry in Connecticut. CPS agrees that we're "grateful for his unwavering support of emerging poets, his commitment to raising the profile of poetry across the state, and his contributions to poetry."

## **CPS Chapters & Presidents**

### **Danbury**

Elizabeth Massey  
[finchwhistlehaven@gmail.com](mailto:finchwhistlehaven@gmail.com)

The Danbury chapter meets at Danbury Library, 170 Main Street, on the second Saturday of each month, from 2:00 - 4:00 PM (Bring 6 to 8 copies of a poem for the workshop, or just come to listen and respond. To receive an e-mail reminder each month, contact Elizabeth.

### **Farmington Valley**

Terence McCaffrey  
860-416-6684  
[tmccaff24@hotmail.com](mailto:tmccaff24@hotmail.com)

This new chapter meets on the second Tuesday of each month in the library at Tunxis Community College from 6-8 pm. Bring copies of your poem if you want feedback.

### **Greater Hartford**

Julia Paul  
[Julia.Paul@cox.net](mailto:Julia.Paul@cox.net)

The Greater Hartford chapter meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month, Sept. through June from 1:15-3 pm at Welles Turner Library, 2407 Main Street, Glastonbury. Starting in June the meetings will begin at 2 pm. Bring copies of a poem to share if you want feedback on your work.

### **Manchester**

Linda Richardson  
[wwpoetryclub@gmail.com](mailto:wwpoetryclub@gmail.com)

The Manchester chapter meets from 1-3 pm on the second Saturday of each month from September through June at The Arbors, 403 West Center Street in Manchester. Bring ten copies of a poem to share if you want feedback from your group. The chapter meets informally in July and August at the same location.

### **No chapter in your area?**

Consider starting one! All that's required is a regular meeting time, a place to meet, and a willingness to work with CPS poets.

### **Middletown**

Pamela Guinan  
860-563-5761  
[Pamela.cps@hotmail.com](mailto:Pamela.cps@hotmail.com)

The Middletown chapter meets at the Russell Library, 123 Broad Street at 6 pm on the last Wednesday of each month. Bring copies of a poem for reading and critique.

### **New Haven**

Vic and Laura Altshul  
[victor.altshul@yale.edu](mailto:victor.altshul@yale.edu)

The New Haven chapter meets the third Saturday of the month at the Friends Room at Miller Memorial Library, 2901 Dixwell Ave., Hamden, 10:15 am-12:15 pm.

### **Southbury**

Marion McGauhy  
860-354-2157  
[Mcgauhy@aol.com](mailto:Mcgauhy@aol.com)

The Southbury Chapter meets on the fourth Sunday of the month at 2 pm. Meetings are held at the Southbury Public Library, 100 Poverty Road. During the summer, new and prospective members should contact Marion for summer meeting schedule times as the library's hours change during the summer.

### **Wilton**

Ray Rauth  
[Rayrauth@optonline.net](mailto:Rayrauth@optonline.net)

This group meets every third Saturday from 2 to 4 pm in the Wilton Library, 137 Old Ridgefield Road. Members bring in copies of poem to distribute to all of the attendees. The poems should be no more than 40 lines.

## Connecticut Poetry Society Celebrates April Poetry Month

The Connecticut Poetry Society recognized April Poetry Month 2018 by book-ending the month, holding one event in March in anticipation and one in May. On March 31, we conducted our monthly poetry series called poets on poetry (POP), about the poetry of Claudia Rankine. Kate Rushin led a lively discussion at the Hartford Public Library of Rankine's recent book called *Citizen*. This POP session preceded Rankine's appearance on April 26 at Hartford Public Library to discuss her book, which was selected as the "One Read" for this year. The event was sold out and included youth poetry and dance. Several CPS members were in attendance. On April 28, we conducted another POP session on the poetry of Maxine Kumin.



Then, on May 19, CPS celebrated poetry month by holding its annual Poetry Blast. So that The Blast wouldn't conflict with the many other poetry celebrations in April, we decided to move it to May. This year the poetry program included short sessions on the poets William Carlos Williams, Jane Hirshfield, and Wislawa Szymborska, each of whom had been the subject of a full-length POP during the prior year at Hartford Public Library. Part of the Blast



Michelle McFarland (Hartford Public Library), Christine Beck, Mark Sheridan, Ginny Connors, Julia Paul at the spring Blast

included a presentation to the Hartford Public Library of poetry books written by poets Gertrude Stein, Wislawa Szymborska, Maxine Kumin, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, each of whom had been discussed at the POP. The Blast also featured a bookfair, delicious refreshments, raffle prizes, and a wonderful open mic. John Stanizzi closed the meeting with a stirring reading of his poem "Resiliency," which you can view on our members only website by [clicking on this link](#).

