

# WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

## August 2024

Welcome to the August edition of Wordsmiths newsletter.

I love history in any form, and when it comes to poetry, I am always fascinated to read about Australia's 19<sup>th</sup> century female poets. Grace Elizabeth Jennings Carmichael (1867-1904) was one such poet, and even though she wrote some beautiful verse her life story is quite sad. Raised on a station near Orbost, she learned to love the Gippsland forest. She expressed verse in the sights, scents and sounds of the bush. At 20, she left home to become a lady's companion, and then a trainee nurse. Her book, *Hospital Children*, was published in 1891. In 1890 her poetry was published in *Poems* in Melbourne, and London in 1895. In the early 1890s she was a member of the Austral Salon and in September 1895 gave a lecture on *The Spirit of the Bush* with Alfred Deakin in the chair. In 1895 she married Henry Francis Mullins. They moved to South Australia and then to England, where she and her husband lived in poverty. After the death of one son and their only daughter, Grace died of pneumonia in Leyton workhouse in 1904. Three surviving sons lived in the Northampton workhouse until a group of Grace's admirers in Victoria launched an appeal to bring the children back to Australia in 1910, where they were reared in private homes, taking the



name Carmichael. In 1927, at Woodgrange Park Cemetery in London, a white marble book was placed on Grace's grave, inscribed with a few brief lines of hers on wattle blossom. Plaques were later unveiled to her memory at Orbost in 1937

and Ballarat in 1938. In the 1890s Grace was regarded as a 'graceful and genuine poetess' but later generations found her verse cloying rather than sweet and its philosophy homespun. *A Bush Gloaming* is perhaps her most well-known poem. I would love to sit down and have a chat with Grace Carmichael Jennings, even if just to say, *You haven't been forgotten, nor has your poetry.*

Leigh Hay

### MEETINGS

**Peter White** led the May meeting with the music of Sons of Korah. Sons of Korah is an Australian based band founded in 1994 in Geelong. The name references the Old Testament family of that name and the band is devoted to giving a fresh voice to the biblical psalms. After playing three tracks of music, Peter then explained that the lyrics were from Psalms 1, 37 & 17.

**Greg Burns** led the June meeting with the poetry of UK poet Jenny Mitchell. Jenny won the Gregory O'Donoghue Prize 2022 and the Poetry Book Awards for her second collection, *Map of a Plantation*. The prize-winning debut collection *Her Lost Language* is one of 44 poetry books for 2019 (Poetry Wales) and her latest collection, *Resurrection of a Black Man*, contains three prize-winning poems and is featured on the US podcast *Poetry Unbound*. Jenny was Poet-in-residence at Sussex University in 2024, and has recently been appointed the British Library Poet in the Community, working with the Community Engagement Team. Greg read *Map of a plantation; Wanting to know freedom; A gentlewoman; Her remains; Bending down to worship* and *Another vision of the goddess*.

**Cecily Falkingham** led the July meeting and read from Leunig's *A common prayer* (published in 1991). Cecily read *Dear God, let us prepare for winter; We give thanks for domestic animals; There are only two feelings, Love and fear; and Dear God, We give thanks for birds.*

Unless notified otherwise, meetings will be held, at Carolyn Vimpani's at 8 Woodhouse Road, Doncaster East from 2-5 pm. Zoom facility will also be available if possible. Please check the roster below and, if you can't make it on the day when you're rostered, let Janette know ([poetica@iprimus.com.au](mailto:poetica@iprimus.com.au)) to arrange a swap with someone else.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

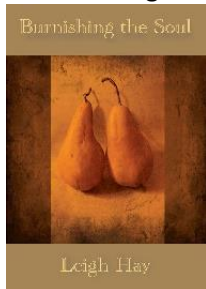
| Month  | Leader                      | Afternoon tea          |
|--------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| August | Maree S Leigh, Darryl, Jean |                        |
| Sept   | Darryl                      | Jemma, Peter W, Cecily |
| Oct    | Florence                    | Carolyn, Maree N, Greg |

## ADVANCE NOTICE OF 2024 LAUNCH – A NEW DAY DAWNS

This year's judge Tru S Dowling will launch the anthology at Box Hill Community Arts Centre on 22 September 2024 from 2pm – 5pm. Place a note in your diary so you don't commit to any other event.

