

# WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

18.4

December, 2018

Welcome to the final edition of Wordsmiths Newsletter for 2018.

I recently returned home after five weeks of travel, to reflect on the fact that everyday poets are genuinely sincere people. This most recent trip included London and I was invited by a friend to attend open mic night at London's Poetry Society café. The Poetry Society was founded in 1909 to promote a more general recognition and appreciation of poetry. It's now grown into one of Britain's most dynamic arts organisations.

Open mic night is once a month and it's a memorable occasion. I hadn't visited since the 1990s, but nothing has changed in 20 years. House rules are easy: rock up, buy a drink, register to read and then swan downstairs to the basement (drink in hand) and join an eclectic group of poets who have come together to read their work. The night is sensitively run by an MC and in the 5-7 mins allotted, each poet has an opportunity to read to an appreciative audience.

The ambience is one of acceptance, camaraderie, support and fun. Some poets sang, others read, while a few had brought a guitar or some other musical instrument to entertain the gathering. As an Australian, I was given an exceptionally warm welcome, and my friend and I took it in turns to read from a recent book of my work.

Open mic night reinforced for me that poetry has no boundaries. It wouldn't have mattered what nationality I represented or how good or lousy my poetry was; I was welcome, my poetry was embraced and supported and people came up to me afterwards to say 'well done...great to meet you....come again.' I certainly will.

**Leigh Hay**



Merry Christmas to all  
Wordsmiths and a safe and  
prosperous 2019.

## PAST MEETINGS

**Maree Silver** led the August meeting, with some background and poetry of Australian poet Bruce Dawe. Dawe, who was born in Geelong in 1930, is considered the most highly regarded poet of suburbia. His occupations have given him empathy with ordinary Australians and his poetry reflects this. Maree read *Drifters*, *Homo Suburbensis*, *The Last of Games* and *Planning a Time-capsule*.

Peter Baker was welcomed to the August meeting.

**Judith Rodriguez** presented a workshop for the September Wordsmiths' meeting, titled 'What Price Punctuation?' Judith put forward the argument for punctuation (or not) and gave many examples of how, given the non-use of traditional punctuation, indentation, line breaks, spaces and italics can serve to punctuate. Judith stressed that whatever the method the poet intends to use, it must be expressive for the poet's writing and readers. Judith handed out examples of punctuation style in poetry by Elizabeth Bishop, Caroline Caddy, Anna Akhmatova, Denise Levertov and Anne Waldman.

**Don Helmore** led the October meeting. His selection of readings were Leunig – *Spring rejuvenation prayer*; Mary Holtby – *A Poet's Villanelle*; Philip A Nicholson – *On poetry*; e e cummings - #2; and T S Eliot – *The Naming of Cats*.

At the November meeting, **Carolyn Vimpani** told the basic story of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and also read some of his beautifully descriptive lines and verses from what is very long poem. Extracts gave an overview, with interesting discussion about the albatross shot in the poem and the vivid imagery Coleridge used to set the scene. Richard Castle was welcomed to the November meeting.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The following is a roster of poets to lead the monthly meeting, and also share afternoon tea duty. If you

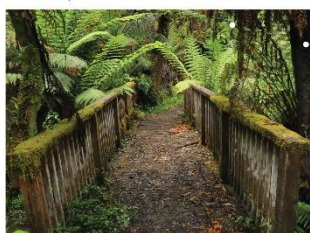
cannot make it on the date shown, please organise with another member to take your place.

Date	Leader	Afternoon tea duty
Dec	Leigh	Everyone BYO plate to share
Feb '19	Florence	Leigh, Maree S, Don
Mar '19	Jean	Peter, Cath, Joan

## LAUNCH OF *INTERLUDES*



POEMS  
I N T E R L U D E S  
edited by JANETTE FERNANDO and MAREE SILVER



Philton launching the 2018 anthology *Interludes*

On Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December, PCP's 2018 anthology *Interludes* (edited by Janette Fernando and Maree Silver) was launched by Philton at All Saints Anglican Church, Mitcham. The launch was compered by Peter White and Jean Sietzema-Dickson (Director of Poetica Christi Press) opened with a tribute to well-known Australian poet Judith Rodriguez, who passed away on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The launch attracted a good crowd of poets, many of whom read their contribution to the 2018 competition and anthology including Roslyn Black (winner) and Joan Ray (runner-up). Cathy Altmann and Angela Chandler provided reflective music and as always, those present stayed for a delicious afternoon tea.



