

WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

11.4. November 2011

Dear Wordsmiths and Friends,

I'm wondering whether this winter will ever conclude! We get freezing days followed by temperatures in the high 20s or even over 30 and then down again to icy winds.

I'm sure it is all tied up with the Climate Change and that we need to brace ourselves for more extreme weather. A group from our church are doing a study of *Darwin, Divinity and the Dance of the Cosmos* by Bruce Sanguin. I am finding it fascinating as, although he admits the problem, he is really hopeful that we can come out of the ecological mess we are in. Each person in our group is selecting a local endangered species to research and be concerned about. A small thing but the best things and ideas start small.

I have also thoroughly enjoyed reading Catherine Bateson's collection of poetry called *Marriage for Beginners*. Catherine led a most instructive and challenging workshop for us at the October meeting and tells me she also enjoyed it and will be happy to come again. We appreciate her generosity.

PAST MEETINGS AND EVENTS

This has been a busy three months. Twelve attended the August 13th, Wordsmiths meeting led by **Maree Silver** who used a selection from the Australian poets Colin Thiele, Dorothea McKellar, Bruce Dawe and Judith Wright to introduce the session. On September 10th, attended by 14, **Sue Donnelly** led, reading poems from *Hugs to Comfort* by John William Smith, G.A. Myers and LeAnn Weif about being in the now and being grateful for that.

Our October workshop led by **Catherine Bateson** was attended by 16 people, including new member **Jenny Liu**.

Catherine worked us hard doing a series of interesting exercises -

1. write an ode using a word and try to compare it with its opposite.
2. write a poem about a poem/s
3. take a word and break it down into its components and construct a poem
e.g. compassionate = compassion, passion, passionate, ate, compass. Try to use each word in the poem.

She then gave us a lot of ideas on how to get past those "blank" page days and begin to write.

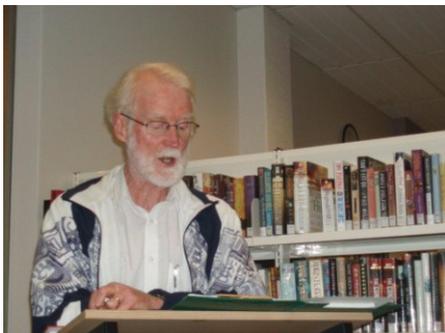
In August several of us joined **Kathryn and Conrad Hamann** as Conrad led us on an **Architecture tour** in the city. Starting at St Patrick's Cathedral, we surveyed the European style of its layout with small chapels half circling the altar end and reveled in the glow of ambient light from the windows. In contrast St Peter's Eastern Hill seemed very dark. We gradually processed down via Collins St, learning to look up more than usual to notice architectural details as Conrad pointed them out, to St Paul's Cathedral, ending at Collected Works Bookshop briefly before going on to



Federation Square for the FAW Reading in which Kathryn was a Featured Reader.

In September too, we had another **Reading at the Library in Box Hill**. This was not so well attended as the weather was bleak and I did not have time for my usual phone calls. (I am wondering if there is someone in the group who would be prepared to do this sort of publicity for these regular readings?) Those who came had a treat as our guest

reader was **David Campbell** (below) who writes both bush (rhyming) poetry and unrhyming. He also reads very well giving due weight to his words and the result is a most enjoyable experience.



In **September and October** (as Barbara Rautman was unable to do it this year) I led **poetry days at Wellspring**. Though the group was small we all found it an enjoyable and profitable day as we listened to poetry and each others' responses to it. Though I collected all the poems for the first day I asked people to forward me their choices for the second day and this gave us a broader range of poems to share.

In October too, we had a **reading at Collected Works Bookshop** in the city. It was disappointing that we had such a small audience but those there thoroughly enjoyed the occasion. Kris put on wine and nibbles to make us welcome and most of us splurged on books from this most fascinating of bookshops. If we do it again we might settle for an evening during the week.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Our last two meetings for the year will be on November 12th and December 10th at the home of Carolyn & Stan Vimpani, 8 Woodhouse Rd East Doncaster.

Joan Ray has agreed to lead us on November 12th, so it should be a fruitful time for those who can go.

For the December 10th meeting, to be led by **Cath Barnard**, you might like to come at 1pm with some food to share, to have a pre-Christmas celebration.

Date	Leader	Afternoon tea
Nov. 12th	Joan	Don, Cecily, Sharlee
Dec. 10th	Cath B	Everyone bring a plate

POETICA CHRISTI PRESS NEWS

As our Managing Editor, Janette, has had to spend several weeks in Brisbane looking after her brother, closely followed by some weeks in Central Australia with the Year Tens from Mt Evelyn Christian School, the committee has suggested holding over the release of the next anthology **HORIZONS** until February/March next year.

Meanwhile, Leigh, Maree and Janette have been editing a collection by **Graham Leo**, Principal of Emmanuel Christian College on the Gold Coast, due out in time for Christmas. It's called **Just glimpses, really** and



is full of marvellous poems. You'll be able to order your copy around mid December.

YOU WILL NOTICE YOU'VE BEEN SENT A CATALOGUE OF ALL OUR BOOKS, WHICH WE HOPE YOU WILL USE TO ORDER SOME OF OUR BOOKS, WHICH WOULD MAKE LOVELY CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

MEMBER NEWS

We are very sad to report the **death of Nel Lewis**, one of our early members. She and Marj Kosky joined in 1990 when we published our first book. Nel had been a Social Worker and wrote very strong feisty poems about people. She lived in Mirboo North for a number of years but we had kept in touch and she was still thinking poems right up to the end (see Poets Corner where you will also find the short poem I wrote as a tribute which was read at her funeral). We extend our condolences to her family in particular her daughter Margaret.

