

# WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

19.1

February, 2019

Welcome to the first edition of Wordsmiths Newsletter for 2019.

I seem to have travelled a lot in the last 12 months. It's always enjoyable to visit new countries and cities, or revisit those you have seen before. It's 20 years since I was last in New York but had the opportunity as a chorister to tour for a week in January with our choir. On arrival from summer in Melbourne, Manhattan was a seriously chilly -15C and so we trudged the streets in ski coats, hats, gloves, scarves and anything else that would keep out the cold.

New York hasn't changed all that much in 20 years – still the iconic buildings, galleries, museums, and coffee stops for the bottomless cups of regular coffee the Americans seem to love. However, there was one thing that I did notice this time round, and that was poetry. Poetry is alive and well in Manhattan...everything from the Nuyorican Poets Café on the lower east side to billboards, street signs and using Haiku to promote safety : “Too averse to risk / To chance the lottery, yet / Steps into traffic.

Hanging from a sign near 46<sup>th</sup> Street was a four line poem by one of my favourite American poets Naomi Shihab Nye: Open / palms / hold / more. New York is also alive with catchy slogans and some great advertising lines. In Greenwich Village I read this on the window of the hairdresser: ‘We repair home-made haircuts’.

When poetry jumps out at you from around street corners or street signs or just appears on the sides of buildings, you instantly know that particular city is alive and well. I don't know about you, but poetry in public spaces restores my faith in humanity, regardless of country or continent.

Maybe 2019 is the year for us all to create some catchy lines and post them somewhere. The chiropractor a few streets from me has a blackboard outside the front fence where chalked pearls of wisdom or profound quotes just keep appearing.

So up to you how you spread the joy. Anything's possible. **Leigh Hay**

## PAST MEETINGS

**Leigh Hay** led the December meeting. Wordsmiths met at 12.00 to share a Christmas lunch together, followed by workshopping of poems. Leigh read three poems from *Light Unlocked: Christmas Card Poems*, including *December 25<sup>th</sup>*, *12 Noon* by Alison Brackenbury; *The Thorn* by Helen Dunmore; and *Bird Psalm* by U.A. Fanthorpe. The last meeting for 2018 was a very pleasant afternoon of shared poetry and friendship.

## 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.

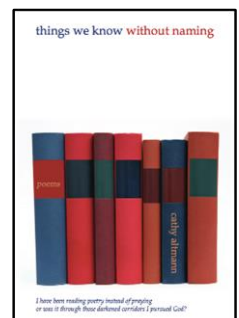
Date	Leader	Afternoon tea duty
Feb 9th	Florence	Jean, Cate, Daryl
Mar 9th	Jean	Peter Baker, Cath, Don
Apr 11th	Cate	Joan, Maree N, Peter W

## FROM THE TREASURER

Membership payments of \$30.00 for the year 1 January 2019 -31 December 2019 are now due. Payment in cash preferred, correct money if possible to Maree Silver (Treasurer), or if paying by cheque, make the cheque out to Poetica Christi Press.

## MEMBER NEWS

As a member of *The Wordsmiths* Cathy Altmann is to be congratulated on the publication by Poetica Christi Press of a second collection of poetry, *Things we know without Naming*, which was launched on December 8<sup>th</sup> at Presbyterian Ladies College.





Anne Elvey and Cathy Altmann at the launch

A sizeable crowd turned up for the launch – not surprising, as her first book, *Circumnavigation*, won the Fellowship of Australian Writers Ann Elder Award for the best first book of Poetry published in Australia.

As Janette was unable to come I started proceedings and introduced the launcher, Anne Elvey, who made a very appreciative assessment of Cathy's work. Her launch speech is to be included in the February issue of *Studio – Journal for Christian Writers*.

Cathy then read a number of her poems to much acclaim, with musical interludes provided by Peter Bartels on flute and Gudrun Beilharz playing piano. Those present enjoyed the range of food and drink offered afterwards and a buzz of conversation made it clear that people had enjoyed and were enjoying the occasion.

Jean Sietzema-Dickson



Cathy's family: Matt, Cathy, John and Sophie.

