



# WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

## 9.1 February, 2009

Dear Wordsmiths and friends,

What a thrill it was to hear from our judge that the winner of our 2008 PCP poetry competition on the subject of *New Beginnings* was our own Kathryn Hamann, for her poem *Her*. Congratulations from us all Kathryn!

Equal second prize went to Jenny Macaffer and Peter Stiles, both of whom have been in our previous publications. The other good thing was the comment from our judge, Aileen Kelly, who said that the standard of work has gone up since the last time she judged our competition.

Other wordsmiths, chosen by her to have poems included in the book, are Sondy Ward, Leigh Hay, Marlene Marburg, Carolyn Ingvarson, Joan Ray and Cathy Altmann.

I do hope you have all enjoyed this holiday time and found it a real time of refreshing, a re-creation of your best self.

By the end of the year Janette and I were both exhausted by the work we had been doing for the *Melbourne Reflections* book so we are both feeling better for some time out to get our lives in perspective again.

I have been enjoying spending time in weeding the back garden, which was a real mess. Just getting down on one's hands and knees and being close to the soil is a freeing thing, even while it can be another form of hard work. I am often reminded of Kipling's line of poetry where he talks about

“ God who sees  
that half a proper gardener's work  
is done upon his knees”,

as I find prayer comes easily while my hands are busy.

Another person who has been encouraging me to get back to realising my relatedness to the earth is Diarmuid O'Murchu, whom Piet and I heard speak at Wellspring recently and whose books we have been reading since. He suggests strongly that our patriarchal power structures are due for review and that we need to be developing a gentler way of looking after God's creation and a more relational way of living. Not that he is the only person saying this, but he does make a compelling case for it.

The other person who is helping me to view creation with new eyes is that wonderful American poet, Mary Oliver. She has a way of finding something to wonder at in such a variety of creatures.

### FIRST MEETING FOR THE YEAR

will be held on February 14<sup>th</sup> at 493 Elgar Rd.

I have asked Janette to lead this workshop with some ideas she has gleaned from attending the 8 day Poetry Lab led by Ron Pretty and others at Wollongong University in January.

**SECOND MEETING** will be the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> **March Poetry Weekend** either at Montserrat House, near Pallotti College in Millgrove, or at St. Andrews Beach. *Please register for this, even if you can only come for part of the time.* If you have not been on a weekend away with us you don't know what you are missing! On the Saturday our *Quiet Day* will be led by Rev. **Robin Pryor**, a retired Uniting church minister, who is well experienced in leading retreats. His theme will be: “**Landscapes of farewell, landscapes of welcome**”. On Sunday, **Cameron Semmens** has agreed to lead us in a *Poetry workshop*, which should be a treat! As in the past, we'll be self-catering for this so the cost will be reasonable. Please fill in the Response slip attached ASAP, so we can plan accordingly.



(Millgrove)

**APRIL MEETING** : As the second Saturday is April 11<sup>th</sup>, Easter Saturday, we may need to reschedule this meeting depending on how many can't come then.

### ROSTER FOR LEADING OUR WORDSMITHS MEETINGS THIS YEAR

As part of my attempt to wind down and also to make sure that *The Wordsmiths of Melbourne* can continue in my absence, I have decided to hand over the conduct of the meetings this year to others. I will ask each leader to spend the first 10 minutes or so sharing some poetry from a classic or favourite poet, as I feel one of the best ways to become a better writer, is to be well-read.

I'll also have a roster for people to help with afternoon tea provision and dishes.

Month	Leader	Afternoon tea
February	Janette	Jean S, Cath, Keith
April	Joy	Leigh, Dilys, Marlene
May	Leigh	Janette, Lucy, Sue
June	Marlene	Sondy, Marguerite, Joy
July	Joan	Maree S, Cam, Louise

If these dates do not suit, please arrange to swap with someone and let Maree Silver know so she can adjust the roster.

## PAST EVENTS

Our planned weekend away was cancelled because so few people had enrolled due to other commitments (see below.)

Instead we had a marvellous workshop on the Saturday morning with Catherine Bateson leading and inspiring us all to do some interesting writing. In the event, it meant that several of us were able to attend the delightful wedding of Cameron Semmens with Sonya Burggraaf, held at *Solace* in Fairfield.



And on the Sunday several also attended **Phil Ilton's** 60<sup>th</sup> birthday bash held at the Hotel at Portsea looking out at a stunning blue sea and listening to a string quartette led by Julien Winspear's daughter Cara. We were also treated to a performance by *Men in Suits*, an a capella men's choir, of which Phil is a member. Our October and December meetings were well attended and we enjoyed having lunch together before the December meeting.