## MEMBER NEWS

Congratulations are extended to **Rebecca Maxwell**. In recognition of her work for those with impaired vision, Rebecca was one of the finalists in the Blind Australian of the Year Award. She had been nominated for the award because of her involvement in extending Braille abbreviations, and for her poetry. In early Blindness Alliance Australia, who made the award, presented Rebecca with a plaque, a framed certificate and a

bouquet. Sympathy is extended to Rebecca on the death of her husband Robert.

Congratulations to **Cathy Altmann** on the publication of her new collection of poetry 'things we know without naming'. Published by Poetica Christi Press, the book will be launched by Dr Anne Elvey on Sunday December 9 at the Doris Daniel Theatre, PLC, Burwood.

Congratulations to **Cate Lewis** whose poem on the Kono refugees of Sierra Leone has been published in the December edition of *Crosslight*, the Uniting Church monthly paper.

Please keep **Janette Fernando** in your prayers as she has been unable to drive for three months and struggles to walk due to several compression fractures in her spine and painful back spasms. We also offer our condolences to her on the recent death of her mother.

### Tribute to Judith Rodriguez

Judith Rodriguez who was to have launched this book, unfortunately died two weeks ago. We extend our condolences to her husband, Tom Shapcott and to her family.

She was one of the most generous poets I know. Many of us can be a bit self-absorbed, but not Judith. Her position as teacher put her in contact with hundreds of people all of whom loved and valued her. This was borne out by the crowd overflowing her house for her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday last year.

When asked she was always ready to launch a book or write a blurb and our group the Wordsmiths have frequently had the benefit of her wisdom. In fact we enjoyed a workshop she ran for us earlier this year.

For as long as I have known her she was an active member of PEN, writing letters to support prisoners of conscience. She was also a generous supporter of the State Library. So her death is a great loss to the community at large and to poets in particular.

Jean S-D

### Review of *Wonderment*

Last year's anthology 'Wonderment' was recently reviewed by Ian Keast in *Studio* magazine. Ian made the following comments :

#### Wonderment

**Maree Silver and Leigh Hay ( Eds)**

*Published by Poetica Christi Press 2017*

ISBN : 978-0-9941640-7-0

Edited by Maree Silver and Leigh Hay, this is the 2017 Anthology from Poetica Christi Press. "Wonderment" was the theme for their 2017 Poetry Competition and the Anthology contains the winning entries, as well as

other selected poems. Like their other Anthologies, the physical production and layout are outstanding, with accompanying pencil sketches by David Hay illustrating the text.

The Editors, in their Foreword, outline the scope of 'Wonderment' :

*Wonderment is astonishment, acknowledgement, curiosity, celebration, awe and admiration...Wonderment often catches us unawares...Wonderment never leaves us wanting. It fills our senses, satiates our spiritual hunger and quenches our longing thirst for beauty.*

*Wonderment can be found in the tiniest, the least attractive, the forgotten and forlorn. It's often found in the garden of the neglected.*

*In this Anthology, poets have given expression to wonderment in a myriad of ways...*

be it in, for example, the natural world or music or relationships; above all the focus on, " the most excellent way, " of love- divine and human.

And the poets represented, (many of whom are contributors to **Studio**), capture the *...moments when we see the wonder of God's creation in the world around us...They observe what many often miss, divine glory revealed in the small things of life.* (Dr Peter Stiles, judge of the 2017 Competition.)

Two haiku – this from Florence Lisner, ( p58),

*White cockatoos  
icing on the autumn tree  
confection for the soul*

and this one by Jean Sietzema-Dickson, ( p130),

Australian Pentecost

*This liquidambar  
lifts flaming tongues heavenward  
-living sacrifice*

provide a taste of this Anthology, (which offers a rich banquet), *to satisfy your longing for wonderment.* (Foreword).

