

# WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

21.4

December, 2021

Welcome to the last issue of Wordsmiths newsletter for 2021.

It's certainly been another up and down twelve months to say the least. Curfews, closures, restrictions and lockdowns have burdened our spirits for a second year. At least Melbourne's Wordsmiths have been able to workshop their poetry online. Recently, I was reminded of just how much poetry can mean to people.

As a committee member, I was involved in the planning of a ladies' retreat. The theme was *Blooming : Hope, Worthiness, Renewal*. The retreat had to be hosted on Zoom and the committee spent weeks preparing resources that could be emailed to participants. These included colouring templates, stories and my task – a selection of poetry. This sent me on a search through previous editions of PCP's anthologies, and also re-reading the poetry of *Solace*, one of two editions of Don Helmore's poetry published by PCP shortly after Don's death on 28 February this year. Participants at the retreat were given an hour to quietly reflect on the poetry provided and many spoke of how Don's work had resonated with them. They felt uplifted and calmed by Don's words, and as a result, some shared their motivation to take up poetry writing.

It's easy to forget that our poetry can connect with people. Our words have the potential to inspire, entertain, encourage and comfort. I think Don would be happy to know that his poetry is continuing to touch the lives of others.

**Leigh Hay**

## MEETINGS

**Greg Burns** led the August Zoom meeting, which 12 Wordsmiths attended.

Greg talked of 19<sup>th</sup> Century poet Edward Lear (1812-1888). Lear was the 20<sup>th</sup> of 21 children – the youngest to survive – and worked as an

illustrator at age 15. A serious ornithological draughtsman, Lear was the first illustrator to draw birds from nature. He was employed by the Zoological Society then employed from 1832-36 by the Earl of Derby who had a private menagerie. Lear suffered health problems throughout his life, including epilepsy and in later life partial blindness. He composed music and wrote a travelogue. Lear is best known for his nonsense poems. Greg read *The Owl and the Pussycat*, *How Pleasant to know Mr Lear*, *The Table and the Chair* and a limerick.

14 Wordsmiths attended the September meeting, which was led by **Janette Fernando**. Janette discussed the poetry of Andrew Lansdown (b 1954), a WA poet and author of 25 books, including books for children. Andrew is well known for writing Haiku and Tanka and has been a former judge of PCP's annual anthology competition. In his life he has been a Minister, educator in prisons and teacher of creative writing. He was also shortlisted for the 2021 Christian Book of the Year Awards with *Abundance*. The group watched a short video of an interview with Andrew and Janette read *Sonnet of Thanksgiving*, *Counterpoise*, *Waking and Always* and *Fontanelle*.

The October meeting was led by **Leigh Hay** who introduced the work of Melbourne poet Jennifer Chrystie. Jen's poems have been published widely in Australia as well as the UK and the US. In Australia, her poetry has been featured in numerous magazines, including editions of *Studio*, *Poam* and *Poetry Monash*. Her first poetry collection, *Polishing the Silver* (Ginninderra Press 2006) was commended in the Fellowship of Australian Writers Anne Elder Award. In August 2020, Jen was one of five poets featured in Banyule Council's online Liminal Exhibition where a bio of each poet and a description of their poem was uploaded, and

poets were filmed reading their works. Jen gave a workshop to Wordsmiths in 2020, is a regular contributor to PCP's anthologies and earlier this year Ginninderra Press published her latest poetry collection, titled *Poetry Pond*, from which Leigh read *Blossom Dreaming, Mr Marmalade, Memory Quilt* and *Lemon*.

13 Wordsmiths attended the November Zoom meeting which was led by **Cath Barnard**. Cath led with her own prayer, then read Mary Oliver's poem: *Sam in the Pinewoods*. Cath spoke about Mary Oliver (19/9/1935 – 17/1/2019) who won the National Book Award and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Cath read *While I am Writing a Poem to Celebrate Summer the Meadowlark begins to sing, Can you imagine, Oxygen, Of the Empire, The Orchard* and *I Wake Close to the Morning* – poems taken from Mary's book titled *Devotions*.

#### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

We have our last meeting for the year on **Saturday, December 11<sup>th</sup>**, by Zoom and it will be hosted this time by Peter White. We'd like to thank Carolyn Vimpani for hosting the other Zoom meetings this year. We hope that by February next year, we'll be able to meet again in person. However, it will depend on restrictions easing. We'll let you know in the first newsletter next year.

#### POETICA CHRISTI PRESS NEWS

##### Launch of *SILVER LININGS*



Poetica Christi Press invites you to the launch of *Silver Linings* – an anthology of poetry edited by Maree Silver and Janette Fernando. Ann Lock from the WellSpring Centre will launch the book, followed by refreshments.

*Silver Linings* includes poems by the winners of the 2021 PCP poetry competition with contributions from The Wordsmiths of Melbourne and others. A number of poets will have the opportunity to read their work.

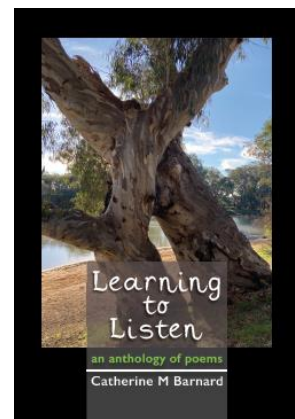
**When** : Sunday December 12, 2021.

**Where** : Arbour space at Box Hill Community Arts Centre, Cnr Station & Combarton Sts, Box Hill. Enter from Combarton Street, parking available in car park opposite and surrounding streets. Could any Wordsmiths attending please bring a plate of food? Note that due to Government regulations, only fully vaccinated people may attend.

RSVP to [poeticachristi@optushome.com.au](mailto:poeticachristi@optushome.com.au)

Don Helmore died earlier this year, but his poetry books, *Beyond* and *Solace* are now available to buy from Maree @ \$20 & \$17 (or both for \$35). Use the attached Order form.

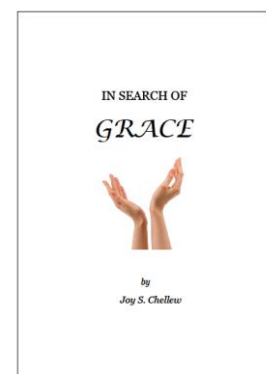
PCP Has also just published a book of poems by Wordsmith **Cath Barnard**, titled *Learning to Listen*. The launch is likely to take place early next year.



#### MEMBER NEWS

Congratulations to **Janette Fernando** on the birth of a new granddaughter, Zoé Judith, born to Tim and Lisle. Janette and Roger are looking forward to travelling to Alice Springs for Christmas to meet her.

Congratulations to **Joy Chellew** who has a new book out, her fourth collection, this time called *In Search of Grace*. Please keep her and her family in your prayers, as her son Peter is suffering from lymphoma on the brain and isn't expected to live very long.



## VALE BARBARA RAUTMAN

WellSpring has advised that Barbara Rautman died peacefully on Friday, 12 November 2021. Barbara is remembered for her significant contribution to WellSpring. She completed her formation as a spiritual director in 2003 and accompanied many in their spiritual journeys, both in direction and on retreat. I first met Barbara Rautman many years ago when I asked at WellSpring for a Spiritual Director. When I found that she loved poetry I knew that I had found the person I needed.

Barbara was a wonderful listener, as was testified by many others at the thanksgiving service for her life held last week at WellSpring. Over the years she became a valued friend to whom I could turn, asking for prayer for myself or others. She always encouraged me about my poetry, but perhaps her greatest gift was the establishment of Poetry Days at WellSpring. Sitting in a circle, one person would read a poem from the collection she had gathered for us. We sat silently until a second person read and then after a short pause began to respond to the poem. In this way we really learned to hear the poem in depth and were all greatly enriched. From this Barbara developed the Poetry Network, which continues to this day.

