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

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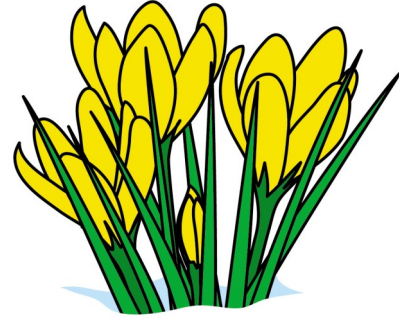
Newsletter: Ginny Connors

Publicity: David Cundy

POP Director: Jeanne LeVasseur

Chapter Liaison: Pat Mottola

Youth Outreach: Nancy Manning



Time to Renew Your Membership

Membership in the Connecticut Poetry Society runs from April 1 to March 31. We are now collecting renewals for membership. If you owe dues, you should have received an email from **Patti Fusco**, Membership Chair. Dues are \$30 per year (\$15 for students), and can be sent via PayPal (<http://ctpoetry.net/membership.html>) or via snail mail to Patti Fusco, Membership CPS, 311 Shingle Hill Road, West Haven, CT 06516.

Not sure if you owe dues? Email Patti at pwfusco@gmail.com.

President's Message

Poetry is alive and thriving in Connecticut! CPS has been prolific, as always. *Thank the god of Zoom!* POPs and MOMs continue to grow and attract new audiences. In February we offered our first "POPx" – Typography for Poets. Did you know that what is "not there" (white space) is just as important to your poem as what "is there" (text)?

There are more new and exciting things happening: President's Workshops are offered twice a month for you, dear members. Our new poetry reading/workshop/craft talk series, **con-neCTions**, is launching in March, bringing together poets from the U.S. North, South, East and West to read their work and offer craft workshops. We are planning our Spring Fling Gala (in person!) on June 5th. Save the date! And, don't forget to enter our amazing contests! You can even submit poems to be set to music via the Art Song Project. Check the CPS website ctpoetry.net and Facebook so you don't miss out on these opportunities.

So how are we able to accomplish all of this during a pandemic? I must recognize and give thanks to our outstanding CPS Board of Directors. *"Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well."*—**Voltaire**

I so appreciate the teamwork I witness in every meeting, every discussion, every committee. The board members work tirelessly. And endlessly. They are constantly brainstorming innovative ideas to bring you the best programs and opportunities. Indeed, the saying "Those

few who give allow many to thrive" is never more truly spoken than here.

In closing, let me say it's times like these that make us recognize our strongest passions and deeply experience our reactions to life, and to our place in the world. I close with a silent wish for peace and hope for the all the people of Ukraine. *"I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."*—**Albert Einstein**

Pat Mottola, President, CPS

I Ask You, What Is Question Poetry?

CPS Secretary/Treasurer Mark Sheridan explained his experimental poetic form, *question poetry*, in a recent TEDxHartford presentation. Curious? You can access the TED talk via YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/hNvsjeqJc6U>



William Meredith Foundation Awards Prize to CPS Member

Kudos to **Christie Max Williams**, who was one of two recipients of Awards for Poetry in 2022. The prize was awarded for his book *The Wages of Love*. The other poet, from Washington, D.C., was Anne Harding Woodworth.

Contest News

The **Nutmeg Contest**, a contest for Connecticut poets, was completed at the end of January. Congratulations to the winning poets and poems from this year's contest:

1st – Shellie Harwood for "Afterswarm"

2nd – Elaine Zimmerman for "Lullaby During Insurrection"

3rd – Sandy Carlson for "Take Her Coat"

Honorable mentions were awarded to **Catherine DeNunzio, Robert Claps** and **Srinivas Mandavilli**. Thank you to judge **Barb Jennes** and congratulations to all of the above poets; you can see the poems now on the CPS website.

The **Lynn DeCaro Competition**, a contest for Connecticut high school students, is currently underway with a submission period open through March 15. **Pit Pinegar** will judge the 2022 **Lynn DeCaro Competition**; student poets are encouraged to submit!

The submission period for the **Connecticut Poetry Award** will open on April 1; the 2022 contest will be judged by **Terry Blackhawk**. This contest is open to all poets and the winning poems will be published in *Connecticut River Review*.

Looking ahead, experimental poets may wish to begin thinking about the second **Experimental Poetry Contest** which, like last year's contest, will be judged by **Richard Deming** of Yale University. Submissions will open on June 15.

Visit the CPS website to get guidelines for these contests.

