



WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

19.2

May, 2019

Welcome to the second edition of Wordsmiths Newsletter for 2019.

I have always loved cards; birthday cards, Christmas cards, friendship cards and even get well cards, especially humorous ones. Recently, I needed to purchase a card to accompany a birthday present for my cousin, and I came across one that read *Music of the soul is heard throughout the universe*. As a chorister, this resonated with me immediately, but the more I thought about it, the more I realised that the card could just as easily have read *Poetry of the soul is read throughout the universe*.

Like music, poetry crosses boundaries. I have some poetry books at home that are written in Arabic. I have no idea what the poet is on about (unless there's an English translation which there sometimes is) but I just love the look of the curly Arabic alphabet or Arabic abjad – the Arabic script as it is codified for writing Arabic. It's written from right to left in a cursive style and includes 28 letters and as far as I'm concerned, the curlier the letters, the better. These poetry books are usually beautifully illustrated and this adds to the enjoyment of leafing through, just to appreciate their look and feel.

The works of great composers and great poets live on in our hearts and souls. I can't imagine a universe without music or poetry. Reading the poetry of other people is always a joy for me. Unless a poem is seriously deep and convoluted to the point of total mystery, I always gain something from taking on board what a poet is saying and sharing. Maybe that's why my bookshelves are crammed full of poetry books dating back decades. Tomorrow, of course, I'll commence the decluttering, but if you're like me, tomorrow never actually comes. Nor, if we're really honest, do we wish it to.

Unfortunately my collection of poetry is not just confined to books. On a shelf in my office I have a white plaster dove. This elegant bird, also inscribed in Arabic, has a love poem written across its wings. One day I'll have the Arabic translated, and when I do, I'll be sure to tell the universe.

Leigh Hay

PAST MEETINGS

Florence Lisner led the February meeting and shared her enthusiasm for Irish poet Seamus Heaney (1939-2013). From an Irish Catholic family, Heaney grew up on a farm and won many awards and accolades for his beautifully crafted, popular poetry. Professor of Poetry at Harvard and Oxford, Heaney won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995. Florence read '*Digging*', '*The Forge*', '*Mossbawn 1. Sunlight*' and '*Song*'.

Janette Fernando led March Wordsmiths with poems by Brian Doyle, poet, essayist and novelist who died at age 60 in May 2017. Brian had been editor of *Portland Magazine* at the University of Portland, and author of the essay collection *Grace Notes*. He was also a contributor to *Eureka Street*. Janette read *A corner of the cloak*; *Lily*; *In a pub on Latrobe Street in Melbourne*; and *In Reply to the Question*.

Cate Lewis led at the April meeting, with some background to poet George Herbert's life. Born in 1593, Herbert died aged 40 in 1633. Herbert lived through a vibrant age of poetry and was a Metaphysical (beyond science) poet and part of this movement. His poetry deals with religion, philosophy, and meaning of life and he presented new ideas. His short poems were complex and obscure and he is best known for *The Temple (Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations)*, published posthumously in 1633. Cate read *The Pulley*, *Easter Wings*, *Affliction*, *The Collar* and *Love (III)*.



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
May '19	Jean	Rebecca, Peter W, Janette
June '19	Carolyn	Florence, Leigh, Greg
July '11	Joan	Cecily, Linda, Maree S

FROM THE TREASURER

For anyone who has yet to pay their Membership for the year 1 January 2019 -31 December 2019, \$30 is 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

The recent **April Wordsmiths meeting** was extremely well attended, with 17 poets in attendance. It was a beautifully warm autumn



afternoon of poetry and encouragement, thoroughly enjoyed by all and thanks, as always, to Carolyn Vimpani for hosting the meetings in her home.

Linda McDermid was welcomed at our March meeting and **David Dwyer** was welcomed back to Wordsmiths at the April meeting after spending twelve months working in the Northern Territory.

Cameron Semmens published a new book in December for parents and children. Titled **One Big Wish**, Cam's text is sensitively illustrated by Carmen De Kock. **One Big Wish** is the story of a little girl with big hopes and a big imagination. Her parents don't live together anymore. It's confusing, and she feels weird about it. But with love and a new perspective she finds her way through. RRP is \$25. For orders go to : www.webcameron.com



PCP ANNUAL POETRY COMPETITION

Entries for judging in this year's PCP competition have now closed, but members of Wordsmiths are reminded to submit up to three poems they wish to have considered for inclusion. The theme is *Love's Footprints*. Email to Maree Silver poeticachristi@optushome.com.au or post to PO Box 110, Greensborough, 3088.

2019 WELLSRING CENTRE POETRY DAYS

Wellspring Centre will be conducting another three 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

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

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

Tuesday 8 October, Poems as Icons – facilitated by Julien Winspear

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

POETRY BOOK TO AID CAMBODIAN VILLAGES

South Australian poet and former judge for PCP **Jeff Guess** has authored and published **Scanning the Soul – Finding the poetry in everyday life**. The proceeds from sales of this collection of poetry will be used for the construction of wells to provide clean water for Cambodian villages. In addition, a new project is underway to send six Cambodian village girls to school <https://www.welldirected.org> RRP \$30 and if ordering a copy from Jeff direct, the RRP is \$25 (2 for \$40) post-free.

VALE LES MURRAY 1938-2019

Australia's unofficial Poet Laureate, Les Murray has died, at the age of 80. Born in Nabit on the New South Wales north coast, Murray went on to publish nearly 30 volumes of poetry over a career spanning several decades.