Our prayers are with **Sue Donnelly** and her husband who are working very hard to render their house habitable again after a fire! We wish them renewal of strength for this massive task.

We've missed **Cecily Falkingham** at our meetings, as she has been travelling overseas but has also had a knee reconstruction. We hope to see her at a meeting before the end of the year.

Joan Ray is hoping to go to Canberra for the launch of a book by her daughter in law, a biography of Joan's mother with a focus on her art work. She was responsible for the design of the first edition of decimal stamps.

We **congratulate Kathryn Hamann** whose poem, *-kuing the Rex* has been included in the best Australian Poems of 2011. Well done Kathryn! And congratulations to **Marlene Marburg**, who had four of her poems taking up the Poetry section of *Eureka Street* on October 31st. You can read them and the many responses she had by going to this link: <http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aid=28807>

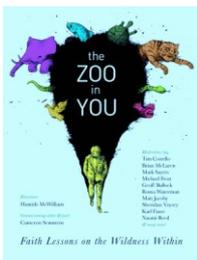
We're delighted that several of our Wordsmiths have been shortlisted for the CALEB Award for Christian writers:

Well done **Sue Donnelly**, whose manuscript was shortlisted for the Unpublished Manuscript award.

Congratulations to **Janette Fernando** for her editing which has seen *Everyday Splendour* shortlisted for the poetry prize.

Congratulations also to **Kathryn Hamann!** Her latest book, *A Slight Fuzzing of Perspective* has also been shortlisted for the poetry prize.

And well done to **Cameron Semmens** who has his book *Give a man a fish* shortlisted for the Reviewers section. He is also launching a new book *The Zoo in you* which is available from December 2nd at www.webcameron.com



VALE AILEEN KELLY

We were also saddened last week by the **death of Aileen Kelly**.

Aileen grew up in England, graduated from Cambridge University and spent most of her adult life in Melbourne, where she was an adult



*educator. Her poetry won the Mary Gilmore Award and the Vincent Buckley Prize, and was shortlisted for the Anne Elder and the Victorian Premier's Poetry awards. She led Poetry Workshops for the Wordsmiths on two occasions, each very fruitful and stimulating. I had the stretching exercise of doing a series of workshops with her at her home a few years ago and Janette was delighted to have her launch her book *Two Edged*. She also won First Prize for poem in *Reflecting on Melbourne*. We will miss her as a one of Melbourne's finest poets and as a generous encourager of The Wordsmiths. (See her poem in Poets Corner).*

COMPETITIONS

The **Geelong Writers verse** and short story competitions have been extended to 20 November. Prizes of \$100 for Short Stories (1500 words max. on the theme of 'Horoscope') and for Poems (40 lines max. no set theme). Send in the entry, along with a cheque or money order for \$5 per entry, to Writing Competition, Geelong Writers Inc., PO Box 1306, Geelong 3220. The winner will now be announced on 27 November.

Poetry Matters invites submissions. Send 4-6 poems and s.s.a.e. for prompt reply. Payment is one copy of issue in which work appears. Send to Cheryl Howard, 61 Palmer Crescent, Newham Vic 3442. Enquiries: poetrymatters@optusnet.com.au

Blue Giraffe - Closing dates February and August annually. Selection is ongoing. Up to 5 poems not previously in print or electronic media and not under offer petermacrow@hotmail.com or, with SSAE or email contact for reply, to Peter Macrow, 6/16 Osborne Street, Sandy Bay, TAS 7005

DIARY OF EVENTS

Saturday, November 12th: 2-5pm: Wordsmiths Meeting at 8 Woodhouse Rd, Doncaster East.

Saturday, December 10th: 1-5pm: Wordsmiths meeting at 8 Woodhouse Rd, East Doncaster. Come at 1 pm with a plate to share for lunch.

February 11th: First meeting for 2012

POETS' CORNER



Skin Deep

I find myself sitting beside a decorated man:
no medals for acts of gallantry,
no bright colours nor extravagant jewellery,
but vibrant paintings adorn his skin.

I've never thought of my skin as a page, or
canvas.

Holy monks killed calves to make vellum,
writing the very words of God
on the skins of hornèd creatures.

The Nazis used Jewish skin
to make lampshades and purses.
Ancient Picts daubed with blue
terrified the Romans.

I've only ever used my skin
to keep me in.
I shrug disdain at my barbarian companion,
but Isaiah reminds me of the Word made flesh:

"See, I will not forget you", says the Lord.
"I have carved you on the palm of my hand".

© Graham Leo (from *Just Glimpses, Really*)

Old friend

'It's just my wretched body'
you say reassuring,
agasp on my doorstep,
eyes jaunty as ever
in their purple carrels.

Well truthfully old friend I find
as I bag your bones into a chair,
prop your stick handy,
discreetly check
I've got your daughter's number
and urge the jug to boil

Well truthfully I wasn't
instantly concerned
for the state of your soul

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Nel's Last Words

Hi God
Please help my writing
although you can do anything, even read mine!

Selfishly today I'm praying for myself.
Please help my sight
and make me able to control my hands.

No dark clouds. No freezing wind.
No whipping wind. Today the gentle breeze
Fluffly white clouds in a clear blue sky.
We need both to enjoy it'
Thank you God.

Once
Words denied
Always in my head
Dreams
Love
Chuckles
Laughter
Sorrow
Tears
Once
Goodbye © Nel Lewis

NEL LEWIS

Not
Elegant, but
Loveable

Loving
Eagerly
Watching
Insightful
Steady *jmsd.*

MOON

The moon is a soft white armchair
to fall back in
plump the cushions
clutch heartily a sweet
delight of warm cocoa
dream big and large
above the stars
of forgetfulness
watch planes fly by at right angles
carrying only

other people's problems

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