



WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

16.4

November, 2016

Welcome to the final edition of the Wordsmiths' newsletter for 2016.

As a poet, one of the things I most enjoy is hearing other poets read and share their work. There's something endlessly fascinating about how individual poets put words together and then read a poem with emphasis. It's a bit like interpreting Shakespeare's famous line : *To be or not to be, that is the question.....or ...To be or not? To be – that is the question!!*

A lifetime ago I worked at La Trobe University. One thing I looked forward to every now and then was making the trek from Biochemistry over to the English faculty in my lunch hour, to hear academic and poet Max Richards read his poetry and share the hour with other like-minded people. Max was always inclusive. He was friendly, and regardless of an individual's ability, he welcomed poets to read and share.

As a rank amateur I didn't have the confidence to read my poetry, so would just sit and listen, soaking up the ambience.

It was with sadness that I recently learned that Max had died – September 21, the result of a car accident in the United States. I looked for my copy of *Catch of the Day* – a collection of his entertaining and touching poems. His verses immediately took me back to La Trobe University and a room full of people, munching a sandwich or sipping coffee.

I couldn't tell you now who was there. All I remember is Max reading verse that made us laugh, sigh, sit in silence, or conjure up thoughts, experiences and memories of our own. I'm again reminded that much of the impact of our poetry is in the re-telling. It's often only in the retelling that we really hear the poet's voice. Vale Max Richards. Your wonderful poetry lives on.

Leigh Hay



PAST MEETINGS

At the August meeting : **Maree Silver** read poems to engage the senses, take the listener on a journey, and those that use metaphor or simile. Maree read poems by David Whyte – *The Lightest Touch*, Denise Levertov – *And I walked Naked ...* excerpt from *A Cloak*, and *Bearing the Light*, Nancy Murzyn *O Wonderful Weaver of the World*, John O'Donohue *For Presence*, and Ken Rookes *Wind-song*.

Don Helmore led Wordsmiths at the September meeting and talked about the use of poetry in prayers. Don read prayers from poets such as Leunig, the last verse of *The Star spangled banner*, Margaret Sheppard *Fidler*, Prayers taken from *The Beasts Choir* and *Prayers from the Ark* by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold (a French poetess translated by Rumer Godden 1963). Don also read Tsarina Alexandra's prayer poem 1918 when her family was under house arrest by the Bolsheviks, and a poem called *Winnie in Heaven*, built on Sir Winston Churchill's commentary "When I get to heaven I mean to spend a considerable portion of my first million years in painting."

Cath Barnard led in October. She read a poem titled 'All' by French Catholic priest, theologian and writer Michel Quoist (*100 Contemporary Christian Poets*) and also a poem that appears on a plaque in Beverley Minster, North Yorkshire, titled 'Resurgam – 1668' (Anon). Cath also read poems from *Let There Be God – The Creation* (by American author and civil rights activist James Weldon Johnson), *The Apple Tree* by Oliver St John Gogarty and *The Late Passenger* by CS Lewis.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Date	Leader	Afternoon tea duty
Nov 12	Poetry Workshop by Cam Semmens	Rebecca, Joan, Cecily
Dec 3	Bron	Christmas meeting : Everyone bring something to share



At our next meeting, on November 12th, we will have **Cameron Semmens** lead us in a poetry workshop from 2-3.30 pm. Please bring \$10, writing paper and a pen. Those of us who have experienced Cameron's poetry workshops have found them engaging and practical, so we

hope many of you will be able to attend.

Please note that in December we will be meeting a week early, ie. December 3rd. Please come at 1 pm if you can, and bring a plate of lunch to share.

MEMBER NEWS

When the Bugle Calls is a libretto written by our newsletter editor, published writer and poet **Leigh Hay**, *Poetica Christi* Press Committee Member, member of *The Wordsmiths of Melbourne* and member of the *Heidelberg Choral Society*. Commissioned and composed by Nicholas Buc.

Jean and I attended the world premiere of this libretto, held in the Performing Arts Centre of Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School on Saturday 13 August 2016. It commemorates the ANZAC's involvement in two wars fought half a century apart - the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, France, in World War 1 and the fiftieth anniversary of Long Tan in the Vietnam War, through music.