Dubbed "The Bard of Bunyah" — a reference to his affinity for the town he grew up in — the acclaimed author earned many accolades over the course of his life, including the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. Much of his work explored the history and landscape of Australia and his connection to the north coast region, including his 2015 volume, *On Bunyah*.

His agent, Margraet Connolly said he had a "profound understanding of Australia and Australian people" and his work put the country on the map.

Australian author David Malouf said Murray thought of himself as "the voice of people whose voice otherwise was suppressed and who were otherwise unseen or looked down on".

Jean Sietzema is leading Wordsmiths in May and will feature his poetry as a tribute to him.



COMPETITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Bruce Dawe National Poetry Prize

Open to Australian citizens or permanent residents of Australia. No theme, 50 lines, Entry fee \$6, First prize \$3000. Closes 31/5/2019. For more information :

<https://www.usq.edu.au/study/faculty-events/2019/02/bruce-dawe-poetry-prize>

2019 Poetry d'Armour Love Poetry Contest (WA Poets Inc)

Submissions are sought for original, unpublished love poems. First prize \$500. \$10 entry fee and poems must be less than 40 lines and suit the theme of love. All entries must be submitted by email as a word document. Closing date : 31/5/2019. For more information : <https://wapoets.com/poetry-damour/poetry-damour-love-poetry-contest/>

Newcastle Poetry Prize

Accepts poem or suite of poems, 200 lines, no theme. Entry fee \$33. First prize \$15,000. Closing date 12/6/2019. For more information :

<http://www.austwriters.com/AWRfiles/competitions.htm#BruceDawe>

Society of Women Writers NSW Inc National Writing competition 2019

For Short Story (Fiction and Non Fiction) and Poetry. Closing date 30/6/2019. For more information : <https://womenwritersnsw.org/competitions/>

Stories of Life

Stories of Life is a writing competition that seeks out stories of faith and testimony. We are looking for stories that are interesting, lively, perhaps even quirky. We love tales laced with warmth and humour that show evidence of God's reality.

The stories can be about any aspect of faith, so lateral thinking is welcomed. We love reading about how our extraordinary God has touched ordinary lives. You can tell us about how you came to know Jesus, about how he healed you or miraculously provided for you, or you can relate how he gave you strength when things were tough. Past stories have included a prison riot, a gecko running around in church and a mountain rescue. Apart from awarding cash prizes to winners in each category, we also publish selected stories in an anthology that is available by Christmas. Competition runs from April till July 31st. For more information go to storiesoflife.net

DIARY OF EVENTS

Saturday, May 11, 2-5pm: Meeting of Wordsmiths. 8 Woodhouse Road, Doncaster East.

Thursday, May 16th, 10-3 pm: Poetry Day at Wellspring, 2 Y St, Ashburton, Theme: *God's Fingerprints – Finding the Extraordinary in the ordinary – the poems of Luci Shaw*, facilitated by Janette Fernando. To book, phone: 9885 0277 or email info@wellspringcentre.org.au.

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

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



POETS' CORNER

Catrill

after heat
storm
after storm – rain
after rain...
catrilling crescendo –
crickets!

© cmb (Cath Barnard)

Arboreal

Nerves and arteries
open out
like flowers
where they spread
into a forest

Feelings shelter
beneath that canopy
grazing upon
each new growth
of sensation

Pain stalks
from bough and leaf
waiting
in predatory silence
for time and space
to strike
then kill

Hope hides
from such predation
dreaming instead
for night's freedom
and journeys across
open plains

Love has
already
undertaken
such a quest
we wonder
if it will ever
return

© Greg Burns

Any old Autumn afternoon in Melbourne

By 2.30 the day is perfect.
Belated birthday coffee with a friend
lemon-lime tart, girlish giggles –
who says we've aged?

Come 4.30 a river walk to burn off some carbs.
Boccherini's strings soothe my stride
as I skirt the oval beside the river
where cavorting Border Collies
make it look easy.

A rose-gold sky burnishes red tipped leaves
the last of the day's radiant warmth.
No breath of breeze as I turn for home
wondering what to cook for tea.

© Leigh Hay

Reflection

I take the cup
reflecting on this sign
of Jesus' blood.

But when I look
deep
in the wine
I see
my self
mirrored,

washed
in Jesus' blood.

© Janette Fernando

Poetry and Religion

Religions are poems. They concert
our daylight and dreaming mind, our
emotions, instinct, breath and native gesture

into the only whole thinking: poetry.
Nothing's said till it's dreamed out in words
and nothing's true that figures in words only.

A poem, compared with an arrayed religion,
may be like a soldier's one short marriage night
to die and live by. But that is a small religion.

Full religion is the large poem in loving repetition;
like any poem, it must be inexhaustible and complete
with turns where we ask Now why did the poet do
that?

You can't pray a lie, said Huckleberry Finn;
you can't poe one either. It is the same mirror:
mobile, glancing, we call it poetry,

fixed centrally, we call it a religion,
and God is the poetry caught in any religion,
caught, not imprisoned. Caught as in a mirror

that he attracted, being in the world as poetry
is in the poem, a law against its closure.
There'll always be religion around while there is
poetry

or a lack of it. Both are given, and intermittent,
as the action of those birds – crested pigeon, rosella
parrot –
who fly with wings shut, then beating, and again shut.

© Les Murray (from *The Daylight Moon*, 1987)