CPS members are also members of **NFSPS** (National Federation of State Poetry Societies). Among the benefits of this organization is the opportunity to submit to any or all of their 50 annual poetry contests, which accept entries from January 1 — March 15. They offer cash prizes large and small. We're always happy to see CPS members among the winners! More information can be found on their site.

http://www.nfsp.com/poetry_contests.htm

CPS connections Reading & Workshops

CPS is happy to present a reading with two award-winning poets, Brian Komei Dempster and Jennifer Franklin. This will take place on March 5 at 4 pm. Register here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0kd-qurlljE9FdEiadmJQsghdoEezPY4JY>

Connecticut River Review Is Now Open to Submissions

Connecticut River Review, the journal sponsored by CPS, is open to submissions through April 15. Although we accept poems from an international roster of poets, it is always a pleasure to include some work from Connecticut poets. Because of the multitude of submissions received, though, acceptance is very selective. Find your three best, unpublished poems and submit them soon! Look for guidelines on the CPS website or go to the Submittable site here:

<https://connecticutriverreview.submittable.com/>

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 2-4 pm. Masks required. 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
MarGarArts@mail.com

This online chapter welcomes CPS members interested in reading and writing haiku. Members of the group share haiku and senryu regularly.

Manchester

Matthew Borrelli
matthewborrelli296@gmail.com

Manchester's Wit and Wisdom group moved to a ZOOM format in February and will continue meeting on the second Saturday of each month. It is hoped that Face to Face meetings will resume soon.

Middletown

Pamela Guinan
860-563-5761
Pamela.cps@hotmail.com

New Haven

Laura Altshul
lauraaltshul130@gmail.com

The New Haven chapter has been meeting on the third Saturday of each month. Presently they meet via Zoom, for the safety of all members.

Pomfret

Christine Kalafus
CEKworks@charter.net

This chapter is resuming in-person meetings. Meetings will be held at the Pomfret Library, 449 Pomfret Street, from 7-9 pm on the second Monday of each month.

Ridgefield

Barb Jennes
barbiennes@gmail.com

This chapter will meet every fourth Saturday from 10 am to noon, via Zoom until the Ridgefield library re-opens. Email Barb to get the library registration page URL, which changes monthly. Interested CPS members can register on the library website (barbiennes@gmail.com); they will subsequently receive the Zoom link and an email address to which their poems should be sent.

Shoreline

The **Shoreline Chapter is not currently meeting.**

Southbury

Marion McGauhy
860-354-2157
Mcgauhy@aol.com

The Southbury chapter has become inactive.

Wilton

Ray Rauth
Rayrauth@optonline.net

The Wilton Workshop will meet from 10:30 until noon on the third Friday of each month, via Zoom. Registration will be through the Wilton Library. We are hoping to resume in-person meetings before long.

Poet in the Spotlight: Sharon Smith

Sharon Smith enjoyed reading poetry as a child, but didn't begin writing it until about five years ago. While taking a course on World Religions, she studied writings from the mystical branches of four religions. She found great beauty in the way poetry can express mystical thought. For her coursework she wrote her own poems drawing on concepts from each of the four religions she had been studying.

Since then, she's found a lot of satisfaction in her involvement with Connecticut Poetry Society. She says that she's learned a great deal by attending readings and participating in open mics, and she's especially appreciated attending her local chapter's monthly meetings, where members share and provide feedback on each other's work. She feels that CPS offers "a wonderful way to share little pieces of our deepest selves in a safe and supportive environment."

Smith writes about diverse topics. She's often drawn to write about ancestors, people she's known, places she's visited, and stories she's heard. Sometimes she uses poetry to express timeless truths. Art, music, literature, acts of kindness, and people enduring despite their difficulties lend inspiration.

Her own interests are varied. She practices and teaches yoga, continues with her husband to follow a favorite band, and likes to visit Cape Cod and also New Hampshire, where her son lives with his wife and daughter.



Smith responds positively to poems that are **heartfelt**, that present a story or message that have clearly moved the writer. She loves the poetry of Rumi and Hafiz, two amazing Sufi poets from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. She says, "their poems prove to me that the human condition, our capacity for joy and need to dance, is timeless." A more contemporary poet whose work she loves is Dana Faulds, who writes poetry that speaks to the experience of yoga. In her capacity as a yoga instructor, Smith reads from Faulds' work at the end of each class. Alice Walker's work is high on Smith's list, and she's currently reading books by two CPS members: **Tom Nicotera's** *What Better Place to Be Than Here?* and **Ginny Connors' Without Good-byes**. Amanda Gorman's *Call Us What We Carry* is another poetry book she's presently enjoying.

The way poetry moves right to the emotional center of an issue is something Smith truly appreciates. She loves the way it can express deep feelings in surprisingly few words.

Riverwood Poetry Series

The Riverwood Poetry Series continues to offer a variety of fine poetry programs. These events are offered via Zoom at 7 pm. You must register to participate.

