

**The Connecticut
Poetry Society
Newsletter**

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

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

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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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Secretary: Amy Graver

Treasurer: Patti Fusco

Membership: Patti Fusco

Contests: Kathleen McIntosh

Webmaster: Tony Fusco

CRR Editors: Ginny Connors, Debbie Gilbert, & John Surowiecki

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

POP Director: B. Fulton Jennes

Chapter Liaison: Pat Mottola



Summer Gathering at Blackstone Library

In July several dozen CPS members connected and reconnected at the beautiful Blackstone Library in Branford. Members received their copies of *Connecticut River Review*, everyone enjoyed the bountiful food, and an open mic allowed many people to share a poem with the appreciative crowd. Stay tuned for information on a fall festival event, which is in the early planning stages.



President's Message

Hello dear CPS Members!

How quickly the seasons change – summer's end already near! What doesn't change is our appreciation for poetry and for each other. I would like to personally welcome all new CPS members! Did you know that the President's Workshops, held on Sunday evenings via Zoom, is open to new members who don't yet have a group of writers to belong to? CPS workshops provide encouragement and support each other's drafts by giving thoughtful feedback and suggestions for revision. Please let me know if you are interested in participating.

As always, our Board is working to plan exciting offerings for you this fall and spring, including another Ekphrastic Museum Project. Check your emails for updates, as well as listings this newsletter. By the way, we are always looking for great new venues for our social events, so if you know of an event space in your area that would host our gatherings let me know! ctpoetryline@gmail.com.

Everyone should have received their copy of this year's outstanding *Connecticut River Review*. It's a super issue! These editors have outdone themselves! Consider ordering a copy for a friend.

Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar. — Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry and Other Essays*.

I look forward to seeing you all soon!

Pat Mottola, President

Connecticut Poetry Society

Craft Books You Love

Thanks go to all who participated in our survey of your favorite poetry craft books – those books you turn to over and over again, the ones that have contributed most to growth and depth in your own writing! Here are some of your favorite titles:

A Poetry Handbook by Mary Oliver; *The Poet's Companion* by Kim Addonizio & Dorianne Laux; *The Art of Description* by Mark Doty; *Writing the Australian Crawl* by William Stafford; *The Triggering Town: Essays on Poetry* by Richard Hugo; *The Making of a Poem* by Mark Strand & Eavan Boland; and *Poetic Medicine* by John Fox. We welcome more suggestions from you!

Middletown Chapter Resumes

We've missed you! After a long hiatus, the Middletown Chapter will resume under the direction of CPS President **Pat Mottola**. If you are from the Middletown area, and would like to participate in the workshop, or if you have any questions, please email Pat at ctpoetryline@gmail.com.

Poetry in the Preserve

The Wilton Chapter of CPS, the Wilton Land Trust, and the Wilton Library will present the second annual "Poetry in the Preserve" on Saturday, October 21st at 2 pm. The event, with readings from chapter members followed by an open mic, will be held at 77 Tito Lane in Wilton, a small quiet preserve in North Wilton. The Wilton Library web site will have additional information. Please register on the library site.

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

Michael Garry
mgarry1955@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. Meetings recently have been via Zoom, but soon we'll conduct some meetings in person. Email Debbie to submit your poem for critique and to receive the Zoom link or info on where we'll meet. 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 Manchester Historical Society, 175 Pine Street in Manchester.

Middletown

Pat Mottola
ctpoeetryline@gmail.com

This chapter is resuming. Contact Pat for information on how to participate.

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.

Contest News

Winners of the **2023 Connecticut Poetry Award**, judged by **Dolores Hayden**, were announced in June:

First Place: **Kaecey McCormick**

Second Place: **Laura Rodley**

Third Place: **Diane Hueter**

Congratulations to these poets; see their winning poems at the CPS website. <https://www.ctpoetry.net/connecticut-poetry-award.html>.

