



# WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

22.4. 2022

Welcome to the last edition of the Wordsmiths newsletter for 2022.

We don't have to be reminded that another year is nearly over and Christmas is fast approaching. The give-away is when bells and baubles, Advent calendars, chocolates, fruit cakes and packets of stollen appear in supermarkets. As a stollen lover I have nothing against this exquisite marzipan cake, but each year it seems to arrive that much earlier. Food is an important part of Christmas (as are gifts, cards and family get-togethers). But for poets, Christmas is also the ideal time to write reflective, meaningful, uplifting poetry. A few years ago I discovered a book titled *Light Unlocked – Christmas Card poems*. The book was published in the UK, so many of the poems relate to a winter Christmas. Most are not overly religious or sentimental, but rather a seasonal reflection, be it festive or otherwise. One of my favourites is by Jackie Kay, titled 'Promise'.

*Remember, the time of year / when the future appears / like a blank sheet of paper / a clean calendar, a new chance. / On thick white snow / you vow fresh footprints / then watch them go / with the wind's hearty gust. / So fill your glass. Here's tae us. Promises / made to be broken, made to last.*

I know this time of year is busy with all manner of end of year commitments, but there's still time to sit down and write your Christmas poem, or perhaps your festive season only poem, or end of year poem, or beginning of next year poem...or maybe just a poem that has absolutely nothing to do with anything at all.

Whatever you write, bring it along to Wordsmiths to workshop in 2023.

**Leigh Hay**

## MEETINGS

**Florence Lisner** led the August meeting with the poetry of Dylan Thomas (1914-1953). Thomas was probably the most celebrated poet of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Swansea, Wales, Thomas wrote

from an early age. A heavy drinker, he was subject to depression, yet his poetry contained original metaphors and no clichés. Invited to the USA in the 1930s, he achieved rock-star status, as he epitomised the archetypal poet with his lilting Welsh accent and poetry that was alive and relatable. Best known for his poem *Do not go gentle into that dark night*, Thomas died at age 35, only 11 months after his father's death. Florence read *Elegy; Fern Hill; In October* and *We Lying by Seasand*. She also read some of his original metaphors.

The September meeting was led by **Carolyn Vimpani**. Carolyn told us about Andy Jackson, a poet diagnosed with Marfan's Disease (crooked spine) and read from his book of auto-biographical poetry where he speaks for the disabled.

October Wordsmiths meeting was led by **Cecily Falkingham**. Cecily led with D.H Lawrence, and provided the group with a short biography and read the poem *Violets*. David Herbert Lawrence was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire in 1885. Lawrence was the fourth of five children born to a miner and his middle class wife, and Cecily admitted Lawrence is one of her favourite poets.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Unless notified otherwise, meetings will be held at Carolyn Vimpani's at 8 Woodhouse Grove, Doncaster East, from 2- 5 pm. Some have asked if we can have hybrid meetings so that they can attend via Zoom and we're pleased to say that thanks to Greg and Peter White, we will also have Zoom available whenever they are present. This will mean that you all need to send your poems to Peter White [petjamfrog@hotmail.com](mailto:petjamfrog@hotmail.com) by the Thursday before the meeting so that he can prepare a power point which Zoom participants can see.

For the December meeting, please bring a plate of lunch to share and meet at 1.30 pm instead of 2 pm.

Month	Leader	Afternoon tea
Nov 12th		Janette, Maree N & S
Dec 10th		All bring lunch to share

## MEMBER NEWS

**Leigh Hay** was profiled in the October edition of the Society of Women Writers magazine. Under the theme 'Spread the Words' Leigh was featured as a writer of children's books with images of *Cosmo flies into Christmas*, *A Zoo of Gutsy Goodness* and *Stick Your Neck Out*.



Congratulations to **Jean Sietzema-Dickson** who celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with a party at her home in Box Hill North, on Saturday 27 August.

40 guests helped her celebrate and enjoy a formal finger food dinner

prepared by Jean's children and grandchildren. Jean's birthday was officially August 8. A founding member of Wordsmiths and Poetica Christi Press, Jean has worked tirelessly to promote PCP and poetry. She was Managing Editor of PCP up until 2007. Jean is well known in the Melbourne poetry scene in particular. We wish her continued good health, and many more years of writing.