March 8: **Meghan Dahn** and **Matthew Saylor** will present a reading

April 12: well-known poet **Alicia Ostriker** is the featured reader

May 10: The Connecticut Book Award finalists and winner will share some of their work: **Benjamin Grossberg, Cortney Davis, Jason Labbe, Gray Jacobik, and Danielle Vogel.**

An open mic is available at these readings. For information go to

<https://www.realartways.org/event/riverwood-poetry-series-tue-march-8-22/>

Riverwood will also present a reading during the April 22 Earth Day Celebration at Real Art Ways in Harford, starting at 3 pm that day.

Poets for a Greener World

Connecticut Literary Festival, Riverwood Poetry Series, and Real Art Ways will sponsor activities on Earth Day, April 22, at Real Art Ways in Hartford. There will be panels, discussions, readings, book tables, and food trucks. Readings by twelve poets featured in the anthology *Waking Up to the Earth* begin at 3 pm. At 4 pm **David K. Leff** will moderate a panel on Teaching the Writing of Poetry About Nature and Climate Emergency.

Jon Andersen, Clare Rossini, Julien Strong, and **Rhonda Ward** will be panelists.

AT 5:30, **Margaret Gibson** will moderate a discussion with **Syma Ebbins** and **Eric Hammerling** on poetry and science, exploring ways that science knowledge can amplify poetry of the natural world.

Connecticut poets **Daniel Donaghy, Benjamin Grossberg, Frederick Douglass Knowles, Rennie McQuilkin,** and **Margaret Nelson** will share some poetry at 6:30.

The evening will finish with a reading and conversation between **Margaret Gibson** and **Daniel Donaghy**, beginning at 7:30.

Byrd's Books Spring Poetry Series

Byrd's Books is offering four nights of poetry this spring. The March 11th event is virtual and begins at 7 pm. It includes **Marilyn Nelson**, former Poet Laureate of Connecticut, **Rick Magee**, Bethel's new poet laureate, and four other authors. Dates for the other programs are April 22, May 1, and May 22, and are likely to be in person or hybrid events. Fabulous poets and authors such as **Laurel Peterson, David K. Leff, Donna Marie Merritt, Cortney Davis,** and **Brian Clements** will be participating. Find out more at

<https://www.byrdsbooks.com/spring-poetry-series-2022>

CPS Member Publishes New Chapbook

Lois Mathieu has published her second chapbook: *Ribbons of Light*. In this collection she takes readers past hardship and loss into a landscape of redemption and joy.

More Events for CT High School Students

Mark Sheridan will present a talk on the poetry of Sylvia Plath on April 2. On April 30, students can participate in a virtual open mic, sharing their original poems. In addition, CPS sponsors the DeCaro Poetry Prize for Connecticut high school poets—submissions will be accepted through March 15. See the CPS web site or contact our Youth Outreach Coordinator, Nancy Manning at nmanning@region16ct.org for more information.

Look for **Nancy Manning's** new book later this spring: *The Unspoken of Our Days*, which will be published by Antrim House Books.

Wintonbury Poetry Series

Two award-winning Connecticut poets will be featured in Wintonbury's virtual program on March 17 at 7 pm. The poets are **Ginny Lowe Connors** and **Geri Radasci**. Each of these poets has published several poetry collections. Ginny Lowe Connors will share poems from her new book, *Without Goodbyes*, which focuses on Joanna Kellogg and her siblings, who were taken in a raid at Deerfield Village early in the 1700s and raised in a Mohawk community in Canada. Geri Radasci's most recent work is *My Oarsman*, which is a tribute to her late husband, John E Radasci. An Open Mic will follow the featured poets; sign up during registration or email Mara Whitman to participate. (mwhitman@libraryconnection.info) Go to <https://bplct.evanced.info/signup/> to register for this program.

POPs: Poets on Poetry

CPS members enjoy the opportunities offered by our POP programs. Our first spring offering is a program about **Patricia Jabbeh Wesley**, a Liberian poet. The moderator will be **Joyce Ashuntantang**. This program will take place on March 24 at 7 pm.

Patricia Jabbeh Wesley is an award-winning poet, literary scholar, and professor of Creative Writing and African Literature. She was born in Monrovia, Liberia, and raised there. In 1991, Wesley immigrated to the United States to escape the Liberian civil war. This war, which lasted fourteen years, helped shape her writing as a Diaspora African woman in the United States. She is the author of six books of poetry and her work has been translated into several other languages.

Moderator Joyce Ashuntantang is a Cameroonian born, award-winning poet, creative writer and Professor of English and African Literature at the University of Hartford. She has appeared as an invited poet in many countries around the world including England, Germany, Nicaragua, Greece, Costa Rica, Colombia, Bangladesh, Cameroon and USA.

The POPs series will continue on April 21 at 7 pm with **Frederick Douglas Knowles** presenting a program on Hafiz, a Persian lyric poet.