## READINGS AT BOX HILL LIBRARY

As the readings at Surrey Hills were not serving the purpose for which I started them, namely to

attract non-poets, we have decided, with the encouragement of librarian Christina Fernie, to have a series of readings at the Box Hill Library this year. This follows our very successful reading there for poetry week in September last year.

The first of these will be held on **Friday March 27<sup>th</sup>** and our guest reader will be Phil Ilton, so do put this date in your diaries now.

The theme will be *Australia* and will include recitations of classic Australian ballads as well as our own work. **If you'd like to be a reader, let us know via the response slip.**

## PCP NEWS

PCP is delighted to announce that its latest publication, children's book *Stick your neck out* is almost ready, Pencil April 19<sup>th</sup> in your diaries for the launch. Written by **Leigh Hay** and illustrated by Andrew McKenzie, ***Stick Your Neck Out*** is the funny, touching, uplifting tale of two giraffes and a black hole that sucks and will inspire anyone affected by life's black holes. The launch of ***Stick Your Neck Out*** will be at Eltham Library, April 19<sup>th</sup>, time to be advised.

We're hoping to launch the ***Melbourne Reflections*** book in August at the Melbourne Writers Festival, so please pray that we will get permission to do so. Some vital statistics about the book for your information are:  
Size of book is 300mm. wide x 235mm.high (landscape orientation) Hardcover (laminated)  
152 pages, including 30 colour pages,  
213 poems (including 29 rooku)  
144 poets represented,  
70 visual artworks/photographs, from 25 different artists/photographers.  
Anticipated Launch Date :August, 2009  
Meanwhile we're hoping to raise funds by pre-selling the book at the special price of \$42 rather than the RRP of \$48. Of Course, you're welcome to pay the full price of \$48 if you are willing and able to! If you can help us this way, please fill in the response slip.

**If you missed our PCP competition on *New Beginnings* last year we're also accepting submissions of poems on that theme for our anthology, due out later this year.**

## MEMBER NEWS

**Cameron Semmens** has produced another children's book just before Christmas, entitled *Water, Wine and a Wonderful Wedding*. **Sondy Ward** has a new exhibition of her art work, *Mindsapes* from February 1-28<sup>th</sup> at the Gallery, Crossways Church, 2 Vision Dve,

Burwood. Open Sundays or by appointment on (03) 9886 3700.

Congratulations to **Cathy Altmann** on having another poem chosen by Moving Galleries and to **Marguerite Varday**, whose 50 word novel received a Highly Commended award, and also to **Cecily Falkingham** who had an article published in *Gardening Australia*.

We have had a few casualties in the holidays. First **Dilys Terry-Smith** fell and bruised herself badly and then developed flu on top of that so was out of action for several weeks, all of which had been planned to be busy! Then **Marlene** and now **Leigh** have both had minor surgery from which they seem to be recovering well. **Ashley Harris** has been in Box Hill Hospital with blocked carotid arteries.

**Janette** will, I'm sure, have lots to tell us about her time in Wollongong.

Please pray for **Mary Macdonald**, **Nel Lewis** and **Marie-Louise Stephens** whose lives are now very restricted, and for **Kathryn Hamann**, whose beloved father-in-law Sefton died recently. Maree Silver and I attended the thoughtful memorial service at Holy Trinity, East Melbourne.

We congratulate **Joan Ray** on her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, wishing her God's grace for many years to come.

**Pray also for the committee of PCP** that we may have wisdom and great insight to know how to proceed with attracting funding for *Melbourne Reflections*. We are looking into the possibility of turning PCP into a co-operative so that having more paying members we would have more funds.

## COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

**Verb-ate-him: a new quarterly e-journal** that publishes literary works in the forms of poetry, short story and micro-fiction along with art works (comic, photography, painting) and sound and video art. Submissions are now open for the first issue which is due to be launched in April. Send your submissions (no more than three pieces at a time please) along with a short biography to [submissions.verbatehim@gmail.com](mailto:submissions.verbatehim@gmail.com) or see [verbatehim.wordpress.com](http://verbatehim.wordpress.com).