### 2019 Wellspring Centre Poetry Days

**Wellspring Centre** will be conducting four days throughout next year for poets to gather together and share a love of poetry. Each of these days will include time for sharing poems in a group setting, as well as opportunities for personal reflection and creative responses. Each day runs from 10am – 3pm. Cost : \$68/\$58

**Monday 18 March, Poems from the Mystics –**  
Elizabeth Lee

**Thursday 16 May, God's Fingerprints : The Poems of Luci Shaw– Finding the Extraordinary in the Ordinary –**  
Janette Fernando

**Wednesday 3 July, The Poetry of David Whyte –**  
Elizabeth Lee

**Tuesday 8 October, Poems as Icons –** Julien Winspear

**More :** <https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au>

### COMPETITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

**The Australian Prose Poetry Anthology** In 2020 Melbourne University Press will be publishing an anthology of Australian prose poetry, edited by Cassandra Atherton and Paul Hetherington, and entitled 'The Australian Prose Poetry Anthology'.

This anthology will chart the trajectory of the Australian prose poetry from its beginnings to the present day, and will include about 150 works. Cassandra and Paul now invite submissions from contemporary Australian prose poets for consideration for publication in the anthology. Please note that all submissions **MUST** have been previously published in a journal, magazine, newspaper, anthology or volume of poetry (and please include these publication details in your submission). Please include a 50-word biographical note and your contact details, including address, email and phone number. All submissions should be emailed to [prosepoetryanthologymup@gmail.com](mailto:prosepoetryanthologymup@gmail.com) by 1 **March 2019**.

Poets who have prose poems selected for inclusion will be notified by 30 June 2019.

### Henry Lawson Society Literary Awards 2018-2019

Entry forms are now available for the 2018-2019 awards for : Traditional Rhyming Verse, Short Story, Free Verse, Henry Lawson Society poetry prize for members only and Wombat Award for poetry for children Under 12 years. Entries close 30 April, 2019. To download entry forms and for more info : [www.henrylawsonsociety.org](http://www.henrylawsonsociety.org) **Banjo Paterson Australian Poetry Competition 2019** For individual performance of original poetry. Entries close Wednesday 13 Feb, 2019, Contact Len Banks [lmbanks@bigpond.com](mailto:lmbanks@bigpond.com) or for more info : [www.banjopatersonfestival.com.au](http://www.banjopatersonfestival.com.au)

### DIARY OF EVENTS

**Saturday, December 8, 12-5pm:** Christmas Meeting of Wordsmiths. 8 Woodhouse Road, Doncaster East. Bring lunch to share prior to the meeting @ 2pm.

**Saturday, February 9, 2-5pm :** Meeting of Wordsmiths. 8 Woodhouse Road, Doncaster East.



### Women Like Us

Some evenings we just  
need to leave the house  
(me, and women like me).  
There may have been  
tears on the couch, or  
slicing at the sink, the glasses  
and island bench not  
nearly balm enough for our  
clenched teeth, our husbands  
fraying, and the dog unleashed.

Then the darkness draws us  
out where tears can prick  
our eyes. We can tell ourselves  
certain truths (or lies). We need  
to look at the dark gathering,  
the hint of evening in the sky  
and the moon almost swallowed  
up by next door's balcony.

We need to speak or  
swear at whoever listens out  
here (only later thinking of  
the neighbours), then head  
inside the fug and dinner smells  
of our house, the steel cicada  
of our conscience stilled for once.

*@Cathy Altmann*

### Emergence

Cocooned  
in a  
cave  
of  
woolly warmth  
...I hover...  
imperceptibly transitioning  
from dreamscapes  
down, down  
descending through layers  
of thoughts...  
...and ideas,  
to eventual wakefulness,  
awareness of  
self,  
and day...  
eyes closed,  
just marinating...  
in the blessed stillness  
of Sunday

*@Florence Lisner*

### Watershed

we walk pathways of secrecy  
wearing cloaks of invisibility  
fearing to be seen  
afraid to declare  
our Faith

we are tribal  
safe in the rhythms of our locality  
not seeing the fervour of  
our fellow man's craving for  
The Truth we hold within our sacred rituals

we are fungible people  
replacing The Truth with Humanism  
replacing the watershed of Baptism  
with the euphoria of the secular  
replacing Communion with community

give us space to  
renew  
regenerate  
rededicate  
ourselves to you

*@Carolyn Vimpani*