



WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

14.3

August, 2014

Well, we can't say that winter isn't upon us here in Melbourne. The trees are stripped bare, the wind chill feels as though it's straight off the Antarctic ice-shelf and Melbournians are rugged up in coats, boots, gloves, beanies and scarves.

But who's complaining? Probably not poets. Poets love this weather, don't they? It's an excuse to walk in the rain, watch birds flock across a winter sky, or feel the crunch of ice underfoot. Winter is an invitation to sit by the fire or behind glass with the heating turned up, slippers on and a cuppa at the ready...and write about this beautiful season of the year that can be so stark and severe yet incredibly warming and encouraging.

In this winter edition, Greg Burns has contributed a write up of the June launch of *A Lightness of Being* – the latest anthology from Poetica Christi Press; Cath Barnard has reviewed the launch of Cathy Altman's *Circumnavigation*; Joan Ray has written a delightful piece about rediscovering her mother's bird illustrations; and Cameron Semmens talks about poetry in translation – a visit to Timor-Leste on behalf of Word Vision.

Enjoy all that winter has to offer – the season and poetry go hand in glove. Leigh Hay

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Date	Leader	Afternoon tea duty
Aug 9th	Carolyn	Greg/Cath/Sue
Sept 13th	Leigh	Jean/Janette/Don
Oct 11 th	Greg	David/Cecily/Joan

PAST MEETINGS

At the May Wordsmiths, Sue Donnelly led and read from a selection of poems that spoke of God's constancy. Joan Ray led the June meeting and read a selection of poems from Judith Wright's 'Birds', including *Black Swans*, *Dotterel* and *Reminiscence*.

At the July meeting, Don Helmore outlined a brief history of poetry from the earliest poets of Sumaria

and the Psalmists, through to Shakespeare and Vincent Buckley. Don also introduced us to the poetry of Rev Studdert-Kennedy (Woodbine Willie) and his WWI poetry in *Rough Rhymes of a Padre*.

LAUNCH OF *CIRCUMNAVIGATION*

The Launching of the Beautiful 'Barque' *Circumnavigation*, an anthology concerning one woman's struggle with breast cancer.

Scanner facets superimposed on the photograph of a graceful figurehead from an old sailing ship, form an intriguing cover design for Cathy Altmann's masterpiece *Circumnavigation*. One has the impression of the navigational charts of yesteryear.

This wonderful little anthology was launched on 31st May at P.L.C., Burwood, by well-known Melbourne poet Jennifer Harrison. Jennifer Harrison I had taken a friend to the launch, knowing that the poems would reflect Cathy Altmann's own personal journey with breast cancer. She had also experienced this dreaded disease. It was surely wonderful therapy for my friend. She just sat on the edge of her seat, drinking in every word that Cathy read. At the end, all she could exclaim was "Wow! Wow!" And again, "Wow!"



I too, had found the poems deeply moving. In fact, Cathy had held everyone spellbound as she articulated the raw truths to us. An awed

silence followed and then the liquid notes of *Claire de Lune* by Debussy gently and lovingly filled the space, superbly rendered by Cathy's friend, Angela Chandler. A little later my friend told me, "I didn't know I was going to be listening to someone who is able to express all the things I had gone through and had felt

myself!" Again later she mused: "It is so deeply satisfying to hear that Cathy's experience mirrored mine! She has been able to articulate what I could not! I feel so much better for having heard these poems read by the very author. I just can't thank Cathy enough!"

Obtainable from Poetica Christi Press, this little anthology would make a sensitive and special gift for someone who has experienced this grave medical issue, someone who has been on this grueling 'circumnavigation'.

Cath Barnard

LAUNCH OF A LIGHTNESS OF BEING



Janette and Jean at the launch

Groups clustered in expectation, shuffling back and forward in their chairs. The buzz of conversation filled the air as Janette stood, haloed by light, to speak to all of us there. With hands upheld to capture the winter's sun she introduced the launch and set the scene with expectation. Bill Rush's launch speech evoked both smiles and delight as he teased out the spirit of the



collection and regaled us with the stages of denial (comparable to the stages of grief) when reading poetry, even those in

major publications much too prominent to name here. I believe most of us related to the stages at one time or another; sometimes experienced in sequence and sometimes simultaneously. In turn contributors stood and read, each moment poignant with depth; taking us from the humble to the lofty. In between, as a pause for breath, Angela Chandler and Cathy Altmann refreshed our spirits with music appropriate to the theme. The sounds of piano and violin filled the empty spaces of the room and our imaginations. Thankyou were given. Afternoon tea was enjoyed. Books were collected and bought. Friends were met, and with spirits light we returned from that little

oasis, back to our everyday lives through the wintry afternoon.

