

WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

23.1

February, 2023

It's another new poetry year, so welcome to the first edition of Wordsmiths newsletter for 2023.

At the end of 2022, just before Christmas, I needed to have my car serviced, so left it with the dealer in Hawthorn and caught a train into the city to shop for last minute gifts until the car was ready. Having secured nature gifts with a difference from Wunderkammer in Lonsdale Street (our family loves that shop) I retraced my steps back to Bourke St. The queue for Myer Christmas windows stretched almost to Swanston. I'd suddenly joined the manic surge of Christmas shoppers; children crying, parents distracted, couples bickering, mobile phones in constant use. Stopping for a much needed coffee in Royal Arcade, I found a lone seat at the back of a café. John Lennon's poignant song *Imagine* was playing in the background. I began to imagine a world without Santa, without the stress of shopping for gifts or food, the dread for some of family get-togethers, or having to pay the credit card at the end of January.

My imagining reinforced the reason for the season – so much so that I fossicked in my handbag for the small notebook I always carry and began to pen a poem. By the time I had finished my flat white, and Lennon had finished singing, I had a poem roughly drafted. I felt unburdened. I left the café with a light step and a tranquil mind.

Taking time out to write a poem is often the best 'me time' you can get. It gives our minds a chance to regroup, assemble our thoughts in words that soothe, placate, encourage, communicate or just affirm our innermost dreams and feelings.

I view poetry as therapy. I'm never averse to self-medicating on writing, reading or just talking poetry with other people. If anyone in Royal Arcade that day had asked, I would have shared these thoughts, but alas, they were all too busy. Maybe some other time.

Leigh Hay

MEETINGS

At the November meeting, **Janette Fernando** focussed on indigenous poets and read works by Oodgeroo Noonuccal (*Municipal Gum*); Kevin

Gilbert (*A Question to God*); Jack Davis (*Family*); Colin Johnson (*Mudrooroo*); Ali Cobby Eckermann – Ruby Moonlight (*Wash*).

At the December 10 meeting, 9 Wordsmiths attended and 2 joined online via Zoom. The group who attended in person shared a Christmas lunch beforehand at 1.30, and then enjoyed the final meeting for the year. Those attending were invited to read a favourite Christmas poem. Florence Lisner, Maree Silver, Graeme Turner, Janette Fernando, Leigh Hay, Carolyn Vimpani, Peter White and Maree Nikolaou read a personal favourite and Peter Baker sang his choice of Christmas poem. At the conclusion of the regular meeting, Janette thanked Carolyn Vimpani on behalf of Wordsmiths for again offering her home as a meeting venue each month.



2023 Christmas meeting, back row (L-R) Carolyn Vimpani, Peter White, Leigh Hay, Peter Baker, Maree Silver, (Front Row L-R) Greg Burns, Janette Fernando, Darryl Pobke and Graeme Turner.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Although we had hoped to have Joel McKerrow lead us in a Poetry Workshop on February 11th, he had double-booked and will now do this on December 9th. Unless notified otherwise, meetings will be held at Carolyn Vimpani's at 8 Woodhouse Road, Doncaster East, 2 pm. Zoom facility will also be available if possible.

Month	Leader	Afternoon tea duty
February 11	Peter W	Leigh, Daryl, Janette
March 11	Jean S-D	Greg, Peter B, Maree S
April 8th	Greg	Peter W, Jean, Maree N

MEMBER NEWS

Janette Fernando (and her husband Roger) have moved to Woori Yallock following Roger's retirement from teaching at Mt Evelyn Christian School for 41 years. They are planning an outback Australia trip through the Centre, out to the West Coast and the Kimberleys, which could take 4-5 months.

