

**The Connecticut
Poetry Society
Newsletter**

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

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

CPS Honorary Board

Antoinette Brim-Bell, Connecticut Poet Laureate

Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2019-2022

Rennie McQuilkin, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2015-2018

Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2001-2006

Vivian Shipley, CSU Distinguished Professor Emerita

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Newsletter: Ginny Connors

POP Director: Barb Jennes

Chapter Liaison: Pat Mottola

Youth Outreach: Nancy Manning



Dr. Vivian Shipley Wins Paterson Prize

We congratulate CPS Honorary Board Member **Vivian Shipley**, Connecticut State University Distinguished Professor Emerita. Her 12th full-length collection of poetry, *Hindsight: 2020* (Louisiana Literature Press, Southeastern Louisiana University, 2022) was selected for the 2023 Paterson Poetry Prize Award for Sustained Literary Excellence from the Poetry Center at PCCC. Vivian, our sincerest appreciation for your continued generosity and your welcoming hospitality over the years, as well as your expert guidance in all things poetry.

President's Message

Hello dear CPS members!

Welcome to summer! And a special welcome to all of our new CPS members!

I am feeling so good about the return of in-person events. We are fresh off our Spring Fling, always a wonderful event—even the rain couldn't dampen it in the least! Our Board Members and Volunteers stepped up, as always, to make good things happen! We will have another gathering mid-summer, and another in early fall.

Our Executive Board met last week and we are planning more great things for you this coming year. Look forward to *conneCTions*, a student in-person Open Mic, and another Ekphrastic Museum Project in the spring. By the way, you can access our Ekphrastic Project video, our collaboration with the New Britain Museum of American Art, by clicking on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6tVhfc3Nsk>

Another new project in the works (in which you all can participate) is a Poetry Craft Book List. Got a favorite book that you turn to for inspiration? More details about that appear in this newsletter! And of course, MOM and POP will return in September, as well as the President's Workshops. Our wheels are still turning...who knows what's to come!

Poetry is the opening and closing of a door, leaving those who look through to guess about what is seen during the moment. —Carl Sandburg

Enjoy the summer and know that I look forward to seeing you all soon!

Pat Mottola, President
Connecticut Poetry Society



Beth Brody

Ekphrastic poetry at the New Britain
Museum of American Art

Ed Lent



CPS Chapters & Presidents

COVID-19 has changed the way our chapters meet. If you want to know more about meeting with a specific chapter, please get in touch with the chapter president.

Bethel

Liz Massey
finchwhistlehaven@gmail.com

This chapter meets at the Bethel Library on the second Saturday of each month, from 1-3 pm. Bring copies of a poem to discuss.

Farmington Valley

Debbie Gilbert
debbiewgilbert@hotmail.com

This chapter meets on the first Monday of each month, from 7-9 pm. Email Debbie to submit your poem for critique and to receive the Zoom link. So as to have enough time to respond to each poem, we cap each meeting at ten participants.

Greater Hartford

Julia Paul
Julia.Paul@cox.net

Currently, this chapter is meeting via Zoom. Members are looking forward to the resumption of in-person meetings.

Haiku Chapter

Marita Gargiulo
margararts1000@gmail.com

This online chapter welcomes CPS members interested in reading and writing haiku. Members of the group share haiku and senryu regularly. The chair collects the poems in advance and emails them to all chapter members so that the poems can be discussed during the meetings.

Manchester

Matthew Borrelli
matthewborrelli296@gmail.com

Manchester's Wit and Wisdom group meets on the second Saturday of each month from 1-3. They meet at the Firehouse in Manchester.

Middletown

This chapter has been on hiatus but hopes to resume meeting soon.

New Haven

Laura Altshul
lauraaltshul130@gmail.com

The New Haven chapter meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10-12. Presently they meet via Zoom.

Orenaug Chapter: Woodbury, Watertown, Southbury, Roxbury, Bethlehem

Sandy Carlson
orenaugchaptercps@gmail.com

The Orenaug chapter will meet in person on the third Saturday of each month at 9:30 am. Contact Sandy for the location. The ekphrastic workshops are held at the Woodbury Public Library on the first Saturday of each month at 1 pm.