## Should Your Poem Be on the CPS Website?

The CPS online Poetry Page

<http://ctpoetry.net/members-poems.html>

features two poems a month by members of CPS. Send one poem for consideration, no longer than 60 lines, using the online submission form located here:

<http://ctpoetry.net/members-only-poetry-submission-form.html>

## Poet in the Spotlight

Joseph Brockway is a Spanish professor who is working on a PH.D. in Translation Studies. When he's not reading or writing, he's often found taking long walks in Bushnell Park in Hartford or walking along the beach. He grew up in Groton, Connecticut but moved away after high school. When he moved back to our state in 2016, he



Joseph Brockway

joined CPS. He wanted to get to know other local poets and become involved in the poetry scene. He attends two local chapter meetings to workshop poems and attends many CPS-sponsored events, including Poets on Poetry at the Hartford Public Library, which helps him get to know the work and life of a variety of poets.

While he was in high school, words and phrases began invading his thoughts. He would stop everything else he was doing and write. That's still how he receives poetic thought. "I have poems written on receipts, napkins, pages in books, and so on." As well as working on a dissertation, Brockway spends time translating from Spanish to English—mostly poetry—and writes short essays or reflections. His recent reflections are part of a manuscript, *My Fragmented Self: The*

*Afterpoetry*, which is about the results of a DNA test that revealed his dad is not his biological father. Each reflection is accompanied by a poem.

His poetry writing is informed by the study of languages, Jungian psychology, and experimentation characteristic of surrealism and other avant-garde movements. For Brockway, a memorable poem is one in which he can sense the emotion through sounds and other sensory images.

He says, "Sound, rhythm, and inventive manipulation of language are probably what I place more emphasis on when I write a poem. I think that's because my emotions are stirred more by sounds than by visual images and meaning. For example, I will employ alliteration and other forms of repetition to make lines more powerful...the rhythmic flow is integral to my poem "Tanith's Smile" that was published in the Fall 2017 issue of *The Perch*. My friend Tanith died from Lupus complications, and the poem captures the last time I saw her in the hospital. In the poem, the emotion of the moment rises and falls with the length of syllables and lines, which attempt to mimic the rising and falling beep of a heart monitor."

Most of the poetry books Brockway reads are either by Latin American poets (in the original Spanish) or by surrealist poets translated into English. If he could have dinner with three poets, he'd choose the Puerto Rican poet Nemir Matos-Cintron (he's been translating her work), the South African poet Koleka Putuma, and Maya Angelou, if she were still living, whose poem "Still I Rise" awed him when he first read it in eighth grade.



## In Memoriam



Connecticut lost two outstanding poets recently.

**Susan Allison**, Middletown's Poet Laureate, lost her fight against cancer. Several years ago she opened a shop in Middletown for old and rare books: Ibis Books & Gallery, which became known later as The Buttonwood Tree, an arts and cultural performance space. She was a creative spirit and a gracious advocate for the arts.

**Suzanne Plein**, formerly of Southbury, passed away in May. She was the author of a poetry chapbook called *Wolf in the Basement* and was active in the poetry community.

These poets will be missed.

### A Poetry Collaboration

Steven Ostrowski and his son Ben have collaborated in writing poems about their relationship with each other, their loved ones, and the universe. The result is a new chapbook called ***Seen/Unseen***, recently released by Cervena Barva Press. A different series of eight of their collaborative poems appeared in *The American Journal of Poetry*.

## Guilford Poets Guild to Host Dick Allen Memorial Tribute on June 14

Dick Allen, essayist, educator, and former Connecticut Poet Laureate (2010-2015), was scheduled to read at the Guilford Poets Guild's March Second Thursday Poetry Series reading. Sadly, he suffered a fatal heart attack on Christmas Day 2017. In the spirit of gratitude and celebration of his life and his poetry, the Guild is planning a reading of his poetry on Thursday, June 14 from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at the Guilford Free Library.

Each member of the Guilford Poets Guild will read his/her favorite Dick Allen poem. There will be door prizes of his poetry books. The Guilford Free Library is located at 67 Park Street. Please register by phone, in person, or online. [guilfordfreelibrary.org](http://guilfordfreelibrary.org). 203-453-8282

### Congratulations

to **Eddie Morales**, who has been named president of the Meriden Poetry Society, and to former CPS treasurer **Mike Lepore**, who will become Glastonbury's second poet laureate, following the tenure of Alexandrina Sergio.

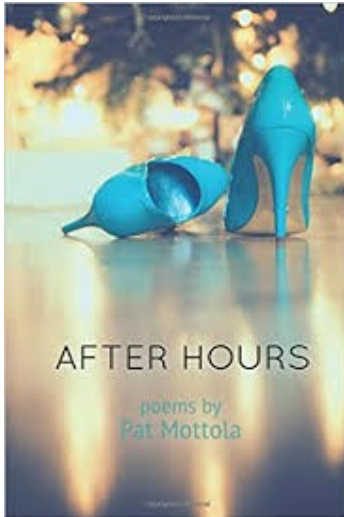
### Wit and Wisdom Poetry News

The Manchester branch of CPS, Wit and Wisdom, visited *The Arbor* in May, where they shared poetry and interacted with members. After winning a Robert Frost poetry book, one resident recited "The Road Not Taken."

Members of this chapter will also participate in Manchester's June stroll on Main Street, *Pride of Manchester*. They take part in the *Journal Inquirer's* "Poetry Corner."