The **2023 Experimental Poetry Contest** received submissions during the summer and is again being judged by **Richard Deming** of Yale. Watch for the contest results forthcoming on the CPS website.

The **Vivian Shipley Award**, which will be judged this year by Connecticut's 8th Poet Laureate, **Antionette Brim-Bell**, is currently underway. First prize is \$1000; submissions are open through September. Open to all poets! Submit here:

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

Looking ahead, the **2024 Nutmeg Contest** will open on December 1; all Connecticut poets are welcome to submit and CPS members may submit for free.

CPS Members Recognized in Contests Sponsored by National Federation of State Poetry Societies

Several CPS members who entered the annual NFSPS group of poetry contests won recognition after competing with poets from around the country. Congratulations to **Anita Dees**, who took third place in the Jessica C. Saunders Memorial Award and was cited with an honorable mention in another contest. Praise also goes to **Elaine Zimmerman**, who garnered three honorable mentions, **Any Narwocki** who was recognized with two honorable mentions, and **Tony Fusco**, who also earned an honorable mention.

Monthly Open Mic Resumes

Monthly Open Mic—or MOM—will take place each month at 7 pm, usually on the last Friday of the month. Feel free to join in on Friday, September 29, Friday October 27, and Thursday (to avoid the Thanksgiving weekend), November 30.

These open mics are relaxing, informal readings by any CPS members who wish to share their work. Reminder emails and registration links will be sent to all members a week before each MOM.

Artist Fellowship Program

Luisa Caycedo-Kimura was among this year's recipients of awards through the Connecticut Office of the Arts Artist Fellowship Program. She won an Emerging Recognition Award.

The program provides recognition and funding support for Connecticut artists to pursue new work and advance their artistic careers.

Poet in the Spotlight: Debbie Gilbert

Debbie Gilbert leads the Farmington Valley chapter of the Connecticut Poetry Society. A chapbook she's written, *[M]AR[Y]*, has just been released by Kelsay Books, and she is the author of several other poetry collections.

Her primary motivation for writing is the wish to learn. She says, "Poetry uncovers what's unknown and connects me to the unexpected." A graduate of Wesleyan University with a major in chemistry, she enjoys experimentation and research—and she's able to apply these skills during her writing process.

She started writing seriously about a decade ago after a traumatic event which she relates in her very moving chapbook *Ransom*. The spirit of self-discovery helped her develop the collections found in her books *Once the Earth had Two Moons* and *imagine the small bones*, both of which take a deep dive into personal transformation. *Imagine the small bones* also brings artwork into conversation with poetry; many of the paintings which inspired the poems are reproduced within the book.

Lately, Gilbert has used her writing to explore beyond her own life, writing fictional stories in verse. These are series of poems linked to a narrative. She says, "These stories are inspired by historical incidents and fictional characters from Ireland, my ancestry. One chapbook, *Deirdre*, is forthcoming mid-December. Two others are still in the works—*Finches in Kilmainham* and *Misneach* which means 'courage' in Irish, which is what it takes to recount some of these disturbing histories." For guidance,

courage, and inspiration, she turns to her current favorite poets: Eamon Grennan, Seamus Heaney, Patrick Kavanagh, and Eavan Boland. Their work is "intimate and tender despite uncertainty."

Debbie Gilbert has found the friendship, support, and education she has needed to develop her poetry through the Connecticut Poetry Society, as well as from her involvement in the Riverwood Poetry Series and several workshop groups.



Debbie Gilbert

Manchester Chapter Hosts Poetry Corner

The Wit and Wisdom Club of Manchester will be posting a poem monthly from one of its members on the Work_Space Gallery website. The monthly poem will be displayed at the gallery and at Mary Cheney Library in town. The goal is to let community members know that the group, as part of CPS, is an expanding and inclusive resource for sharing poetry.

Connecticut River Review Virtual Launch

By now members of CPS should have received their copies of *Connecticut River Review*. Reading poems on the page allows for careful and close attention to the work, but hearing poems in the voices of the poets who wrote them adds special resonance to the poetry. That opportunity will occur on September 10th, when CRR holds a book (or journal) launch including many of the contributors to the 2023 issue.