Greg Burns

POETRY IN TRANSLATION – A TIMOR-LESTE LITERARY EXPERIMENT!

From a cloud of anxiety, my aircraft descends into the warmth of Dili. On the horizon, a coffee-stained moon. *Thump* – we land. My Timor-Leste adventure has begun. I'm here in the name of poetry, to fight poverty. Late in 2013 I was commissioned to write a book of poems for World Vision's office in Timor-Leste. It was collated into a booklet to be shared with donors and stakeholders. It was a real privilege to be asked. And genuinely scary. After months of redundant scribbles and superseded concepts, I created a suite I was content with: *Dear Timor-Leste – Poems of Hope*.

World Vision Timor-Leste invited me over to launch the booklet, and perform at their staff conference. I'm no Tim Costello, so I suggested instead that I run a staff workshop in poetry writing. They liked the idea! None of us had any idea how it was going to work...

You see, English is the 3rd language for most Timorese. Their mother tongue is Tetun, the local language. It's quite aural, and doesn't have a very big vocabulary – so it borrows a lot of words to fill in the gaps, especially for modern things. People also commonly speak Portuguese, the colonisers' administrative language. And finally, English is a distant third.

The best advice I received about running a workshop there was that the Timorese are naturally more communal than us Westerners. Where we might prefer to work individually, they'd prefer communality. Thus group writing activities were the best way forward.

Since *Dear Timor-Leste* is a suite of personifications in letter form (i.e. Dear Future, Dear Water). I decided to invite the staff to write their own letters to inanimate things or concepts. There were about 20 staff, all local people, and we split them into groups of 5, each with an easel and butchers paper.

They wrote slowly, discussing everything, choosing just the right words. In the end, we had Dear Banyan Tree, Dear Sun, Dear Mountains over Dili and Dear Timor. Each one of the letters was something special.

And then – the best bit by far – the performing! The staff had just seen me perform, so I invited them to perform their own poems too. "Don't just read them," I said (with the help of the translator), "Perform them!" To emphasise the point I postured like a Shakespearean actor and waved my arms about theatrically. They laughed. They were up for it!

Each group nominated a performer, who shared their piece in native Tetun, with an explanation in English. One of my favourites was Ho ó Foho – included below.

I loved the musicality of it, and it was performed with such gusto!

After every line he delivered, the speaker would dissolve into laughter. In response, the entire room laughed. It was brilliant – the room more alive with energy and engagement than I could have imagined.

I must admit, I was both relieved and enlightened. The Timorese may learn from us about nutrition and sanitation, but they're our teachers on the joy of a shared idea.

Here's Ho ó Foho in Tetun, with translation. Enjoy!

Ho ó Foho

Ho ó iha fa furak mai ami rain
Ho ó ami bele hateke tun mai
Ami nia rain cidade, ami bele
Hare furak natureza iha ami rai
Ho ó iha bele prevene rai monu
Ho ó bele hakiak bé
Ho ó ami bele besik kalohan
Nia furak no kria malirin.

With You, Mountain

With you, beauty is given to our land
With you, we can look down here at
our land and towns, we can
look at beautiful nature in our land
With you, we can prevent landslides
With you, we can keep water
With you, we can be close to the clouds
You are beautiful and create coolness.

Cameron Semmens

HOUSEKEEPING

From the Treasurer -

A reminder that the Membership fee for 2014 is \$30 p.a. and is current for the 12 month period from 1 January to 31 December. If you have not yet paid this year's Membership payment can be made by cash or by cheque **made payable to Poetica Christi Press**, and sent to 12 Cypress Ave, Burwood, 3125. If you are not a current member a charge of \$5 per meeting applies. (\$3 concession)

From the Administration Assistant-

Does anyone have a copy of the 2004 Newsletter 4.2 for May 2004, as we need a copy to complete our archives?