In collaboration with evolutionary geneticist Professor Jenny Graves, **Leigh Hay** has co-written a libretto for a choral performance to be premiered in Melbourne in 2023. *Origins – of the Universe, of Life, of Species, of Man* is an oratorio conceived by Prof Graves. Using words and images from cosmology, molecular biology, evolutionary genetics and anthropology to describe origins from the big bang to the emergence of humanity, *Origins* will celebrate the role of genetics, science and humankind's stewardship of the planet. With a 100-strong choir, full orchestra, professional soloists and music by Australian composer Nicholas Buc, *Origins* will be premiered on 18 July at the Melbourne Recital Centre. The performance will coincide with the International Congress of Geneticists, to be held in Melbourne in July 2023.

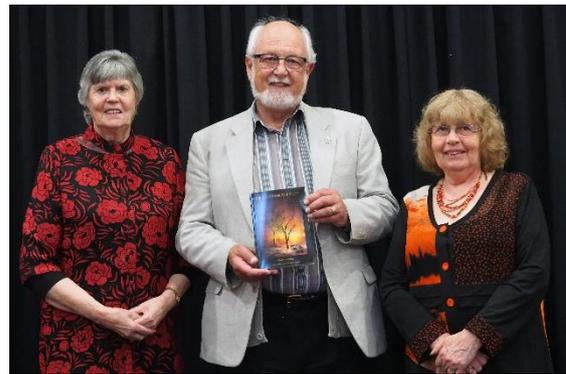
LAUNCH OF TRANSFORMATION ANTHOLOGY (Edited by Maree Silver & Janette Fernando)

The launch of Poetica Christi Press' 60th publication, *Transformation*,



an anthology of poetry, was held in the Box Hill Community Arts Centre on Sunday November 13 2023. Approximately 35 people attended the function which was held in the beautiful Arbour space. Janette Fernando, Managing Editor, introduced the judge Dr Mark

Garner who then launched the book with his informative speech being much appreciated by all present.



(L-R) Maree Silver, Dr Mark Garner and Janette Fernando

Ten poets read their work and Peter White, MC, read the runner-up poem - *Benediction* written by David Terelinck from Queensland. Janette Fernando also read the poem of the winner –



Peter White reading

Melinda Kallasmae of Strathdale - *Graceful and gentle*. Musical interludes were provided by Cathy Altmann on violin and were much appreciated. Afterwards, a generous supper was enjoyed by all.

LAUNCH OF SURPRISED BY JACK

Excelsia College recently hosted the launch of *Surprised by Jack* by Dr Peter Stiles, with about 40 friends and colleagues in attendance. Encouraging commendations were given by Rev. Dr. Darrell Jackson (Whitley College), Dr. Jim Harrison (Sydney College of Divinity), Dr. Mark Stephens (Sydney Missionary and Bible College), and Dr. Paul Burgis (PLC, Sydney). A light lunch was served after the launch and a special cake provided, the 29th of November being C.S. Lewis' birthday.



Dr Peter Stiles at the launch of *Surprised by Jack*

2023 ANNUAL PCP POETRY COMPETITION

Entries are now open for PCP's 2023 poetry competition. The theme is *Journeys* – a topic that lends itself to poems including those about pilgrimage, migration, faith journeys, adventure, making one's way, progress, odyssey, visitation, or being called on a journey. First prize : \$300, 2nd prize \$100.

Entries close on 30 April, 2023. For more information or to download an entry form : <http://poeticachristi.org.au/>

WRITERS VICTORIA EVENTS

PROSE POETRY

Date: Sat 18 March 2023 – 10:00 - 4:00 pm
Where: 176 Lonsdale St, Melbourne. \$140 (members, concession) \$220 (non-members)
With: Lucy Van
Let's stand outside everyday language with prose poetry.

RESPONSE POETRY

Date: Sat 29 April 2023 – 10:00– 4:00
Where: 176 Lonsdale St, Melbourne. \$140 (members, concession) \$220 (non-members)
With: Autumn Royal
This workshop will focus on how the poetic form can complement, interrogate or further understandings of artworks, archives, letters, current and/or historical events or simply be a reply to another writer.