There will be two events, one taking place at 11 am and the other occurring at 7 pm, with different readers in each session. There will be time for discussion at the end of each session.

To attend, you must register in advance. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with information about joining the meeting.

Register for the morning session here:

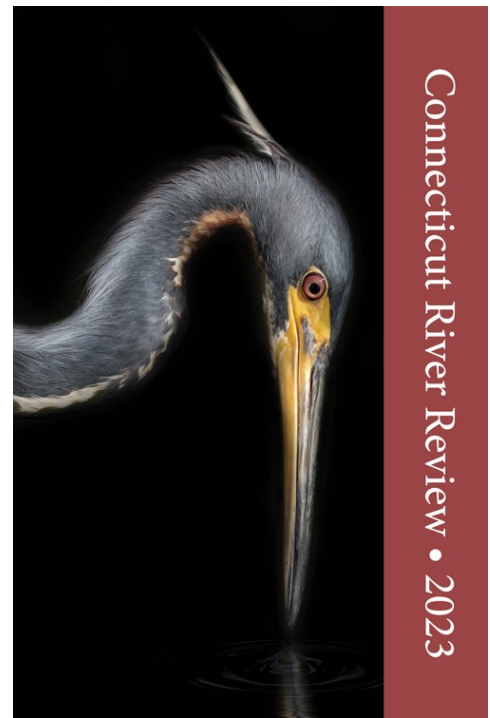
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUpcOGqqDgrHtQR_wlpoxJY-l1rZynjA-0f

Register for the evening session here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEtcuCopzsvHtRq03hSD9MgjUEcom-7fjES>

Book Launch for Two Poets

Sharon Smith and **Debbie Gilbert** will host a poetry book launch at the Hoppin Gallery of the Barney Library, 71 Main Street, Farmington, on Saturday, October 28, from 1-3 pm, featuring *reflection* by **Sharon Smith** and *[M]AR[Y]* by **Debbie Gilbert**. Ample parking is available off of Church Street.



Honors for Barb Jennes

CPS Board Member **Barb Jennes** was recently honored with award recognition for two poems. The first was the 55th New Millennium Award for Poetry for her poem "Father to Son," in which Jennes imagines the kind of "soft" advice her father—who wanted a son but got three daughters instead—would have given to her were she born a boy. Jennes also earned a finalist nod for this year's Lascaux Prize with her poem "Not," which also placed second in the 2019 *Connecticut River Review* Contest, judged by the late Leslie McGrath.

Fall POP (Poets on Poetry) Presentations

Join us for these upcoming CPS Poets on Poetry events, hosted on Zoom:

In Praise of the Praise Poem with JP

Howard, Saturday, September 23 at 7 pm.

This workshop will explore the praise poem, beginning with a discussion of exemplary works. Participants will then respond to prompts supplied by poet-moderator **JP Howard** in reimagining how to praise objects, people, emotions, art, poetry, and—of course—ourselves. **JP Howard** is a poet, educator, literary activist, curator, and community builder. Her debut poetry collection *SAY/MIRROR* was a Lambda Literary finalist.

Writing Survivance: Contemporary Indigenous Voices with Cheryl Savageau, on Saturday, October 21 at 7 pm. **Cheryl Savageau** is a writer, poet, and educator of Abenaki descent. Her collection *Dirt Road Home* was a finalist for the Paterson Poetry Prize and was also nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. She will present on leading voices in indigenous poetry, including poets from the New England region.

Shake It Up! Mirror Poems & Other Quirky

Forms with Ginny Connors, on Thursday,

November 16 at 7 pm. Imagine a poem you can read left to right, up and down, backwards, or even diagonally. They exist! Join us as

Ginny Connors, author of four full-length poetry collections, publisher of Grayson Books, and co-editor of *Connecticut River Review*, offers a closer look at an assortment of quirkily crafted poems.

