



WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

22.2

May, 2022

It's May already and like most of us, I am staggered at just how quickly the days and months of the year are evaporating. Time is doing a runner and I have absolutely no idea where it's going!

As for my New Year resolutions, they're a thing of the past and I'm not even sure that I can remember them now that we're five months into the year.

So what things do stay in our memory, year after year, until even in old age we can still recall them? It's a known medical fact that as we age, our ability to recollect childhood events is sharpened as opposed to what we had for lunch or what we did yesterday. I spent eight years looking after my mother-in-law who was confined to a bed in a nursing home. We put together a photograph album for her so that she could recognise (sometimes) family members and old friends. I also purchased some cryptic crossword books for her as she was known in our family as the Cryptic Queen, but unfortunately she forgot how to work out the clues. Songs from WWII she could recall, but again, this was hit and miss when it came to the words of the songs. The most fun I had with Mother Duck (my pet name for her) was to begin reciting a poem from AA Milne's *When We Were Very Young*. In a flash M-D would complete the poem, word for word. She never missed. She could remember words by Kipling, Tennyson, Lawson & Paterson. At 97, she could still sing and recite nursery rhymes. After nearly a century of living, poetry was the one thing she could accurately recall. Poems read to her in childhood were still embedded in her nonagenarian brain.

It would be nice to think that the poetry we're creating today will be read, recited and remembered a century from now.

Leigh Hay

PAST MEETINGS

Maree Silver led the February Zoom meeting, attended by 9 members of Wordsmiths. Maree gave some background on Bruce Dawe (1930-

2020), one of the most influential of Australian poets. In 1984 he was awarded the Christopher Brennan Award. Dawe wrote for all Australians and was an anti-war poet. He had many jobs throughout his life and continued to write poetry up to his death at age 90. Maree read *Homecoming, Public Library, Melbourne, No fixed Address (for old Harry)* and *Easy Does It*.

Janette Fernando led the Zoom meeting on 12 March, which was attended by 14 members of Wordsmiths. Janette chose prayer poems from the recently published book *Prayers of a secular world*, edited by Jordie Albiston (who passed away on 28 February) and Kevin Brophy. Janette read *Eggs* – Frank Alile; *First Knight* – Anna Ryan-Punch; *Silence* – Laura Jan Shore; *The Air Holds its Breath* – Anne M Carson and *Why Do We Exist?* – Chris Wallace-Crabbe.

The April meeting was led by **Peter White**, and 13 poets attended on Zoom. Peter talked about Wendell Berry, American novelist, poet, essayist and environmental activist. Educated at the University of Kentucky, Berry is known for his Sabbath poems, motivated by his long-time habit of walking out onto the land on Sunday mornings. Berry's poetry reflects nature and Christianity. Peter read *Sabbath V* (1985), *Sabbath III* (2012) *Sabbath X* (1979) and *Remembering that it Happened Once*.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

We are looking forward to having the May meeting on Saturday 14th of May, in person again at Carolyn's place, though Zoom is also an option.

Month	Leader	Afternoon tea
May	Jean	Janette, Leigh, Greg
June	Florence	Maree S, Peter W, Jean
July	Greg	Cath, Cecily, Daryl

MEMBER NEWS



Congratulations to **Cath Barnard** on the launch of *Learning to Listen*. Published by Poetica Christi Press, *Learning to Listen* was launched by the Rev Mark Dunn at Manningham Uniting Church on Sunday February 27. This

anthology of poems by Cath is her first ever published work. Delightfully enhanced with sketches by her daughter Myrawin, Cath's poems help us to consider how we can be reconciled with the First Peoples of this land and in what ways we can help to preserve and conserve the wonderful natural world around us. Cath read a number of her poems at the launch, interspersed with beautifully executed musical interludes played by her granddaughter Quilby Nelson, an accomplished concert pianist. Janette Fernando acted as MC for the launch, which was followed by afternoon tea.



L to R: Myrawin, Quilby, Cath, Mark Dunn

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual membership fees of \$25 or \$20 concession are now due. (Fees have been reduced due to Zoom meetings). Direct transfers can be made - Name : Poetica Christi Press, BSB: 633-000 Acc: 118162593. Please see the attached reply slip for details.

VALE JORDIE ALBISTON & BLAISE VAN HECKE

Sadly, two leading lights in the poetry and publishing world passed away in recent months.

JORDIE ALBISTON



On 28 February, Melbourne poet Jordie Albiston died, aged 60. Jordie studied music (flute) at the Vic College of the Arts, and then went on to gain a doctorate in English literature from La Trobe University. Jordie was widely published and anthologised. Her work was translated into several languages, and she received some of the nation's major prizes and awards, including the Mary Gilmore Award (for *Nervous Arcs*), the NSW Premier's Literary Award and the Wesley Michel Wright Prize for Poetry. Her published output includes 13 poetry collections, three books of children's poetry and a substantial handbook on poetic form. Some of her poetry drew on archival and documentary sources; two such collections – *Botany Bay Document* (1996) and *The Hanging of Jean Lee* (1998) – were adapted for music-theatre by the composer Andree Greenwell, both enjoying seasons at the Sydney Opera House and both released on CD. Alongside her own writing, Jordie was a mentor to many poets, both younger and older, an astute and sensitive editor of poetry, and an inspiring teacher. She was also a keen practitioner of the art of bell-ringing, as well as a proud and enthusiastic member of the Cloud Appreciation Society. Overwhelmed that her most recent collection, *Fifteeners*, had won the John Bray Award in the 2022 Adelaide Festival Awards for Literature, she had been preparing to travel to Adelaide for the ceremony on March 5 when her life was tragically cut short. She died in her sleep on February 28.