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual membership fees of \$25 or \$20 concession are now due. Direct transfers can be made - Name : Poetica Christi Press, BSB: 633-000 Acc: 118162593.

## LAUNCH OF *TRANSFORMATION* ANTHOLOGY (Edited by Maree Silver & Janette Fernando)

Poetica Christi Press invites you to the launch, by Rev Dr Mark Garner of *Transformation* poetry anthology on **Sunday Nov 13th, 2022.**

**4.45pm for official launch, books available from 4.30pm** at the Arbour space at Box Hill Community Arts Centre.

*Transformation* includes poems by the winners of the 2022 PCP Poetry competition with contributions from the Wordsmiths of Melbourne and others. A number of poets will have the opportunity to read their work.



## JUDGE'S REPORT OF THE 2022 Poetica Christi Press Poetry Competition

Dr Mark Garner judged the competition and here is his report:

It was very encouraging to read such a large number of poems on wide-ranging topics: enthusiasm for writing poetry is far from dead! A good poem typically makes us as readers surprised by something familiar, and we are made to think about its significance in a new way. A good poem changes us in some way, however small. This was true of the majority of entries: the poetic eye was very much in evidence, making the task of judging quite demanding. It was by no means easy to decide which ones should be included in my final list, by selecting approximately one in ten of the total number of contributions. A number of contributors were unlucky that their works, although worthy, did not quite meet my criteria for selection.

There is evidence in a number of poems that the authors had worked hard on crafting the language in order to express their meanings in a striking and memorable manner. This requires a particular sensitivity to the extent to which language can be reworked from the everyday in order to communicate profound, often highly personal, thoughts to others.

Unfortunately, this creative capacity was not always in evidence, and some poems slid into obscurity. It is rarely effective simply to write a string of synonyms or related words, without embedding them in some way in fuller text. Nor can it be assumed that simply breaking the conventions of typescript and presenting the poem in an unusual physical layout will necessarily

complement or enhance the meaning. The physical difficulty of reading can detract from, rather than contribute to, what the writer wants to express.

There was also a sizeable minority of entries that, for all their artistry, did not really engage with the theme of 'transformation'. A number spoke eloquently and movingly of an intensely personal experience, very often in the first person, but did not express how this had led to, or taken the form of, personal change, metamorphosis, conversion, or the like— in other words, in what sense the experience was transformational.

The winning poem, *Graceful and gentle*, by Melinda Kallasmae, is a beautifully crafted, moving tribute to an old lady ('our mother, our centre') as she undergoes the ultimate transformation from life to death. The gentle rhythm of the short lines, and the regular beat of almost understated rhymes, evoke the steady intervals of shallow breathing moving to the inexorable moment of slipping away. As she goes, she 'accepts now—as we must—this dying of the light'. And we are inevitably moved to contemplate how we shall go into 'that good night' when our own time comes.

*Benediction*, the runner-up poem, by David Terelinck, reminds us powerfully but subtly of the sustaining role of prayer as we confront new situations. The quiet rhythms of the language reflect the patterned preparations of a woman for her day ahead. She is in a room, perhaps in a nunnery, but she is deeply enmeshed in the natural world through the open window, and her every soft movement is like a prayer. The poem ends with the moment in which she, like the old lady, enters into a new world: she leaves the room and 'enters this new day with all of yesterday's conviction'.

My thanks go to all of the many people who contributed. I encourage you all, regardless of whether your work eventually appears in this publication, to keep on writing.