KARDIA FORMATION

Grace Upon Grace - Eight-Day at Home Retreat 6 - 14 October 2023

Kardia is offering you an invitation to join us in forming a community of prayer during an eight-day retreat while you are at home.

The retreat will be drawn from the book *Grace Upon Grace* by Marlene Marburg. You can make this a silent retreat or a retreat in daily life. You can choose to pray with one or more readings from the daily suggested readings.

For more information go to: <http://www.kardia.com.au>

2023 EVENTS AT WELLSRING CENTRE

Autumn Retreat

Friday 10 Mar 5.00pm - Wed 15 March, 3.00pm, Lysterfield.

Soul Nurture Day with Marg Donald

Saturday 15 April 10am-3pm, Ashburton.

Winter Solstice with Marg Donald

Thursday 22 June – 10.00am-12.00pm.

Spring Retreat at Wantirna

Friday 15 Sept 5.00pm – Sunday 17 Sept 3.00pm, Wantirna South.

Retreat by the Sea

Monday 16 Oct 5.00pm – Monday 23 Oct 3.00pm, Queenscliff.

For more information

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

COMPETITIONS

Ada Cambridge Poetry Prize 2023

- Accepting (up to) two poems in any form, on any theme with 30-lines or less
- Open to all writers aged 18+ residing in Victoria
- Entry is \$15
- The winner will receive \$500
- Submissions close March 10.
Info: www.willylitfest.org.au

Mulga Bill Writing Award.

Writers are encouraged to take inspiration from the theme 'gold', and submit a poem (max. 25 lines) or short story (max. 2000 words). Writers of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to apply. Entry fee is \$5. **Entries close Friday 3 March, 2023. Poetry: \$200 first prize, \$50 second prize.** www.ncgrl.vic.gov.au/mulgabillwritingaward

Short Stories Unlimited – open themed poetry competitions

2023 poetry competition open theme (opens 1/4/23 – closes 15/5/23)

Urban theme (opens 1/6/23 – closes 31/7/23)

Rural theme (opens 1/9/23 – closes 31/10/23)

<https://shortstoriesunlimited.com/poetry-competitions/>



POET'S CORNER

The Psyche

psyche
on the runaway racecourse of the mind
pounds its well-worn tracks
pitted against potholes –
bombarding questions and doubts
worries wait at the barrier like restless
schoolchildren

tension rages –
individuation or self-abnegation?
numbing socialisation? ...

at the coalface –
egos contesting!

simply transcend ...
and surrender,
surrender,
surrender to love

© Florence Lisner

Transformation

*When I was a child I thought as a child, but now I
am grown up
I have left childish things behind. 1 Cor*

As a child I was a cry-baby, always feeling that
others had the better part.
Boarding school only made it worse as other girls
were older, wealthier.

It took the death of our daughter to mature me.
In the light
of this tragedy, I began to see things in their true
proportions.

As we drove home from our beach holiday I
prayed for a sense of humour.
It came. I told people I knew Ingrid would leave
home soon, and now
she had gone to the best boarding house I could
imagine.

© Jean Sietzema-Dickson

The butterfly

My striped skin stiffens
Attaching myself to a twig
I seem immobile but inside me
all systems are high on speed

I'm an express train
a river plunging down a hillside
a human released
from quarantine

Organs morph into
streamlined versions
My life has never been
so creative

At the right moment I emerge
my wings quivering
shimmering sapphire
in a flutter of spring sunshine

© Jennifer Chrystie

Newborn

When I first cradled the first newborn grandchild
I thought my heart would burst with happiness –
Daddy's chin, mummy's hair colour,
Grandma's curiosity for life.
Now adults, some with families of their own,
they never cease to amaze and delight.
Now I am a great Grandma,
my only sadness is that great Grandpa is no
longer here
but his sense of humour, kindness, creativity
will live on embedded in the spirit of the
newborn child.

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Send any news for the May 2023 newsletter to
treehousepoet318@gmail.com by April 15 2023.
Newsletter edited by Leigh Hay and Janette
Fernando.