BLAISE VAN HECKE

On Sunday 13 March, Blaise van Hecke suddenly and unexpectedly passed away, aged 53. Blaise touched many lives with her kindness, her warmth, and her selflessness. For over a decade Blaise was the director of Busybird Publishing, located in Montmorency. She also launched the PCP anthology *Imagine*. A long standing member of the Small Press Network, Blaise was also closely involved with the Society of Women Writers, Yarra Plenty Regional Library, Banyule Council and the

Nillumbik Arts advisory committee. Blaise was much respected as someone who helped many authors to self-publish. She wrote a number of volumes of memoir based on her extraordinary early life and subsequent travels, as well as *The Book Book* about the process of publishing. She will be sadly missed by all her knew her.

We were privileged to have Blaise launch one of the anthologies, *Imagine*, published by Poetica Christi Press in 2016.



Maree Silver, Blaise van Hecke and Janette Fernando at the launch of *Imagine*.

KARDIA FORMATION 2022

90-Day Full Spiritual Exercises Retreat

Directors : Rachel McLoughlin and Colleen Johnson. 16 May-28 Aug 2022 (with a break in the retreat 25 June-10 July 2022)

Grace Upon Grace : Savouring the Spiritual Exercises through the Arts by Marlene Marburg, is an inclusive and contemporary retreat normally prayed in daily life over 30 weeks. During this 90 day retreat, participants will pray each of the thirty weeks over three days (instead of seven days) with two one-hour prayer sessions per day. The retreat will include weekly individual spiritual direction and a weekly small group sharing session – both will be conducted online via Zoom.

For more information :
<https://www.kardia.com.au/programs/retreats/90-day-retreat/>

EVENTS AT WELLSRING CENTRE

Christian Meditation – every Friday, 10-11am. Format : By Zoom at Ashburton or in person. A weekly gathering for an hour of meditation with a mixture of music, silence and short recorded talk. Suggested donation \$5.

Winter Solstice with Marg Donald

Gathering for reflection and meditation to encourage our hearts as we honour the beauty and darkness of winter. 21 June 10-11.30. Cost \$27. Registrations close 2 June.

For more information on these :

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

COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

ACU Poetry Prize

Australian Catholic University is putting the call out to poets from around the nation to share a glimmer of hope in a world shaken by a global pandemic, worsening natural disasters and the threat of global conflict. The 2022 ACU Prize for Poetry opened on Monday 4 April for all Australian residents to craft their finest poems on the theme of 'Hope', inspired by a line from Alfred Lord Tennyson's famous play Robin Hood : "Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering 'it will be happier'..."

Entries for the prize, which has a coveted \$20,000 prize pool will close on July 4, 2022.

More information about how to enter:

www.acu.edu.au/prizeforpoetry

Poetry submissions are open for ISLAND 165 – due for publication July 2022. Submissions close at midnight on 15 May 2022. For more information, visit the Island website at <https://islandmag.com/submit>.

2022 Bruce Dawe National Poetry Prize This year, the winner will receive \$3000, and two highly commended entrants will receive \$500 each. The winners will be announced in August. The annual prize continues to be generously endowed by the late Emeritus Professor Bruce Dawe AO. Entries close on Monday 6 June 2022. For further information, please visit <https://www.usq.edu.au/bruce-dawe-prize> or email brucedaweprize@usq.edu.au

Newcastle Poetry Prize 2022

\$25,000 prize pool and the opportunity to be published in the 2022 anthology. Closes 8pm Monday 27 June 2022. For further information <https://hunterwriterscentre.org/newcastle-poetry-prize-2022>

Send any news for the August 2022 newsletter to treehousepoet318@gmail.com by July 15 2022. Newsletter edited by Leigh Hay & Janette Fernando



POETS' CORNER

Lost and Found

Alone or in a crowd
deceived or deceiving
betrayed or betraying
all is not lost.

Deserted or deserting
useless or misused
hot or cold with grief
all is not lost.

If today is a struggle
in valleys of unseeing
through plains of despair
all is not lost.

Through Christ's death
His glorious resurrection
His love always for us, with us
believing we are found!

© Joy Chellew

Night

The Night recedes
from the sky.
Branches can only
be made out as a
deeper darkness.
his day is
ended. Cars still
swarm like fish
on the tide of
night, coming in
a faster rush
now sound is
magnified. I feel
my way in the
dark, breathe
the air which
has been held
and released
by the tree
from its net of
branches – wait
for the slow

opening of
night, like
an abalone
silvered over
with the spoils
of light.

© Cathy Altmann

pools

breeze interrupted images
shifting surface
unstable reflections
fragmentation

a kaleidoscope
of brokenness
disjointed pictures
of existence

impressionist paintings
of reality
encompassing an intrinsic beauty
in colour and movement

© Carolyn Vimpani

Isolation

Shut away from life's usual busyness
I hear the purr of passing traffic
its tireless roar muted
so many vehicles idle.
This morning's bird-shriek
lessens to sporadic tweets.
Quietness bathes the neighbourhood.

The earth, unaware of changing times
sends up the pink and red florets
of nerine and naked lady.
The pumpkin flowers fertilise
and swell with miniature fruit.
Leaves turn burgundy, gold and bronze
storing food, preparing for winter.

Floating inside this bubble
tranquillity
washes
over me.

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