**Bush Lantern Award 2009.** Closing: 29 May. Written competition for bush verse. Each poem must have good rhyme and rhythm and an Australian theme to a maximum of 100 lines. 1st prize: Bush Lantern Award Trophy + \$200; 2nd Prize: \$100; 3rd Prize: \$75. Entry fee \$6 per poem or \$15 for three poems. For guidelines and entry form, contact Jayson Russell 0411 360 922, [blanata@bigpond.net.au](mailto:blanata@bigpond.net.au)

**New Melbourne-based art and literary biannual Sketch** is currently accepting submissions for its second issue. Closing: 1 March. All types of literary and artistic endeavour

encouraged. For details please visit [www.sketchmediahouse.wordpress.com](http://www.sketchmediahouse.wordpress.com)

### St Andrew's Poetry Competition

NO entry fee. Prize is to have poem on display at their fete in May. Two sections Open/ Humorous. Closing date 16th April (Helen Cerne judged last year's.) Send entries to St Andrew's Uniting Church, PO Box 780, Bacchus Marsh 3340

### Christian Projects, to be published by new imprint, *Even Before Publishing*, for the Christian market:

*\*Even Before You Were Born:* Pregnancy focused, looking for poetry, short stories, artwork and much more. Small gift book. Submissions open until end of June 2009. To be published late 2009.

*\*Psalms of Everyday Christians:* Poetry, psalms and songs, plus artwork needed. Small gift book. Submissions open until end of June 2009. To be published late 2009/early 2010.

*\*Armour Bearer:* Based on 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, where Jonathon bears David's armour. Short stories, poetry, artwork needed. Open until August 2009.

To be published early 2010. More details [www.wombatbooks.com.au/evenbeforepublishing.html](http://www.wombatbooks.com.au/evenbeforepublishing.html)

**PressPress Chapbook Award 2009.** Closing: 31 May. The Award is for an unpublished chapbook length manuscript of poems. The winning manuscript will receive \$500 and chapbook publication with PressPress. Entry fee \$15. For guidelines and entry form, see [www.presspress.com.au](http://www.presspress.com.au)

## COMING EVENTS

**Sundays in February** : Sondy Ward's art exhibition at Crossways, 2 Vision Dve, Burwood  
**Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> February:** 1st meeting of the Wordsmiths at 493 Elgar Rd, Mont Albert Nth, 1.45-5pm.

**Friday, 13-15<sup>th</sup> March** : Poetry Retreat at Millgrove or St. Andrews Beach.

**Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> March** 6.30-8pm. Reading at Box Hill Library, Whitehorse Rd, with Phil Ilton as guest reader.

**Saturday, April 11th** Wordsmiths meeting at 493 Elgar Rd, Mont Albert Nth, 1.45-5pm.

**Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>** Launch of Leigh Hay's book *Stick your neck out*. Eltham Library.

**Tuesday, May 12<sup>th</sup>** Wellspring Poetry Day, 9.45am – 3.15pm *The Luminous sprawl of Gifts*, at 10 Y St, Ashburton. Ph: 98850277

*If you haven't paid your membership dues in the past 12 months, please pay them now.*



## POETS' CORNER

### Falcon

A falcon sliced the sky  
A flash of energy driven hunger  
The quivering chicks in the reeds below are  
silent  
A predator perches – empty clawed  
turns his golden eyes toward the sun defiantly

© Cecily Falkingham

### Bleeding woman

*Luke 8: 43-48*

she bled her nascent yearning to feel herself  
complete,  
to live the meaning of a threshold in her life,  
to find the doorway for changing humankind,  
to show the model their meeting would  
inscribe.

she bled the sorrows of defunct old ways,  
she bled until she touched the founding love.  
she sensed unfolding  
from old authority,  
from blood to light  
to Christ on earth.  
the spirit's flowering start,

the turning point of time  
marked its threshold in her soul;  
she drained her old biology  
with her act of new autonomy.

from bleeding woman to nascent individual,  
with her own accord she reaches out to touch,  
affirm the nascent knowledge –  
the new seed for humankind.

© Rebecca Maxwell

### Evening walk with my mother (c. 1946)

After tea we take the river track.  
sea wind sougns across the scrub,  
below, the air is warm and still.  
Lengthening shadows band the path.  
Between young gums, water dazzles,  
river banks glow red.

*Here, you say, I saw the kingfisher  
a streak of blue it settled on that root  
right by the water's edge.*

Dust silks my sandalled feet.  
A mudlark calls. On we stroll  
around another bend  
and freeze:

within a red encircled stage,  
(an inlet in the river bank)  
four white-faced heron bob and turn  
skip and bow in stately dance.

© Joan Ray

### Wise moves\*

they knew about war  
political gain  
diplomacy's call  
a nation's pain

they chose to ride  
freeway one  
their satellite  
a star that shone

they rode for days  
faced terrorism  
their illegal beliefs  
defying prison

they could have said no  
stayed put, unbidden  
denied their faith  
stayed home, stayed hidden

but they didn't

© Leigh Hay

\*Though this can have a Christmas  
connotation it is also relevant today.