

# WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

21.3

August, 2021

Welcome to the August issue of Wordsmiths newsletter.

A few months ago I was invited to read my poetry as part of an upcoming festival. I said yes at the time, thinking it will be up to Covid as to whether this goes ahead. Nevertheless, I decided I would put the time into thinking of a theme, sorting my poetry into sub-themes and putting some words together as background patter. This all sounded fairly straightforward and maybe it would take an afternoon and things would be sorted.

Have you ever tried to 'sort' all your poems in one afternoon? I can testify that it started well, but after an hour of wading through files on my laptop and trying to decide what would fit where, I needed an industrial strength pot of coffee. I simply had no idea I had written so many poems, all filed away in one of my numerous 'poetry' folders. Numerous is an understatement. I found travel poems, people and places poems, seasonal poems, children's poems, not to mention folders marked 'Sketches' 'Peace' and 'Memories'. After a much needed coffee, I began to enjoy finding poems I hadn't read for years or forgotten about entirely. They brought back memories of why I'd written them, who I'd written them for or why a date on a poem was significant. I cried, I laughed, and I felt nourished by just re-reading my own work. Poetry is nourishing, whether we read it or write it.

There's sure to be more lockdowns, so why not spend an afternoon re-reading your poetry and feel encouraged by what you've written.

Leigh Hay

## MEETINGS

**Peter White** led the May meeting. He provided some background on poet Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). Little known during her life, Dickinson has since become regarded as one of the most important figures in American poetry. She lived much of her life in isolation, never married, and was a prolific writer of over 1800 poems. Only 10 of her poems were published during her lifetime - the remainder published posthumously. Her poems were not titled but numbered instead. Peter read Nos 280, 185, 465, 712 and 1545.

The June meeting was held via Zoom. **Carolyn Vimpani** hosted and also led. She introduced the works of John

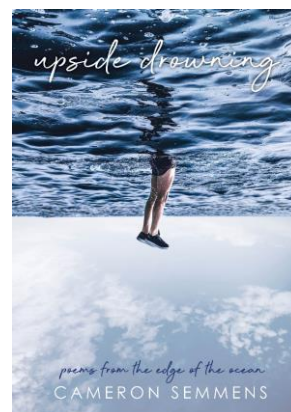
Donne (1572-1631) who was born a Catholic but became an Anglican priest. Donne was fairly promiscuous and married in secret. His wife died in childbirth after giving birth to 12 children in 16 years. Donne was a metaphysical poet, finding different meanings in objects. His work was published posthumously. Carolyn linked the group to videos of *The Flea* and *No Man is an Island* and also read *Death Be Not Proud* (Holy Sonnet #10 – written in 1633).

**Florence Lisner** led the July meeting at which 10 Wordsmiths attended. Florence's father was a poet and she had been clearing out his belongings and found several books of Chinese translated poetry. She explained about the names given to 4 lines, 7 lines etc. What is interesting is that the poets lived in the years from 700 onwards, such a long time ago, and poetry was considered to be poetry only if it was written about certain things. The later poets challenged this by writing about subjects previously not considered poetic. Florence read poems by Wang Wei (701-762) and Do Fu (712-770)

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Month	Leader	Afternoon tea
August	Greg	Zoom meeting
September	Peter B	Maree S, Leigh, Peter W
October	Leigh	Jean, Cecily, Cath

## MEMBER NEWS



**Cam Semmens** has a new book ready to be launched on August 21. *Upside Drowning* : poems for the edge of the ocean. The book will be launched live at the Rotunda in Catani Gardens, St Kilda. Email the words 'Lock me in for live' to [cam@webcameron.com](mailto:cam@webcameron.com) to register so that he can track numbers. Or attend the

launch online by sending Cam the words *Zoom me in!* to receive the link.

Cam will share a number of the book's poems in the rotunda, and then as a group, everyone will walk up the pier and toss the book in a bottle into Port Philip Bay. All those online will have front-seat views and a few specific moments of question time and response. RRP \$20 + postage

Congratulations to **Cathy Altman** with *Laundromat* which was one of four winners in the Studio competition celebrating forty years of publication. In this beautiful collection of poetry with a few short stories, **Maree Silver** with *City Images* and *Tracks and trails* and **Jean Sietzema-Dickson** with *Tivoli Gardens* and *Another Dimension* were chuffed to find that their entries were given an honourable mention. Studio is published four times a year and is well worth the \$40 subscription.