MEMBER NEWS

Congratulations to **Sue Donnelly** whose new poetry collection titled **Heartfelt Moments** (published by Ginninderra Press) is now available for \$20 from www.giinninderrapress.com.au



Congratulations to **Cameron Semmens** whose book *Love is the New Black* (3rd ed) has been shortlisted for the 2014 Sparklit Australian Christian Literature Awards.

Marlene Marburg's book *Grace Undone*, published by Poetica Christi Press, is progressing well and we hope to have it out in September.

We offer our condolences to **Sandra Topp**, whose husband Rex died last week.

Welcome back to **Peter White** who has been travelling in Europe.

REPORT ON BOX HILL LIBRARY READINGS.

The July 18 reading at the library was a night for children. Cartoonist and illustrator, **Penne Gillies**, took 50 children and their parents on a walk through the park with Mel Byrne and her dog Jack. Once Jack was off the lead, madness and mayhem quickly took centre stage and the children delighted in Penne's illustrations and storytelling skills. As Mel desperately tried to grab Jack's Extra Expandable Wonder Lead (Patent Pending!), Jack managed to run amok, disturbing cats, swans, ducks, tadpoles, flowerbeds and picnic baskets. He even discovered Captain Flashlight's lost Treasure!!

Wordsmiths poets joined in the fun with an open mic section of favourite children's poems and verses written especially for the night. The children went home with a giveaway illustration from Penne to colour in. Thanks are extended to Box Hill Library, and Kathryn Hamann and Penne Gillies for a fun night. Our next reading, on Friday, September 5th, will feature **Maree Silver** reading her poems on the Australian Landscape.

COMING HOME TO ROOST by Joan Ray

Some weeks ago I got wind of a book sale at the National Library, and ordered a parcel of books on line, including copies for all the family of Penny Olsen's "A Brush with Birds", which devotes a whole chapter to my mother's bird illustrations. She did the colour plates for 'Birds of the High Country', and the Library has the original paintings in its collection. I found that parcel such fun that I sent off another order, including 'The Best Nest' for my great-grandson's birthday. As it was going for only a few dollars, I included Judith Wright's poems, 'Birds'. I had a hunch that Thomas's book had some pictures by his great-great-grandmother, but imagine my surprise and delight to find that the Judith Wright was also illustrated, and, yes, there was my mother, Betty Temple Watts, among the list of illustrators!

COMPETITIONS, EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Poetica Christi Press 2014 Poetry Competition The theme for this year's competition is INNER CHILD. Closes September 30th. Entry form attached.

Ron Pretty Poetry Prize 2014 Five Islands Press is delighted to announce its inaugural Poetry Prize! **1st Prize: \$5000 Judge: Ron Pretty.** Closing Date: 30 November, 2014. The prize will be awarded to a single poem of up to 30 lines, and is open to anyone over the age of 18 years. Entry fee is \$20 for the first poem and \$10 for subsequent poems. There are no limits on entries. Online entry only. www.fiveislandspress.com.

Azuria, Geelong's new, independent literary magazine is seeking submissions from Australian & overseas writers of essays, poetry (especially in languages other than English & their translations) and short prose. For further details contact the editor, Dr. E. Reilly, at geelongwriters@gmail.com

RHONDA JANKOVIC POETRY AWARD Named in honour of the late Rhonda Jankovic, highly respected social justice advocate & former host of Radio 3CR poetry program 'Spoken Word'. 1st Prize A\$500 plus Trophy: 3CR Vintage Sound-bite Cartridge, 2nd A\$200, 3rd A\$100. Theme: Social Justice. Poems to 50 lines, no limit to number of entries, entry fee A\$5 per poem. Entries close 25 November. For enquiries, Entry Form & Conditions: philton2@westnet.com.au or Colin 0487 411 117.

Uneven Floor, an independent poetry magazine in blog form published out of Perth, Western Australia, is looking for well-written poems with soul. Submission guidelines at unevenfloorpoetry.blogspot.com.

Cordite - Closing 10th August 2014. Submissions to **Issue 47: CONSTRAINT**, with poetry guest-edited by Corey Wakeling, <http://cordite.org.au/>

Inkerman & Blunt – Closing 29th August 2014 The call for submissions is open for their next poetry collection *Prayers of a Secular World*, a collection of poems like prayers that resonate and are relevant to our secular society. www.inkermanandblunt.com.