The libretto also acknowledges that the impact was felt more widely, especially among women who waited at home.

We were treated to a sophisticated and emotionally challenging performance by the Choir and the HCS Orchestra – conducted by Peter Bandy.

The libretto was also performed to a full house by the choir and orchestra in the Melbourne Recital Centre a week later on Saturday 20 August.

Congratulations to Leigh for writing this piece which I feel sure will be performed more widely in future.

Maree Silver

Maree Nikolaou is this year's President of the Henry Lawson Society. In October, the HLS hosted Seniors Week. The society was expecting 30 visitors who were invited to perform, along with other members.

We are glad to hear **Joy Chellew** is back home after a lengthy spell in hospital due to ophthalmic neuralgia, a complication of shingles.

DADIRRI LABYRINTH REFLECTION DAYS 2016

3rd December: A water baby in God's Love stream

"It is our helplessness a child sees, even when we cannot recognise it. And when a child moves to give us comfort, instinctively and without premeditation, we know that it is true that we are dependent, weak and needy creatures. In the end, these little ones, with the strength of their compassion, can bring to naught the brittle might of the powerful." Denham Grierson, *Focus on the Child*, p61. This day will be in silence after morning tea till love feast.

31st Dec: A Quiet New Year's Eve: Covenant Meditation

An opportunity to walk the Labyrinth at night, by candlelight and stars.

To make the transition to 2017 in quiet thankfulness to God.

8:15pm to midnight.

No charge. Please bring a small plate of supper to share. Please book by Friday 27th December

Location: 60 Bass Meadows Blvd, St Andrews Beach 3941. Contact Bronwyn Pryor, Tel. 5988 5257; email robron@pryor.org.au
<http://dadirri.pryor.org.au>

PCP 2016 ANNUAL POETRY COMPETITION :

Congratulations to **Will Moody** (winner) for his poem *Eternity* and to **Vianne Brain** (Runner-Up) for her poem *Radicalised*. We also congratulate Wordsmiths **Joan Ray**, **Vivien De Jong** and **Marguerite Varday** for having poems selected in the top 25 to go into the anthology. A full list of the winners can be found at our website www.poeticachristi.org.au.

We were very pleased to have **Andrew Lansdown** as our judge this year. Andrew is a widely published and award winning Australian writer, whose poems and stories have been published in numerous magazines and newspapers and are represented in over ninety anthologies. His published books include ten collections of poetry, two collections of children's poetry, two collections of short stories and three novels.



JUDGE'S REPORT FOR HOPE WHISPERS

I was honoured to be entrusted with the task of judging the Poetica Christi Press 2016 Annual Poetry Competition. There was an excellent

response to the Competition, with 190 poems entered.

While the quality of the entries was uneven, many fine poems were submitted. The poems were wide-ranging in subject and theme, touching on family relationships, the natural world, international terrorism, biblical characters, and personal experiences. There were love poems and nature poems, laments and narratives, dramatic monologues and personal lyrics. While the majority of the poems were free form, many included rhyme, and some included regular rhyming couplets or quatrains. It was pleasing to see poets experimenting with some traditional European and Japanese forms: sonnets, villanelles, rondeaux and haiku. While these experiments were not always successful, the poets are to be commended for their endeavours to understand and master the poetic craft.

It was also pleasing to note that most of the poems were cogent and accessible. There were very few poems that were confused or, worse, deliberately ambiguous.

I noticed that two flaws kept recurring and it may be helpful to mention these. The first problem concerns cliché. A cliché is a phrase, expression, image or aphorism that has become commonplace. Expressions such as (to cite just two examples) “take time to smell the roses” and “you blow my mind” are commonplace and hackneyed. They are easy to write and just as easy to forget. There is no freshness or vividness in clichés and that is why they have no place in poetry.

The second problem concerns the overuse of adjectives. Adjectives are often unnecessary. Certainly, it is a mistake to think that you can write a poem by piling on adjectives. In some poems, virtually every noun was qualified by an adjective. And some of these adjective-noun combinations were themselves clichés—for example, “silken hair”, “salty tears”, “golden sun”. Thousands of years ago, the first person to describe hair as “silken” or tears as “salty” or sunlight as “golden” did something original and impactful. But since then, the descriptions have been used again and again, tens of thousands of times, so they are now totally lacking in originality and their only impact is to create a sense of overwriting and under-thinking.