On Sunday 15 August, **Leigh Hay** will be reading her poetry at Buckley's of Dunolly as part of the *Words in Winter Festival*.

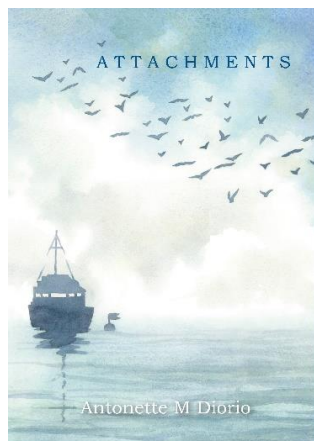
Rachel Buckley will host an afternoon of music and poetry presented by Leigh in the Melba Lounge by the fireside. Light afternoon tea at interval included in ticket price. Copies of Leigh's books will be available for purchase. Bookings strongly encouraged.

Date : Sun 15 August, Venue : Buckley's of Dunolly 1787 Maryborough-Dunolly Road, Dunolly. Enquiries : 03 5468 1858. Time : 2pm. Cost : \$15

## POETICA CHRISTI PRESS NEWS

### Publication of Attachments by Antonette Diorio

Poetica Christi Press has just published its latest book, *Attachments*, by Antonette Diorio (aka Toni Brisland, winner of PCP's 2020 competition.) 'a beautiful collection of imagery, rawness and honesty from an intelligent and engaging poet.' (Leigh Hay)  
Copies are available for \$20 using the order form.



### PCP Poetry Competition 2021

Congratulations to **Tru Dowling** who has been judged winner of this year's anthology Silver Linings with her poem *Those Days, These Days*.

2<sup>nd</sup> place was awarded to **David Terelinck** and **Tim Collins** and **Tru Dowling** were both commended.

The judge, John Foulcher, also chose poetry by the following poets for inclusion in the anthology: Janice Williams, Gayelene Carbis, Wendell Watt, Agi Dobson,

Bob Topping, Maria Vouis, Toni Brisland, Richenda Rudman, Greg Burns, Jude Aquilina, Christopher Ringrose, Wendy Fleming, Janeen Samuel, Allan Lake, Jennifer Chrystie and John Egan.

### Judge's report – John Foulcher

The standard in this year's competition was high, and it wasn't difficult to find 25 poems of quality among the entries. Many can consider themselves unlucky not to have had their poems included in these pages.

All considered the theme of this year's competition, 'Silver Linings', thoughtfully and directly, but the better poems looked at the concept from new angles and were aware of nuances and subtleties the notion held. A good poem always surprises; its conclusion is rarely anticipated.

The topics of the poems varied greatly, many considering the silver linings of personal tragedy and many dealing with the Covid-inspired lockdowns of 2020. There are dangers in the former – while I found most of these were heartfelt and moving, a poet needs to detach him or herself from experience in order to make the poem and the experience something others can know and feel. I'm aware that it's a truism, but poetry *shows* rather than *tells*. Many of the lockdown poems fell to inadequate drafting and easy conclusions, while the better ones brought new eyes to experiences which may have been considered commonplace before lockdown but which became rich new gifts afterwards.

The form of the poems also varied greatly, ranging from sonnets and villanelles to free verse and prose poems. I tried to pick a variety of forms and language registers for this anthology, but ultimately felt I had to honour those poems I considered the best ones.

The winning poem, Tru Dowling's 'Those Days, These Days.' was marked by the verve and liveliness of its language, the rush of its rhythm and its wry, self-deprecating tone. The entire poem was imbued with the concept of 'silver linings', rather coming to the concept in conclusion. It was daring, earthy and evocative. There were three poems which were worthy of second place – David Terelinck's 'Small Epiphanies', Tim Collins' 'Fences Soaked in Dew' and a second offering from Tru Dowling, 'Web'. All three were very fine poems; ultimately, though, the richness of David Terelinck's language, the escalating sense of immersion and the wonderful hesitancy of his final lines gained him the honour. Tim Collins, however, pushed him very hard.