Contact POP Director **Barb Jennes** with questions or suggestions:

barbjennes@gmail.com

Afghan Sisters Publish Their First Book in the English Language

CPS President **Pat Mottola**, longtime mentor of Afghan women living in Afghanistan, is pleased to announce the publication of *Maybe I Should Fly*, a collection of poems written by two of her most recent mentees – Afghan sisters **Shafiqah and Farida Labib** – who grew up during civil war and the Taliban period, witnessing violations against Afghan women and deprivation of their basic human rights. Mottola wrote the foreword for the book. Copies are available through Grayson Books, Amazon, or your local bookseller. All profits go directly to the girls. For more information contact Pat at ctpoetryline@gmail.com. A special live Zoom reading is planned for the Fall. More details will be forthcoming.

New Books by CPS Members

Ansonia resident and CPS member **Timothy Stobierski** recently released his first book of poetry through Antrim House. The collection, *Dancehall*, explores universal themes of love, lust, longing, and loss—presented through the lens of his own experience as a queer man. Billed as “A queer love story in five acts,” its message is universal. It is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or from your local book seller.

A new chapbook by **D. Walsh Gilbert** has just been released. The chapbook, *[M]AR [Y]*, focuses on her 91-year-old aunt’s relocation to an assisted living facility. It’s available from Kelsay Books.

Notable Connecticut Poets Featured in Riverwood Series

The Riverwood Poetry Series will host Connecticut State Poet Laureate **Antoinette Brim-Bell** on Wednesday, September 13 at 7 pm. This will take place at Real Art Ways, 56 Arbor Street, in Harford. An open mic will precede the featured poet. Brim-Bell is a Cave Canem Foundation Fellow and the author of three full-length poetry collections.

On October 11 at 7 pm, **Rennie McQuilkin** and **Clare Rossini** will share some of their poems. As always, an open mic will be part of the program. **Rennie McQuilkin** was our state's Poet Laureate from 2015-2018. He has authored many poetry collections. McQuilkin co-founded the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival which filled the grounds of the Hill-Stead Museum with poetry lovers during many summers. He is also the publisher of Antrim House Books. **Clare Rossini**, the author of several poetry collections, has served as Artist-in-Residence at Trinity College in Hartford.

Rose Garden Reading in Elizabeth Park

The annual Rose Garden Reading in Elizabeth Park will take place on September 9 at 3 pm. Featured readers are **Frederick-Douglass Knowles II** and **Aaron Caycedo-Kimura**. **Frederick Douglass Knowles II** is the inaugural Poet Laureate of Hartford and the author of *Black Rose City*. He is a professor at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich. **Aaron Caycedo-Kimura** is the author of two poetry collections. Among his honors are a MacDowell Fellowship and a

Pinsky Global Fellowship in Poetry.

2023 Wallace Stevens Prize and scholarship winner **Asia Hamilton** will also be invited to read a poem. This reading is sponsored by the Friends & Enemies of Wallace Stevens with the cooperation of the Elizabeth Park Conservancy.

Beat Poets

Patricia Martin has been named the State of Connecticut Beat Poet Laureate. Her tenure is to last from 2023-2025. She is the author of six nonfiction books and two poetry collections. She joined other past and present national and international Beat Poets Laureate during a festival and awards ceremony celebrating beat poets from around the globe on September 1st at the Canton Town Hall.

The Beat Generation was a literary movement that began after the Second World War and is known for its liberal attitudes toward life. In the words of writer Jack Kerouac, "Beat Poetry gives a voice to everyone. It is the epitome of free verse using your own form, your own rules, to express your own ideas on love, life, and the world."

WordHouse Reading

On September 30 at 2 pm the WordHouse Reading Series will feature two outstanding poets: **Brad Davis** and **Sally Van Doren**. This free event will take place at Noah Webster House, 227 S. Main St. in West Hartford. For more information, contact Jim at

JforJames@aol.com .