Wilton

Ray Rauth
Rayrauth@optonline.net

The Wilton Workshop meets from 2-4 on the third Saturday of each month at the Wilton Library.

CPS Welcomes New Board Members

How fortunate we are to have so many talented, hard-working people on our CPS Board of Directors. We welcome **Barb Jennes** as our new POP Director! Many of you know Barb for her amazing work as the Inaugural Poet Laureate of Ridgefield, as well as Poet-in-Residence at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum. She is the author of *Blinded Birds*, winner of the 2022 International Book Award for a poetry chapbook. She will inherit the stellar example set by POP Director **Jeanne LeVasseur**, who set a very high bar for POPs these past three years. Under Jeanne's leadership POPs ran so smoothly they seemed to just "happen effortlessly," but we all know differently. Jeanne, we express our deepest appreciation for your generous contribution of your time and expertise to our POPs, as well as your ongoing interest in assisting CPS.

CPS also welcomes **Sandy Carlson** as our new Vice-President! Sandy is a writer and educator, and Poet Laureate of Woodbury. She has published several collections of poetry, and she hosts the podcasts *Woodbury Writes* (in collaboration with Woodbury Public Library) and *People and Their Poems*. Sandy succeeds Vice-President **Sharon Smith**, whose numerous contributions to CPS are greatly appreciated. Sharon was instrumental in organizing the CPS Ekphrastic Project in collaboration with the New Britain Museum of American Art, and also in making our Spring Fling and other in-person events run so smoothly. Sincerest thanks, Sharon, for your valuable contributions.

In addition, we are happy to welcome **John Surowiecki**, who has joined **Ginny Connors** and **Debbie Gilbert** as an editor of *Connecticut River Review*. He is certainly well-versed, as an author of numerous poetry collections, and the recipient of several prestigious awards for his poetry, drama, and for a novel.

Poems from Connecticut's Four Corners

On Wednesday, June 7, five poet-dads: Dennis Barone, Paul Bluestein, Chris Gaffney, Steve Ostrowski, and John Surowiecki will take part in a special Father's Day edition of *Poems from Connecticut's Four Corners*, a monthly virtual reading hosted by Ridgefield Poet Laureate Emerita Barb Jennes and the Ridgefield Library. The reading will begin at 7:00. Please register at <https://ridgefieldlibrary.librarymarket.com/event/online-poems-connecticuts-four-corners-4> to receive the Zoom link.

Have You Renewed Your Membership?

Membership in CPS runs from April 1 to March 31. Dues are \$30 for members, \$15 for students and are payable via PayPal on our website <http://ctpoetry.net/membership.html> or you can mail a check via USPS mail to **Patti Fusco**, CPS Membership, 311 Shingle Hill Rd, West Haven, CT 06516. If you owe dues, you will have received an email from Patti Fusco to remind you.

Email Patti pwfusco@gmail.com if you have questions. Please make sure we have your most current email, mailing address and phone number.

Poet in the Spotlight: Padmaja Battani

Padmaja Battani writes in several different genres, including short fiction, flash fiction, and poetry. Within the past year, she's published eight book reviews in various magazines. Poetry is her favorite genre. Growing up, she read poetry in Telegu, English, and Hindi. She fell in love with great poems by Keats, Robert Browning, Pushkin, and other poets, and she started writing her own poems when she was about thirteen years old.

Battani writes about growing up in India, the people she's known, and the memories she treasures. Her poetry is also inspired by her reactions to world affairs, to injustices, and gender bias. Feminism contributes to the themes of some of her poems. As well as poems based on social and political concerns, she writes about nature, about long-lost friendships, and sometimes about dreams. She is currently working on the completion of a poetry collection.

She receives ideas for poems in various ways. Sometimes it's a memory that inspires her writing; other times it might be a news story. Poetry prompts can get her writing, or even just the knowledge of a deadline for submitting a poem to a workshop. That's motivating! Recently, she participated in the ekphrastic writing workshop sponsored by CPS, and wrote a poem inspired by a painting at the New Britain Museum of American Art.

The Connecticut Poetry Society has offered Padmaja Battani many opportunities that she appreciates. She loves the President's Workshops and is especially thankful to Pat

Mottola and Vivian Shipley for the feedback and encouragement they have provided during these meetings. Battani appreciates the monthly POP programs and the chance to associate with "an amazing group of poets."