Congratulations to all the poets who entered the competition. It's never easy to put oneself on the line and expose the deepest aspects of ourselves for judgment. We must always remember that the purpose of poetry is not to win competitions but to explore the relationship between the self and the world and to enrich the quality of our lives.

## WELLSPRING CENTRE

On 7 August, Wellspring farewelled Monique Lisbon who had worked at the centre for 16 years. Members gathered at the Ashburton Baptist Church Lounge to express their gratitude and bless Mono for the new seasons ahead.

**The Art of Listening during Pandemics: From a Poet's Gaze. Fridays: 13 August, 27 August and 10 September, 11am to 1pm**  
**Facilitator: Xiaoli Yang. Location: Zoom**  
**This series is available at no cost to participants.**

A series of three general workshops, which may also be taken as Professional Development for Spiritual Directors. Come to all three if you can, or one or two as you are able.



Spiritual formation and companionship have entered a kind of 'new normal' as the world events of the coronavirus, Black Lives Matter (BLM) and struggles between Superpowers take place in our turbulent times. The creation is groaning and crying for its liberation. When there are so many noises in our world: economically, environmentally, politically, culturally, racially—the whole cosmos—is lamenting in great pain. How are we listening? What are the pathways and characteristics of attentive listening that spiritual formation and companionship embody?

The three mini-workshops explore the art of listening during the pandemics of 2020 in the context of multicultural Australia. Through a poetic lens, these workshops articulate the deep listening by means of the verbal, the body and the silence during periods of lockdown. It draws the wisdom of a cultural premise of the Chinese etymology 'Ting' (Listening, 聽) and the Australian Aboriginal community's understanding of 'tapping into the deep spring' in dialogue with poetry, sacred texts, mystics, theologians and scientists. The essential issues of collective lament, ethnicity, race, culture and virtual communications are considered. In the multi-faceted engagements, we are invited to listen to God, creation, others and self in our own formation and in the companionship with others before the eternal 'Listener'. No cost, but please book in advance.

## Introduction to the Enneagram

Facilitator Marg Loftus. Wednesday **25 August**, 10-3pm. The Enneagram explains the 'why' of how we

think, feel and behave and begins to change the way we see ourselves and others. As a sacred map to the soul, it shows us how we can develop our gifts and come to terms with our greatest interpersonal, emotional and spiritual challenges, pointing us back to our True Self. Come along to this workshop and be introduced to the nine personality types of the Enneagram.

**Cost:** \$75 (full cost) / \$65 (members/concession)  
Please book and pay in advance.  
<https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au/events/2021-program/>

## MELBOURNE WRITERS HUB

**The Melbourne Writers Hub** is a group of professional writers and book designers, of which Poetica Christi Press is a member. For advice on editing, graphic design and publishing, or for more information on MWH, visit <https://www.melbwritershub.com> or email [melbwritershub@gmail.com](mailto:melbwritershub@gmail.com)

## COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Ballina Region for Refugees Poetry Prize 2021

Theme: *Time for a Home*. We welcome poems up to 50 lines that consider the experiences, aspirations and hopes of refugees and asylum seekers seeking a home in which they can build new, meaningful and safe lives. 1<sup>st</sup> prize \$300, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize \$150, 3<sup>rd</sup> prize \$50. Entries close Sunday **15<sup>th</sup> August 2021**.  
<https://br4r.org.au/poetry-comp>

**King of the Ranges Written Bush Poetry Competition**, Murrurundi NSW. Closes **25 August**. Info at:  
<https://www.aba.org.au/events.html>

### Aesthetica Creative Writing Award 2021

This international literary prize is open to poetry and short fiction submissions on any theme, celebrating innovation in content, form and technique. Submissions close **31 August 2021**.  
<https://aestheticamagazine.com>

**Betty Ollie Poetry Award**, Kyabram Victoria. Closes **31 August**. For more information :  
<https://www.abpa.org.au/events.html>