On May 2 at 7 pm, **Aaron Caycedo-Kimura** will host a discussion on **Lawson Fusao Inada**, a Japanese-American poet.

Celebrate Irish Heritage...or Just Some Good Poetry

On Sunday, March 13 at 4 pm, the *Poetry Rocks* Series at Arts Center East in Vernon will host two adult and two high school poets.

Nancy Kerrigan is the author of *Lucky Enough: A Journey* as well as other poetry collections. **Garret Phelan** is the author of *Outlaw Odes*, among other books. Rockville High School seniors **Samara Mercado** and **Natalie Tolman**, both of Irish descent, have been recognized by the Scholastic Arts & Writing Awards. An Open Mic follows the featured poets, and a \$5 donation is requested. Arts Center East is located at 709 Hartford Turnpike in Vernon.

James Abraham Hillhouse: A Hillhouse Education

Reflections on a Literary Advocate of the 1800s by Dennis Barone, a Contemporary Poet and Literary Advocate

If you have visited New Haven, Connecticut, you may have walked through the Hillhouse Avenue historic district, and even if you did not, you certainly would have noticed Yale's Kline Biology Tower designed by Phillip Johnson Associates, rising high above the city. Here on this rise once stood the palatial estate of James Abraham Hillhouse (1789-1841), known as Sachem's Wood, built in 1829 and razed in 1942. James Abraham's father had been a prominent politician, a local land-developer, and treasurer of Yale College for fifty years.

Hillhouse senior had severe financial setbacks due in part to the Embargo of 1807, and at about this time, his son graduated from Yale.

Three years later upon receiving a master's degree, the younger Hillhouse delivered an oration titled, "The Education of a Poet," in which he claimed, "But every precept which has been given will be ineffectual in forming the mind of the poet unless, aloof from the world, much of his time be passed in solitude and reflection." No doubt, the park-like grounds of his extensive estate provided opportunity for poetic reflection. In a poem entitled "Sachem's Wood," he wrote about New Haven: "I've seen the world, from side to side, / Walked in the ways of human pride, / Mused in palaces of kings, / And know what wealth to grandeur brings; / The spot for *me*, of all the earth, / Is this, the dear one of my Birth."

After Yale, he lived briefly in Boston and New York and traveled in Europe. While in New York, he met his future wife, Cornelia Lawrence, an heiress, whose family presented the son-in-law with a large tract of land in New Haven. James Abraham became a land-developer both for commercial and residential properties. Along with the architects Ithiel Town and Alexander Jackson Davis, Hillhouse turned this section of the city into one of the most picturesque in America.

Yet, he also sought the callings of a man of wealth, leisure, and artistic interests. In addition to his poem *Sachem's Wood*, other works of his mystical romanticism include *Percy's Masque*, *Haddad*, and *The Judgment, A Vision*.

A quarter-century after his Yale oration, he delivered a discourse at the Brooklyn Lyceum "on the Relations of Literature to a Republican

Government.” Much of what he said sounds similar to today’s arguments for the study of the humanities, the liberal arts more generally, or the often claimed necessity for education in a democratic republic.

Such public lectures were a popular form of entertainment at the time. In this one, Hillhouse bemoaned that respect for letters had fallen in America and that “*Politics and the Love of Money* control our hearts, and direct our energies, with an exclusiveness not elsewhere found.” He asked his audience, “are money-making, and political wrangling about trifles, to constitute our only business? As if this were the purpose for which Heaven has entrusted us with the World’s great problem.” He concluded his talk with words that are fit advice for today: “Without able *writers*, who identify themselves with no section, sect, or party, there can be no incorruptible tribunal of public opinion [...]. All is left to the wild, conflicting jargon of the party press — where each side confirms itself in error, and denies and discredits whatever is repugnant to its interests or its prejudices.” Oh, to find balance; not just in writing, but in life itself.

Dennis Barone’s new book is *A Field Guide to the Rehearsal*. He is the editor of *Garnet Poems: An Anthology of Connecticut Poetry Since 1776*.

A Poem for Today and Tomorrow

Poetry in Time of War

Rosalind Brackenbury

I want to forget their names, the generals,
advisors, puppet rulers,
the puffed-up and the brought-low,

I want not to know them,
not hear their plans, their excuses,
the President and the President's men,
the Pope with his white smoke for voodoo,

the suits, ties, teeth, insignia,
the guns, the names of trucks and weapons.

I want to forget them all,
to be washed of them,
to begin again: where no one knows who
anyone is,
or what he believes.

To give my attention to:
frangipani leaves uncurling,
the smell of jasmine,
one person helping another across a street;

to the seeds,
to the beginnings; to one clear word for which
there is no disguise and no alternative.



(If only we could...)