One of her blessings given to the Wordsmiths was the leading of a Quiet Day for us in 2007, which was appreciated by all.

I grieve the loss of a treasured friend.

- Jean Sietzema



## COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

**Harwood Poetry Prize** : Submit poems of between 20 and 100 lines, in any form. Entry fee: \$16.50. Closing date: Thursday 9 December. For more information, visit Islands Website :

[https://islandmag.com/submit?mc\\_cid=f84d0b58d8&mc\\_eid=1599ec8ace](https://islandmag.com/submit?mc_cid=f84d0b58d8&mc_eid=1599ec8ace)

**Kembla Flame Written Bush Poetry Competition** : Submit poems that have a theme or subject matter that is Australian by nature and have a consistent rhyme and meter. Categories: open, novice and junior. Entry fee: \$6 per poem or three poems for \$10. Closing date: Friday 24 December. Download an entry form from Australian Bush Poets Website :

<https://www.abpa.org.au/award-winning-poetry.html>

**The 2022 Heroines Anthology/Joyce Parkes Women's Writing Prize** is now open for submissions of short fiction and poetry. The *Heroines Anthology* is a collection of stories of women written by women with a particular focus on telling lost women's history, untold stories, and reimagined myths. Theme :Women. Closes: 28 February 2022. Entry fee \$15;

<https://www.theneoperennialpress.com>

The first ever **Minds Shine Bright** Writing Competition is now open to entries. After a time where the arts have struggled it's time for creative voices to be heard. The theme for this, our first competition, is **confidence**. There are four categories including poetry – up to 240 lines.

Deadline: 28 February 2022, Entry Fee: \$5

Prizes: \$1000 overall winner, \$500 for each category winner, \$100 commendations. Winning and commended entries will be published in an anthology in mid 2022.

For information and to enter visit <https://mindsshinebright.com>



## POETS' CORNER

### Crested Pigeon

Whistling wingbeats  
flash of iridescence  
smoky crest held high  
summer grass ripe with seed

you celebrate your territory  
with soft murmurings  
strut and spread your wings  
and sink into a dust bath

an unseen predator  
crouching on all fours  
also has an eye for beauty  
you rise in time on rainbow wings

my heart sings at your escape  
and from the safety of a bough  
you preen, confident, unperturbed  
crest held high and golden eye.

© Cecily Falkingham

### Sentinel

Clouds glower  
threateningly;  
a huge boulder  
looms above the beach,  
sitting mute and unmoved,  
impervious to waves  
that can't reach it.

Looking out over the sea,  
the ragged spine of an island  
juts from the water.  
Rain spears suddenly  
from a darkened sky;  
spooked seagulls seek shelter.

As the storm breaks,  
Sentinel remains silent.

© Daryl Pobke

### Awaiting a canopy

Grey clouds scud  
harried by a chill wind.  
My elm tree is bare now  
disrobed denuded  
a lofty skeleton of woody bones.

Stalwart it stands  
accepting of winter's will.  
Buffeted but unbending, its  
unadorned twigs a stark reminder  
of the obligatory seasons.

Come spring, interwoven branches  
will bud a profusion  
of swaying green pompoms.  
Stratified bark will be shed anew –  
a semaphore to summer.

© Leigh Hay

### Dawn

A temporary stillness  
after a night  
reaching out to God  
searching for peace

How many times  
I surfaced  
reaching out  
returning to sleep

Then stirred  
by early bird calls  
signs of dawn

In the stillness  
I awoke at peace  
giving thanks

© P G Baker

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Send any news for the February 2022  
newsletter to [treehousepoet318@gmail.com](mailto:treehousepoet318@gmail.com)  
by January 15 2022. Newsletter edited by  
Leigh Hay and Janette Fernando.