**Woorilla Judith Rodriguez Poetry Prize** \$1,500 First Prize, \$250 Runner Up, Closes on the **5th September 2021**  
<https://www.woorilla.org.au>

---

Send any news for the December 2021 newsletter to [treehousepoet318@gmail.com](mailto:treehousepoet318@gmail.com) by November 15 2021. Newsletter edited by Leigh Hay and Janette Fernando



## POETS' CORNER

### Those, These Days.

over shoulder boulder holders  
 the name we gave to independence  
 rather than 'training' to gain a bra,  
 proof bosoms would blossom like flowers of stone  
 (to feed the mouths and grow the bones),  
 those days swung on the hinge of childhood, free  
 skirted daisy days, picking one, two, stringing a garland  
 for crowns or neck-lines, slitting stalks or hem-lines  
 (sparking slutty talk, and sniggering behind the shed);  
 dress-up days that led us along forked paths, tongues  
 pressed to movie star posters or hands  
 licked like postage stamps, saliva frothing round  
 the edges, we were mad as a top dog on glue  
 or a hot bitch's juicy stories, whispered  
 with the sacred sun on our silky manes,  
 clutched in a pony tail, a tissue, we all  
 fell down clasping at grass seeds and dandelion puffs  
 that floated like fairy-floss, those chasing days  
 all hot breath and bothered like a steam train escaping  
 while kettle's heated to boiling inside, its spout  
 sprouting  
 full-o-beans and a means to an end or to begin again  
 each day,  
 every day's a play day, a wait and see  
 or jump and splash day, where blood gashed  
 from between legs or a head wound day,  
 when running past the metal swing-set  
 that cut and wounded, while our baby brother's  
 sucking at the milk dregs of mum's affection,  
 and her eyes pale as a frosted stare,  
 not a spare red cent in her bone shoulder-strapped day,  
 then our bags were packed and out we'd go,  
 all preened and prepped like a comb  
 carefully pulled through her straw hair, sprayed  
 and displayed, before she disparaged and we raged  
 and raged those days, these days are days  
 we couldn't do/ have done without.

© Tru S Dowling (winning poem for *Silver Linings*)

### Small Epiphanies

Nights by the bay are a symphony of wood  
 and water; the distant slap of an oar  
 on the skin of the lake,  
 bowlines rasp against the bollard.  
 A sloop mast groans  
 as a swelling breeze gossips  
 with the canvas. The jetty  
 is bleached with moonlight.  
 Barnacled pilings silently sway,  
 sullen with their greening beards

and weathered disposition.  
 The sand is cool and damp;  
 an incoming tide shackles my ankles  
 with kelp, dusts my calves  
 with salt. I breathe the brackish air  
 and wonder which whales exhaled  
 the molecules I draw in.  
 Each step brings offerings:  
 tormented driftwood  
 sand-polished sea-glass  
 shells from distant oceans.

I look up to see a field of stars;  
*campo de estrellas*  
 the Spaniards called it.  
 And suddenly I believe  
 the Milky Way could be dust rising  
 from the blistered feet  
 of countless pilgrims.  
 And beyond *Santiago de Compostela*  
 lies *Finisterre*  
 where the road-weary  
 find the end of the world  
 and are new baptised.  
 Another starfish froths up at my feet,  
 luminescent jellyfish blob  
 beyond the break,  
 and I'm no longer uncertain  
 of my place in the world.  
 This place  
 where small epiphanies are found  
 in the creak of a midnight hawser,  
 a quicksilver moonbridge that links  
 seawall to shore. And it's enough  
 to make you almost  
 (almost)  
 believe a man  
 could walk on water.

© David Terelinck (Runner up, *Silver Linings*)

### Corpus Christi Procession

It's sixty days after Easter.

Accidentally I'm in Sydney City  
 on Corpus Christi  
 and the thorns  
 of my childhood basket  
 adorned in ferns  
 filled with rose petals  
 prick me still  
 as the parade passes.

That golden monstrance sunburst  
 heralding transubstantiation  
 follows petals strewn from girls' hands,  
 in my memory bound to celebration breakfasts  
 the nuns allowing jelly or ice-cream  
 and I wanted both.

© Antonette Diorio (from *Attachments*)