## New Poetry Book by Pat Mottola

*After Hours*, the latest full-length collection by Pat Mottola, CPS Co-President, has been published by Five Oaks Press. It is available on Amazon and through Ingram Spark.



“In *After Hours*, Pat Mottola proves she is that rare poet who is a master of the portrait poem. Whether her protagonist is a seductive woman sitting in a bar filled with leering men, or a man who works with caskets, the legendary Eve, or an immigrant grandfather, or a maid, or the author’s second grade teacher, Mottola captures the idiosyncrasies, core, and heartbreak of each individual with a specificity that is electrifying.”

~Laura Boss, *The Best Lover*

## Poetry at Silk City Coffee

Victor and Laura Altshul are sharing their poetry at Silk City Coffee, Main Street, Manchester, on June 7.

## Staying Human: Poetry in the Age of Technology

Poet Laureate of the United States Tracy K. Smith recently gave a speech to the Library of Congress with the above title. Here are a couple of short excerpts.

“I think my interest in such a project is an extension of my own belief or wish that Americans of all backgrounds might have something quietly urgent and *humanizing* to offer to one another. But in order to get to it, we have to turn down the volume on all the many sources seeking to sell us on the notion of an unmendable divide — because that’s what they’re doing, they’re selling us on a product, which is strife. In order to get to community, we have to go quiet, slow down, allow ourselves to be both vulnerable and brave, and approach one another with an idea as simple as, *I’m me, you’re you, we are not the same, and yet perhaps we can feel safe here together talking about something as simple as a poem.*”

“I believe that poetry helps bridge the gap between self-centeredness or tribalism and true compassion. Poems do this in myriad ways. One of them is by helping to inoculate us against the catchy, inescapable, strategically biased language of the market, firing away at us from every direction in its ceaseless ploy to be the only language.”



Tracy K. Smith

### **Sunken Garden Poetry Festival**

The Hill-Stead Museum's Sunken Garden Poetry Festival is held in high regard within the state and beyond. This year's festival began with Irish poetry, featuring the poetry of Eamon Grennan and David McLoghlin, Irish music by Scoil Rince Luimni, and a step-dancing performance by a charming group of young dancers.

Upcoming features:

June 20: Molly Brown and Margaret Gibson

July 11: U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith

July 25: Solmaz Sharif and Javier Zamora

August 5: Andrea Gibson and winners of the Fresh Voices Poetry Competition

Some poetry workshops open to the public (you must register in advance) are also offered. See

<https://hillstead.org/sunken-garden-poetry-festival/2018-poetry-festival/>

for more information.

### **Rose Weekend at Elizabeth Park**

Roses and poetry—it's hard to think of a better pair-up. On Saturday, June 16, Elizabeth Park in West Hartford will hold its annual Rose Weekend. There will be garden tours in the morning and poetry in the afternoon. The West Hartford Chamber of Commerce Annual Healthy W. Hartford Fair will also be at the park, showcasing products and services to promote healthy living.

Under the tent, poetry begins at 11:30 with West Hartford Poet Laureate Julie Choffel. At noon, several members of the Connecticut Coalition of Poets Laureate will share some poetry. At 1 PM, two poets sponsored by The Friends and Enemies of Wallace Stevens will be featured. The poets are Danielle Pieratti and Reginald Flood. On Sunday, June 17, Rose Weekend will continue with other events sponsored by various groups.



## Billy Collins Selected for West Hartford Reads

The 2018 West Hartford READS! author is BILLY COLLINS, often referred to as "America's Poet." West Hartford READS! is a town-wide initiative encouraging everyone to read the works of one notable author.

On October 4, Billy Collins visits West Hartford Town Hall Auditorium 50 South Main Street, West Hartford, for a Reading, Q&A, and Book Signing. Estimated event length: 60 - 75 minutes.

This summer the library will hold four book discussions based on books by Collins, led by four previous town poet laureates, as well as by Julie Choffel, the current laureate. The library has the books for loan.

The schedule is as follows (all discussions held at 7:15 PM in the town library on Main Street).

June 21: *The Art of Drowning* with Ginny Lowe Connors

July 19: *Questions About Angels* with Christine Beck and Maria Sassi

August 16: *Picnic, Lightning* with Julie Choffel

September 6: *Nine Horses* with Jim Finnegan

Register for these program at this website or in the library and entering "billy collins" in the key word search.

<https://westhartford.librarymarket.com>

The work of Billy Collins will also be the focus of June's POP (Poets on Poetry) at the Hartford Public Library, 500 Main St. Maria Sassi will lead this discussion on June 30th, from 10 AM to noon. Other discussions of his work are also planned for various locations.



## Contests and Publications

Brent Terry judged the 2018 Lynn DeCaro Contest for high school students. Eva Familia won first prize for her poem "Bott's Farm." Molly Galusha took second place for "Steep," and Eliza Browning earned third prize for her poem "Ophelia."

The Connecticut Poetry Award contest has just closed; look on the website for an announcement of the winners. The CRR Poetry Contest will begin accepting entries in August.

Look for the **Connecticut River Review** at the end of the summer. Submissions were received from around the country and from several foreign countries! A number of Connecticut poets will be represented in the 2018 edition.