Padmaja Battani

When she is not writing, she might be found hiking or cooking with her daughter, or admiring a sunset at one of the beaches in Connecticut or Rhode Island. Instead of writing poetry, she might be reading it or reading other types of literature. Currently she is reading *Tilling the Darkness* by Susan Braley, *Girls That Never Die* by Safia Elhillo, and *Border Vista* by Anni Liu. One of the best ways to become a better writer is to be an avid and attentive reader.

Art and Poetry at Work-Space Gallery

Members of the Manchester Chapter, Wit & Wisdom Poetry Club, will be participating in an upcoming exhibit at Work-Space Gallery, 903 Main Street, in Manchester. A wide variety of art as well as poetry will be on display. The exhibit will take place from June 8 to July 28. Opening night is Thursday, June 8, 5-7:30 pm.

Contest News

Results of the **Lynn DeCaro Poetry Competition** for Connecticut high school students were announced in May. This year's competition was judged by Vivé Griffith and produced three winners and five honorable mentions from among more than two hundred submissions. Congratulations to these student poets!

First Place: Athena Lavigne, Rockville High School, Vernon

Second Place: Enfinity Glover, James Hillhouse High School, New Haven

Third Place: Caitlin Chatterton, Rockville High School, Vernon

Honorable Mentions: Theo Mays, Westover School, Middlebury; **Aubrey Niederhoffer**, Greenwich High School, Greenwich; **Saturn Browne**, Loomis Chafee School, Windsor; **Isaac Rivera**, E.C. Goodwin Technical High School, New Britain; **Iris Hida**, Rockville High School, Vernon.

The **Margaret Gibson Poet Laureate Poetry Award** was also completed in May. The award was given for poems which focus on the living world in this time of global climate crisis. Congratulations go to:

First Place: Jenevieve Carlyn Hughes

Second Place (tie): Jude Rittenhouse and **Abu Bakr Sadiq**

Third Place: Anne Hampford

Honorable Mentions: Jeanine DeRusha and **David Epstein**

Winning poems from these contests, along with judges' remarks, can now be found on the CPS website.

Upcoming contests: The **Experimental Poetry Prize** will open for submissions on June 15; it will be judged by **Richard Deming** of Yale. The **Vivian Shipley Award** will open on August 1 and will be judged by **Antoinette Brim-Bell**, current Poet Laureate of Connecticut.

Each offers a first place prize of \$1000 and is open to all poets!

A Garden of Verse

Ridgefield Poet Laureate Emerita **Barb Jennes** is happy to announce the third season of *A Garden of Verse*, a series of summer-evening poetry readings held in the historic walled gardens of Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center at 152 Main Street, Ridgefield. This summer's lineup includes **Jessica Cuello** and **Matthew Lippman** on June 26; **Jennifer Franklin** and **Sean Singer** on July 10; **Nicole Callihan** and **Iain Haley Pollack** on July 24; and Connecticut Poet Laureate **Antoinette Brim-Bell** along with **Terry Blackhawk** on August 7. The free readings begin at 7:00; no reservation required. Parking is available on site. In case of rain or a temperature emergency, readings will move inside the Garden House. Bring a lawn chair or blanket. Picnic dinners welcome!

What's on Your Bookshelf: The Poetry Craft Books Our Members Love

CPS member **Doreen Oshinskie** is initiating an effort to generate a list of great poetry craft books. So, tell us what books you reach for when you need inspiration.

What is your favorite poetry craft book? What is a poetry craft book? It's a book that helps with the craft of writing. It can steer the writer to focus down on the elements such as building concrete imagery, developing sound, using simile and metaphor, understanding meter, rhyme and form, delving into particular poetic forms such as the pantoum, understanding repetition...and so on.

Most poets, writers, teachers and students can name a couple of these books. Oshinskie mentions a couple of titles she learned of at a workshop she attended a few years ago; the Ted Kooser book: *The Poetry Home Repair Manual: Practical Advice for Beginning Poets*, for example. Kooser's book doesn't try to be everything. The poet gives it to you like this: "I'm going to say a few things and perhaps you can learn from this book, which I like to think of as a conversation." That attitude is one of welcoming in the new poet who is wrestling with language.

