

# WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

## November 2023

Welcome to the November '23 edition of Wordsmiths Newsletter.

I always feel that by the time we reach November, the year seems to quicken its pace. Spring is a time of renewal and certainly our gardens invite us to sit in warm sunshine and write poetry, but November reminds us that just around the corner Christmas is hovering with all the busyness that a festive season brings.

To avoid the stress of shopping for Christmas gifts, I like to buy things throughout the year, but this year seems to have been one event or appointment or commitment after another and here we are in November, and I don't have a single gift in the cupboard. A last resort is always vouchers or cash, especially for the teenage members of the family, but vouchers and cash seem impersonal compared with a specially chosen gift.

So ... what gift is portable, light, inexpensive, good for the soul and easily stored? Yes, you guessed it – a book of poetry! After decades of publishing, Poetica Christi Press has any number of poetry books to choose from, some of which are anthologies and others by individual authors.

And the good news is that at the launch of *Journeys* on 2 December, there will be a book sale, so bring your dollars along as books will literally be going for a song and there will be many bargains to be found, and quite possibly a few stray authors at the launch who can sign your gift personally.

Regardless of whether or not you buy a loved one a book of poetry, writing poems for special people is also a lovely way to celebrate Christmas (or any time of year for that matter). Ready-made poems make the perfect gift, so maybe make time to just sit in your garden (or someone else's garden), in beautiful spring sunshine, and let the muse find you!!

**Leigh Hay**

### MEETINGS

**Cecily Falkingham** led the August meeting, at which 10 poets attended. DH (David Herbert) Lawrence was her chosen poet, and she explained that the first of Lawrence's works were poems. Born in 1885, he was a young school master in the early 1900s and kept a log book of his life and experiences in the form of poetry. He would be remembered as a writer, novelist, short story writer, poet and essayist. Cecily read an excerpt from *The Snake* and *The Piano* (the entire poem).

**Greg Burns** led the September meeting with poems based on song lyrics. The first two were by Paul Jarmin, an Australian composer, choirmaster and instrumentalist, whose compositions for choir and orchestra have been performed around the world in venues such as the White House and at the opening of the World Rugby and at the London Olympics. From 1996 Paul Jarman has been part of the Australian world music group, Sirocco. Greg read *Sea of Berries* and *Shackleton* (commissioned by Gondwana Voices as part of the song cycle 'Turn on the Open Sea'). Greg also mentioned a 13<sup>th</sup> century song, attributed to Martin Codax, which is the fifth of seven songs *Cantigas de Amigo*.

**Peter White** led the October meeting, reading some poems from C J Dennis's poems for children –

*If I were a baker; If I were a pieman; Tri-anti-wonti-gongalope* and *Hist*. Fun poetry, enjoyed by everyone present.

Unless notified otherwise, meetings will be held, at Carolyn Vimpani's at 8 Woodhouse Grove, Doncaster East. Zoom facility will also be available if possible. Note that the December meeting will begin at 12.45 pm with a shared lunch (if you bring food that needs heating up, please come at 12.30.)

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Month	Leader	Afternoon tea
November	Jemma	Leigh, Jane, Maree N
December	Joel McKerrow	All share lunch
February	Janette	Jean, Maree S, Peter B

### December Workshop with Joel McKerrow



On December 9, from 2-3.30pm, writer, poet and speaker Joel McKerrow

[www.joelmckerrow.com](http://www.joelmckerrow.com) will be presenting a workshop for Wordsmiths. Joel is a creativity specialist and Director of the School for Creative Development and Artist Ambassador for TEARFUND Australia. Cost of workshop will be \$25 or \$20 (conc), payable on the day. We hope it will be a hybrid meeting, so those who can't attend in person can register to join via Zoom.

## MEMBER NEWS



Congratulations to **Joy Chellew** on the launch of her new book *In search of hope*.

Joy has now published five books in the series : *In search of Wisdom, In search of grace, In search of Hope, In Search of Peace* and now *In Search of Joy*.



**Janette Fernando** and her husband Roger left Melbourne in early October to teach at Araluen Christian College in Alice Springs for Term 4. Roger has been teaching fulltime, and

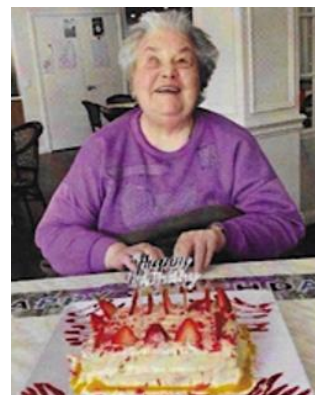
Janette part-time, teaching Years 7,8 and 9 Skills for Adolescence and Year 8 English.

### VALE REBECCA MAXWELL

Rebecca Maxwell was a vital member of The Wordsmiths.

Having been blind since early childhood, due to meningitis, she did not regard this as a disability.

Rebecca said of herself in an interview with *The Age*, 'I'm not special, it's just I'm made aware of something because I don't have "the other door". It's like, if the front door's locked you go in the back door, that's all. Some painters paint what's inside them and use the same faculty as I do. I'm disabled in that I can't see but as a general rule I don't feel disabled. I'm not grieving for something I haven't got, because if I tune in to all that's offered subliminally, the world is so rich.'



Feisty and straightforward, she made a contribution wherever she went, and was involved in a number of organisations, including her church and the local council. She was President of the Society of Women's writers Victoria from 2007-2009 and also worked tirelessly to champion the cause of Braille. She edited a book of life stories of people who use Braille: *Blind and Busy* and also released a collection of her poetry *With other senses*. In 2019, she was a finalist for the Blind Australian of the Year award. There were many laudatory comments at her funeral.