## KARDIA FORMATION

**Kardia** was established as a response to the increasing number of people who desire spiritual formation. Companionship of empowerment for women and men through spiritual direction is offered through spiritual exercises, supervision and various programs for personal and leadership development. For more information about Formation programs, research and resources, visit [www.kardia.com.au](http://www.kardia.com.au)

## EVENTS AT WELLSRING CENTRE

**Prayer at Noon**- Wednesday 14 December, 10.00am

**Christian Meditation**, Friday 30 December, 11.00am

**Growing in Silence**, 24 November, 10am -12pm

**Spring Party**, 26 November 2.00-4.00pm

**Dream Reflections**, 8 December 1.00-3.00pm

**Autumn Retreat** (Lysterfield), 10 and 15 March, 2023.

**Retreat by the Sea 2023** (Queenscliff), 16 and 23 October 2023.

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

## COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Positive Words Mini Competition

Open to all. Theme must contain the word 'Curry'. Short story or Poetry, 100 words or 10 lines. Entry Fee \$2.20 in unused stamps. Prize : Six months' subscription to Positive Words. Closes 31 December  
<https://positivewordsmagazine.wordpress.com/competitions/>

### Melbourne Poets Union International Poetry Competition

Poems up to 50 lines. First Prize: \$1500 Second Prize \$500 Third Prize: \$300. Closes November 25<sup>th</sup>. More information:  
<http://melbournepoetsunion.com.au>

### Judith Wright Poetry Prize

For new and emerging poets. 80 lines, \$20 online entry, closes 14 November, 2022.

<https://overland.org.au/prizes/overland-judith-wright-poetry-prize-for-new-and-emerging-poets/>

### HEAT, Giramondo's literary magazine

Submissions of fiction, essays, hybrid forms, translated works, and poetry now being accepted.

<https://giramondopublishing.com/submissions/>

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Send any news for the February 2023 newsletter to [treehousepoet318@gmail.com](mailto:treehousepoet318@gmail.com) by January 15 2023. Newsletter edited by Leigh Hay and Janette Fernando.



## POET'S CORNER

### Graceful and gentle

After Dylan Thomas's 'Do not go gentle into that good night'

Graceful and gentle  
toward her good night,  
old age concedes now  
the closing of day;  
peers into, admits now  
diminishing light;  
aggregate losses;  
uncertain eyesight.

Our mother, our centre  
– stoic – goes brave,  
peaceful and gentle  
toward her good night:  
joy from minutiae;  
comfort from quiet;  
frail yet undaunted  
continues her way,  
thoughtful through shadow  
by dwindling light.

Wise witty woman  
holds kith and kin tight;  
gives, laughs, and loves –  
content, turns away  
grateful and gentle  
toward her good night.  
Time subverts sureness,  
subdues appetite –  
not humour;  
not courage;  
not faithfulness.  
They forestall,  
they temper  
the dimming of light.

Our mother, our centre  
– radiant, bright –  
sleeps longer, sleeps deeper  
and, sleepy yet, says  
to us, gentle  
*My darlings, good night* –  
accepts now,  
– as we must –  
this dying of light.

© Melinda Kallasmae

## Benediction

The polished oak is cool beneath  
her sheet-shucked feet.  
She peels back the curtains  
as she does every morning  
to a sky laden with stars.  
Kneeling before the open window  
she clasps her hands, bows her head.  
The small-hours darkness is drenched  
with silence; too early for birdsong.  
Just the whisper of her slow breath  
in and out, the intermittent sigh  
of a breeze through the pines.  
The scent of jasmine haunts the air.  
Moonlight alabasters her cheek  
when she stands, carves shadowed hollows  
where it fails to reach.  
She is not beautiful.  
Not in the ordinary sense  
of being beautiful. But she has a grace  
born of obeisance;  
of one whom has settled well  
into their lifetime calling.  
She does not question, but craves,  
being orphaned from  
possessions and desire.  
She is expressionless, moves in a stillness  
that echoes the simplicity  
of her surroundings.  
The room is small. Its lime-washed walls  
are spare, only adorned  
with a large wooden crucifix  
above the door. She fixes her gaze  
upon it and in this single act  
there are none more beautiful.  
She crosses herself, opens the door  
that is never locked,  
and enters this new day  
with all of yesterday's  
conviction.

© David Terelinck

## Haiku

Seeming complement,  
green caterpillar and leaf,  
destruction accrues.

Old barren peach tree:  
shade your summer gift, not fruit:  
and mulch in winter.

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