2014 Toolangi CJ Dennis Poetry Competition – Closing 7th September 2014. Prizes will be awarded at the CJ Dennis Poetry Festival on Saturday 18th October. Toolangi CJ Dennis Poetry Competition c/o Toolangi Castella Community House, PO Box 1323, Healesville, Vic 3777. ph 0438 339 459 www.thecjdennissociety.com

Blue Giraffe 14 - Closing 31st October 2014

Guest Editor Pete Hay. A maximum of 5 poems which have not appeared in electronic or print media, not on offer elsewhere. email: Peter.Hay@utas.edu.au

A Hundred Gourds

The eleventh issue of *A Hundred Gourds*, a quarterly journal of haiku, haibun, haiga, tanka and renku poetry is now online for your reading pleasure. <http://www.ahundredgourds.com/>

2014 Marked Art Redcliffe Uniting announces the launch of their **2014 Marked Art** competition. The competition is open to artists of any genre - music, painting, poetry, pottery, puppets, multimedia, short story, skits, song writing - that communicates a theme or a story from **Mark's Gospel**. With **\$1,000 in prize money**, and the chance to perform/display your work at the Gala Celebration on Nov 8th. <http://www.redcliffe.unitingchurch.org.au>

CHRISTIAN WRITERS CONFERENCE

The Christian Word Writers Conference will be held in Victoria this year, at Bacchus Marsh on October 25th-26th. You can attend the whole conference or come as a Day visitor. For registration or more information: <http://www.christianwritersconference.dx.am>

THE SENTIMENTAL BLOKE in Surrey Hills

Lovers of *The Sentimental Bloke* are sure to enjoy hearing Ruth Aldridge perform some of the songs of this classic Australian favourite. It's on at the Freckled Hen Café, 131 Union Rd, Surrey Hills on Thursday 14th of August at 2 pm.

DIARY OF EVENTS

Saturday, August 9th: 2-5pm: Wordsmiths Meeting at 8 Woodhouse Rd, Doncaster East.

Thursday, August 14th, 2 pm: Songs from The Sentimental bloke performed by Ruth Aldridge at The Freckled Hen café, 131 Union Rd, Surrey Hills.

Friday, September 5th : 6.30-7.30 pm: Poetry reading at Box Hill Library, Poetry of the Australian Landscape with **Maree Silver**

Saturday, September 13th: 2-5pm: Wordsmiths meeting at 8 Woodhouse Rd, East Doncaster.

Saturday, October 11th: 2-5pm: Wordsmiths meeting at 8 Woodhouse Rd, East Doncaster.

POETS' CORNER



Common Ground

Her tiny figure
hurries along the path

Dressed in black,
just a hint of colour
enlivening headscarf,
she could be stepping
from a steamer
straight after the war

We smile
stop to chat
haltingly she confides
she understands
very little English
has few words

The barrier is overcome
by gestures, touches
and some Greek words
unknown to me

This morning
we share
a gentle hug

© Maree Silver

No Umbrella

Drizzle and fog this winter's day
shroud the world in shades of grey;
soft on my face, my hands, my hair,
gentle drip, drip, everywhere.

I walk through mist, breathe fresh air.
Is that singing I can hear?
Sitting in the shelter of a tree,
magpie warbles dreamily.

Some say it's raining, damp and wet.
I could drive, be dry and yet...
Today with two feet on the ground,
I walk through cloud while songs surround.

© Catherine m Barnard

Mocking bird

My head is aching
tired
from turning
this way
and that
listening
not wanting to listen
to the twittering bird
on my shoulder
One minute it's nattering
nibbling my ear
next minute it's cooing
soft sounds tempting me
teasing me
then laughing shrilly
at my confusion
Daintily dancing
its claws bite my flesh
It's itching, scratching
screeching
down the tunnel of my past
pecking away at my present
blotting the book of my future
with a pernicious
plop...

© Janette Fernando

Between you and me...

Gossips are
great encouragers

an elitist hierarchy
they recriminate wrongdoers

leaving you
to right their wrongs

© Sue Donnelly

(from *Heartfelt Moments*)

Newsletter prepared by Leigh Hay and Janette
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