Through her poetry she challenged us to think again, and she always commented meaningfully on the work of others. We will sadly miss her at our gatherings. Using her walking-frame she travelled everywhere by taxi. When I spoke at the Lyceum Club some years ago, I was touched by the fact that she came along to support me.

Jean M. Sietzema (and Janette Fernando)

## LAUNCH OF *JOURNEYS*

Poetica Christi Press invites you to the launch of *Journeys* - an anthology of poetry edited by Maree Silver & Leigh Hay to be launched on Saturday December 2, 2023 in the Arbour at Box Hill Community Arts Centre, cnr Station & Combarton Sts, Box Hill. Books available from 12.15 pm - OFFICIAL LAUNCH AT 12.45 PM followed by refreshments. Could any Wordsmiths coming please bring a plate.



*Journeys* includes poems by the winners of the 2023 PCP Poetry competition with contributions from the Wordsmiths of Melbourne and others. A number of poets will have the opportunity to read their work.

## 2023 EVENTS AT WELLSRING CENTRE

### Poetry Day : Let go

Saturday 2 December 2023. 11am – 4.00pm. In person at Ashburton and on Zoom. Facilitator Dr Xiaoli Yang. As 2023 comes to an end, it is time to relinquish the past and embrace the possibilities of the new year. Come for a contemplative time of release, reflection and renewal. Registrations close 1 December. Call 9885 9277 or [info@wellspringcentre.org.au](mailto:info@wellspringcentre.org.au) <https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au/events>

## COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

*Catchment – Poetry of Place* offers a new opportunity for poets resident in Australia, both in longer verse forms and in tanka. *Catchment* invites submissions of up to three (3) pieces of longer poetry (each no more than 30 lines in length) and/or five (5) tanka. All work selected will show a strong sense of location, either in Australia or overseas. Submissions for the first edition will close on 21 November 5pm. To learn more about *Catchment* and how to submit, go to [Catchment - a literary journal - Bbaa](#) ([bawbawartsalliance.org.au](http://bawbawartsalliance.org.au))

## The Blake Poetry Prize

For Australian poets to explore the spiritual and religious in a new work of 100 lines or less. Entries close 18 December 2023. Entry fee \$30. More : [admin@westwords.com.au](mailto:admin@westwords.com.au) or <https://www.westwords.com.au/project/68th-blake-poetry-prize/>

## The Moth Poetry Prize

Irish competition, open to everyone over 16. No theme, no limit. Entry fee is 15 Euros. Closing date 31 December, 2023. <https://www.themothmagazine.com/a1-page.asp?ID=2762&page=21>

## Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Competition

Irish competition, poem on any subject, line limit 40, closing date 30 November, 2023. Entry 7 Euros per poem or 30 Euros for a batch of five. <https://munsterlit.ie/odonoghue-competition/>



## POET'S CORNER

### Space travel in the 80s

I was one of many kids  
moving at fixed intervals  
between their parents' houses,  
which was akin to space travel.  
Traversing the planets  
but without the right suiting.  
Without a reliable craft.

And like an alien creature  
I was always wanting  
of those specialised tools  
(trace gas analysers,  
robot cranes and safety tethers)  
that would enable me  
to drill and build some sense  
of home amongst craters.

My great oversight  
gravitated into my face  
one Saturday night at Dad's.  
Preparing to meet friends,

I unzipped my vacuum pack,  
large and cherry red  
with four square pockets  
stitched loudly in front.  
But no matter which way  
I tipped or searched,  
I could only find one shoe —  
it might as well have been  
a moon boot.

© Sharon Rockman  
(Winner of the 2023 PCP competition)

### Birth journey

Not an act of human passion  
or mindless dance  
of random chromosomes  
but planned and formed  
from ancient far beginnings  
to fill new-patterned destiny of being

Dark it is, the journey  
painful taken, painful given  
travelling in kin to humankind  
yet in experience unique  
what travail, what commitment  
long suffered, soon forgotten

What celebrated light and sound  
and strong triumphant breath  
of tiny brave Ulysses now on-sailing  
what final, glorious separation  
what warm brave satisfying living  
as waiting arms enfold in loving

Newest of new things  
wanted, waited, prayed for  
sleeping in fervent commitment  
you know not that on this great day  
you've captained your miniscule boat  
on the magical journey of life

Sleep little sailor  
may your vessel be cargoed with blessings

© Janice Williams  
(Runner-up in the 2023 PCP competition)

### Eyebrow Thoughts

What is the use of eyebrows?  
I've sometimes wondered that.  
Not pondered; not as deeply as that —  
just supercilious thinking.

I touch, and wonder —  
are they the echo of the hair? Or  
frilly edges for the plain forehead?

But then more deeply, I've reflected:  
perhaps they're sacred thresholds,  
that a careless gaze may not drop bluntly,  
into ocular pools of light  
where private feelings could be read,  
revealing secrets of the soul.  
Or eyebrows could be delicate thresholds,  
to pause at, perhaps?

Then again, more lightly I conjecture:  
eyebrows are gentle furry arcs  
to soften the blandness of endless skin —  
adding textural pleasure for me,  
and colour interest visually.

But for actors, eyebrows are also accents  
that can vary stress and expression;  
the teasing little differences  
that subtle curvature can hint.

But, why must I define them?  
Let eyebrows continue to be  
lovely unexplained riddles!  
Why be utilitarian?

Eyebrows might just be meaningless  
furbelows  
from God's rococo mood.

© Rebecca Maxwell

### Turbulations

Somewhere,  
In my tumultuous childhood,  
I found my wings,  
And took flight...

© Sue Donnelly

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Send any news for the February 2024 newsletter to  
[treehousepoet318@gmail.com](mailto:treehousepoet318@gmail.com) by January 15, 2024.  
Newsletter edited by Leigh Hay and Janette Fernando.