## MEMBER NEWS

**Leigh Hay** has published a new collection of poetry through Tales from the Treehouse. In ***Burnishing the Soul*** Leigh captures life through poetry.



Cam Semmens wrote: 'Leigh's poems invite us to walk, to sing, to explore far afield and in our backyard, to take note, to write. I take this book as Leigh's very own 'poetic manifesto' on how to live a poetic life, indeed, on how to burnish one's soul.' To order a

copy (RRP \$30) please email :

[treehousepoet@318.gmail.com](mailto:treehousepoet@318.gmail.com) or order  
<https://www.talesfromthetreehouse.com.au>

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

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

## 2024 EVENTS AT WELLSRING CENTRE

### Silent Retreats

- Warm hospitality: All retreats offer a safe, welcoming space.
- Silence: We become silent during the first Evening Prayer/Reflection time together, and remain in silence, including mealtimes, until shortly before the conclusion of the retreat.
- Accommodation: In restful surroundings with accommodation in single rooms and all meals provided.

- Prayer/Reflection: Together each morning and evening.
- Spiritual Companionship: Available daily for each person, if you want to participate.
- Space: To rest, read, walk, journal, enjoy artwork, etc.

The retreats range from 2 to 7 nights.

- 2024 Retreat by the Sea (1-8 September)
- 2024 Spring Retreat (18-20 October)
- 2024 Men's Retreat (1-4 November)

## KARDIA FORMATION

### Ageing with Wisdom and Grace – Eight day at home retreat

The retreat will be drawn from the book *Ageing with Wisdom and Grace* by Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au. You can make this a silent retreat or a retreat in daily life. 14-21 October 2024

[enquiries@kardia.com.au](mailto:enquiries@kardia.com.au)

## COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

### KSP (Katharine Susannah Pritchard) Poetry Competition

Open to Australian residents. No theme. 50 lines, entry fee \$10. Entries close 25 September 2024.

<https://www.kspwriterscentre.com/poetry-competition>

### Mindfood Poetry Competition

Open to Australian and NZ residents. No theme. 100-400 words. No entry fee. Australian winner \$1000. Entries close 18 October 2024.

<https://www.mindfood.com/competition/are-you-a-budding-poet-have-your-poem-published-in-mindfood-magazine/>

### Alice Sinclair Memorial Writing Competition

Category A : Poetry, 50 lines, Entry fee \$15.

Entries close 31 August 2024.

<https://lakemacfar2.wordpress.com/2022-alice-sinclair-competition/>

### FAW Tasmania Poetry Prize

Open to residents of Australia. No theme. 60 lines, Entry fee \$5, First prize \$150, runner up \$50.

Entries close 31 August 2024

<https://fawtas.org.au/competitions/>



## POET'S CORNER

### tiny feet

shadows silent  
gather  
in pockets  
where lost things snag  
midst the seams  
of my body

I finger  
the pockets—trace  
edges—smooth creases  
coarse fibres imprint  
upon my skin

tiny feet dance in  
the selvage of my life  
unspoken—no  
words for their weight

line of life stretches  
an unfurled hand—no  
washing hanging here  
no tiny socks—only

skeins of web lucent  
whisps of air—  
slip  
catch

and kiss those tiny dancing feet

© Jemma van Loenen

### November Night

cool air brushes my cheek  
a planet—star-bright—looks on

croak of frog a soothing primal beat  
gratitude embraces like a shawl

suspended in the universal soul  
I surrender to wonder ...

mystery and awe  
keep ticking time

© Florence Lisner

## Winter Snapshots (N.E Victoria)

Heavy skeins  
sculpted tangled  
white clouds cap an  
indigo range

Misty tendrils  
wisp and curl  
blur the boundary of  
mountain and sky

Shafts of sunlight  
slant through wetland  
floating latté ribbons

Regimented vines  
parade nearby hillsides  
reaching beyond the edge of vision

Resting cattle  
chew their cud  
Shadows spread into evening

Twilight turns  
day's final page  
nightfall closes the album

© Maree Silver

## Transformation

Sun sparkles  
from  
shiny leaves  
metal roofs  
highlights strips of cloud

a soft breeze  
shivers  
twigs and foliage  
blue sky  
backgrounds  
this picture  
of a stunning  
Autumn Day

© Jean Sietzema-Dickson

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