CPS will do a brief survey so we then can provide a list of craft books that are the favorites of our members. Want to share your favorites? You can—in a CPS survey coming out soon (check your emails)!

the survey form :

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf96aEpT8762P5oxs-ah3Z9dfULJebTu1TWCOG-WUR8QPOLKiQ/viewform>

CPS Members Continue to Publish

John Surowiecki's fifteenth book of poetry is scheduled to be published this summer by Bass Clef Books out of Cecilia, Kentucky. The chapbook is called *Chez Pétrouchka* and gives voice—nasty, vulgar and nihilistic—to the puppet in Igor Stravinsky's famous ballet. The poem, divided into six soliloquies, is based on the Second Tableau of the ballet, *Chez Pétrouchka* or *Pétrouchka's Room*.

The origin of this book? He says, "It all began listening to Yuja Wang on YouTube. She was playing Stravinsky's piano version of his ballet, *Petruschka*, a wonderful but difficult piece. Stravinsky wrote the thing but couldn't play it. He asked Arthur Rubenstein to do the job. As much as I love Rubenstein, Yuja Wang blows him away. I was so taken with the performance I decided to give the puppet a voice."

Ellen Hirning Schmidt has a new collection just released by Antrim House Books in May. It's called *Armed to the Teeth*, and in this book life's perils are faced courageously. The poet is armed with the powers of family, the natural world, and a strong heart full of love. More info about the book, how to order a copy, and some sample poems can be found at: <https://antrimhousebooks.com/schmidt.html>

Covid's Effects Captured in Poetry and Prose

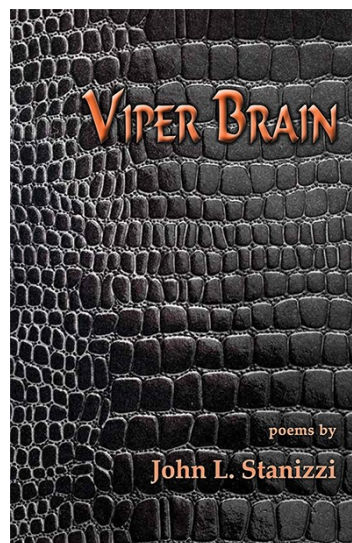
A new anthology, *Coming Out of Covid: A Celebration of Poetry, Prose and Community*, was launched at a party, Sunday, April 23, 2:00 p.m. at the South Windsor Public Library. The free event featured remarks by Senator **Dr. Saud Anwar**, readings, music, book sales and signings, and refreshments.

In late 2020, **Charles Margolis**, who was Poet Laureate of the town at that time, worked with the Poets Laureate of Manchester and Vernon (**Ryan Parker and Pegi Deitz Shea**, respectively) to organize live events in 2021 that asked community members to share their thoughts and feelings about the pandemic. The programs featured readings by the laureates and attendees, reflections written on index cards, music, and artwork. Topics included vaccines, actual infections, essential workers, and racial strife. The book gathers the pieces into a creative history, including photographs from the events and beautiful cover art by **Ria Saxena** and **Aldo Passarelli**.

"Some works are funny and encouraging and others are forged by despair," said **Lillian R. Handleman**, Steering Committee Chair. "But the common thread is the resilience of the human spirit, and the fortitude and courage our communities have mustered in the face of this unthinkable global pandemic."

Creatures on the Hunt: Vipers and Poets

When **John Stanizzi** speaks of his new book, *Viper Brain*, to be released in the fall of 2023, he compares poets to vipers. He says, "My comparison between the Gaboon viper and the poet is rather simple really. Each—the poet and the snake, really do spend most of their days functioning either like people or snakes, but only for a noticeably short time. The entire rest of the time these two creatures are on the hunt, the snake for prey, the poet for the potential poem. To succeed, their attention to what is around them must be on high alert at all times, or the prey, or the poem escapes—what an empty feeling." The book is available now for pre-ordering from Main Street Rag, the publisher.



Flowers in the Dark

Mark Saba's new poetry book, *Flowers in the Dark*, has been published by Kelsay Books. The rich, evocative poems depict landscapes of the heart, home, and time travels. To get a little preview, check out the book trailer at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tB3De-AIZpc>