Even when they are not clichéd, adjectives can often be *overly* poetic, making the poem feel sentimental and twee. Talk of “noble trees”, “barefoot joy” and “ebony-satin shadows”, for example, are the poetic equivalents of purple prose. In fact, the problem with such adjectives is

twofold: They are melodramatic, and hence off-putting; and they are deceptive, convincing the poet that sharing emotion is the same as, and as simple as, declaring emotion. Like clichés, adjectives seem like poetic shortcuts, but in reality they are often poetic dead-ends.

Well, I offer these comments with kind intentions and I hope they will prove beneficial to the poets who read them. I commend the entrants in general and the winner and the runner-up in particular.

Andrew Lansdown

COMPETITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Rhonda Jankovic literary awards

Closes 25 November. Named in honour of the late Rhonda Jankovic, highly respected social justice advocate & former host of Radio 3CR poetry program ‘Spoken Word’. Two sections: Poetry 1st Prize \$600, Judge: Claire Gaskin; Short Story 1st Prize \$600, Judge: Helen Cerne. Each winner also awarded trophy – an engraved vintage 3CR Sound Bite Cartridge. Certificates for 2nd, 3rd places, Commended/Highly Commended. Theme: Social Justice. Poems to 50 lines, Stories to 2,500 words. Entry fee \$5 per poem or story entered. Enquiries, Entry Conditions and Form: rhondajls@westnet.com.au

Overland Judith Wright Poetry Prize for New and Emerging Poets

Closes : Sunday, November 20, 2016 Established in 2007, with support from the Malcolm Robertson Foundation, the *Overland* Judith Wright Poetry Prize for New and Emerging Poets seeks outstanding poetry by writers who have published no more than one collection of poems under their own name. It remains one of the richest prizes for emerging poets. In 2016, the major prize is \$6000, with a second prize of \$2000 and a third prize of \$1000. All three winners will be published in the first issue of *Overland*'s print magazine next year. <https://overland.org.au/prizes/overland-judith-wright-poetry-prize-for-new-and-e...>

Ron Pretty Poetry Prize

Closes 22nd November 2016

The prize is named in honour of the distinguished Australian poet Ron Pretty, who founded Five Island Press in 1986 and has himself published eight collections and four chapbooks. The prize will be awarded to a single poem of up to 30 lines, and is open to anyone over the age of 18 years.

Entry fee is \$25 for the first poem and \$10 for subsequent poems. There are no limits on entries. Online submissions only.

<http://fiveislandspress.com/ron-pretty-poetry-prize>



POETS' CORNER

Flinders Street to Meenyan Sth Gippsland 1960

The train clatters
through green velvet hills
lush grass and dairy herds

Collected at the country station
driven to the farm for our weekend visit

A hint of sunrise wakes us

Frosted grass crunching under gumboots
we bring in cows from a far paddock

Stalled in the shed
udders washed
machines attached
milk lets down
is pumped into cans

Sheds and yards
hosed clean by chilled hands

Thick slabs of home-cured bacon
served with eggs on toast
our hearty breakfast

That evening at the town hall
locals find us exotic
We don't miss a dance

Home to bed in cold cotton sheets
Stretch full length make a warm place

Return train to city
arrive at hostel before lock-down

Memories sustain us
through weeks of study

© Maree Silver

willing hands

willing hands
enlisted
rotating relocating
rearranging pots for
a Spring display

*'let's put
the beautiful cyclamens
on the verandah'...*

'all-done grandma'

limp
tattered
battered bunched
lie fuchsia-pink blooms

a testimony
to miscommunication

©Carolyn Vimpani

August 1953

The snow came down my birthday night
and morning showed us patchy white
remnants, left where the trees spread wide.
We were quite glad to stay inside
enjoying warmth from the open fire,
not quite sure that our desire
to make the most of days indoors
when lack of sun gave chance to pause
from constant busyness and fun
to sit by the fire instead of sun
and to read the books we'd read aloud
to savour them slowly word by word,
was legitimate or proper. So we still hid
them under the covers on our beds, did as bid
till the day was ended and night came down
and we found ourselves an imaginary town
where things started to happen...

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