Cathy has also had three poems published in the online journal *live encounters* – see them here: <https://liveencounters.net/2019/01/25/live-encounters-poetry-writing-february-2019/>

Congratulations go to one of our oldest members, **Joan Ray**, on the occasion of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## MELBOURNE WRITERS' HUB

In December, the Melbourne Writers Hub was launched. The Hub offers writers and poets a variety of different services to get work published. Emerging writers and poets can find a mentor or book designer, an editor or proof reader, a web confidante or speaking coach, or a publisher specialising in self-publishing – fiction or nonfiction. Poetica Christi Press is involved with the Melbourne Writers Hub and to find out more, visit <https://www.melbwritershub.com>

## CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF JUDITH RODRIGUEZ AM (1936-2018)

A celebration of Judith Rodriguez' life and work will be held on the afternoon of **16th February, 2-4 pm** at The Wheeler Centre. There will be friends, family and writers speaking. If you are interested in coming, please RSVP to the eventbrite page:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/judith-rodriguez-celebration-tickets-54970331742>



## 2019 WELLSRING CENTRE POETRY DAYS

**The Wellspring Centre** will be conducting four days throughout 2019 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

### 2019 PCP Annual Poetry Competition

Entry forms for the PCP 2019 Annual Poetry Competition are now available. The theme for this year's competition will be **Love's footprint**. 1<sup>st</sup> prize \$300 2<sup>nd</sup> prize \$100, with 25 poems to be selected to be included in this anthology. Forms can be downloaded from PCP's website [www.poeticachristi.org.au](http://www.poeticachristi.org.au) or for more information, email [pcpcompetition@gmail.com](mailto:pcpcompetition@gmail.com) Closing date for the competition will be 30<sup>th</sup> April.

### 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.henrylawsonociety.org](http://www.henrylawsonociety.org)

### Banjo Paterson Australian Poetry Competition

For individual performance of original poetry. Entries close Wednesday 13 Feb, 2019, Contact

Len Banks [imbanks@bigpond.com](mailto:imbanks@bigpond.com) or for more info : [www.banjopatersonfestival.com.au](http://www.banjopatersonfestival.com.au)

**RABBIT** is currently accepting submissions of nonfiction poetry for **Issue 28: The POLITICS Issue**, to be guest co-edited by Alan Wearne and Ella O'Keefe. Send up to 3 poems (short or long) in *one document* through **RABBIT's** Submittable site. Please include a cover letter with your submission. For more information : [http://rabbitpoetry.com/?page\\_id=35](http://rabbitpoetry.com/?page_id=35) Submissions close Midnight Friday 12 April 2019.

## DIARY OF EVENTS

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

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

**Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 10-3 pm:** Poetry Day at Wellspring, 2 Y St, Ashburton, Theme: Poems from the Mystics, led by Elizabeth Lee. To book, phone: 9885 0277 or email [info@wellspringcentre.org.au](mailto:info@wellspringcentre.org.au).

**Saturday, April 13th, 2-5pm:** Meeting of Wordsmiths. 8 Woodhouse Road, Doncaster East.



## POETS' CORNER

### Memo

It's been pouring rain  
all day – even yesterday,  
and through the night...

so nice they sent along  
a rainbow (just an arc –  
sixty degrees or so)  
to let u know  
they didn't plan a flood.  
The memo must have gone  
right down the line –  
been executed by  
a junior lesser angel-aide  
to be so small.

© Joan Ray

### Interludes

Spaces, gaps  
always there,  
scary  
hard to enter.

Love, joy  
fear, pain  
envy, loss.

Often avoided,  
easily missed  
in the ocean of life.

Here's one now.

Be aware –  
avoid the scare.

Let go and live!

© Peter Baker

### Ball of String

*Job 35*

each person is like a ball of string  
it unwinds, rolls this way and that  
tangles itself in knots like anything  
and tries to get away from that  
which ties it to God  
his loving hand will release it  
let it travel near and far  
but his hand will never forsake it  
and to him it will always be clear  
exactly where string has trod

for he loves you and loves you still  
no matter where you have gone  
but he grants unto you free will  
to choose that path you go upon  
where your string is spent  
yes he yearns for you to roll closer  
and to come under his gentle care  
but he'll let you out if you wish to roll further  
he'll watch you when you're over there  
awaiting the wrath of his judgement

© Peter White

### The bush-fiddle

The bush-fiddle's broken.  
A thin pale nylon  
note unspoken  
curls to silence.

The string unswinging  
that fished for death  
lives transfixed, singing  
its onedrawn breath.

Like a sprouting twig  
of the mantelshelf  
it hangs by a peg  
and sings itself.

Tentatively  
the little gourd  
dreams its symphony  
("The Unheard").

Keats would have liked it.  
Keats died young.  
But it's not unlikely  
he knows the tune.

Calmly it ponders  
the cold square hearth  
and grows to the roundness  
of sky and earth.

Its bush-fruit belly  
is fat as the sun  
and brown as a gully  
and quiet as long.

The calabash made once  
a coolamon  
for a black bush baby;  
for me a song

a slow ripe fall  
of fruit and tendril  
so full so still  
I cannot mend it

© Judith Rodriguez  
from *New and Selected Poems*, UQP 1988

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To send any news for the May newsletter, email  
leighhay@optusnet.com.au by April 15th.  
Newsletter edited by Leigh Hay and Janette  
Fernando