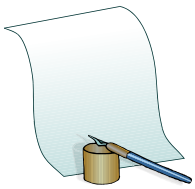


WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER
May 2025

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Wordsmiths newsletter for 2025.

When it comes to authors, books, poets and nights out, I thoroughly enjoy a visit to Readings in Carlton. Carlton is always buzzing with people and so a friend and I have decided we both enjoy a glass of wine together, maybe a pizza or a bowl of pasta and then attending poetry readings, book launches or discussions and interviews with authors.

These events are usually free at Readings and only require you to book and front up early enough to grab a small stool to sit on.

A friend or colleague associated with the author or poet conducts the interviewing and in the case of poets, they have the chance to read as many titles and stanzas as they like from their new book, giving some background on why they wrote a poem, when it was written, and what they were endeavouring to convey in their poem. As much as I enjoy listening to poetry reading, I find this background discussion on the why and when of poetry writing essentially more fascinating.

I've often felt prompted to write a poem, without having any idea from where the prompt originated. It is quite simply, and more often suddenly, in my thoughts. So to hear how established, published poets take this thought/idea/prompt and then weave it into a masterfully crafted poem gives me the encouragement to attempt to do the same.

My poetry may never be on the event list at Readings, but I will continue to attend their literary events as a means of hearing what others have to say and hopefully learning pointers when it comes to technique.

Even when I don't learn anything, a trip to Carlton with my friend is a great night out. We chat for hours and she and I both go home feeling culturally fed.

Leigh Hay

MEETINGS

Janette Fernando led the February meeting, which 10 poets attended in person, and two online. Janette talked about the poetry of Tony Birch, Aboriginal Australian author, academic and activist. Born in 1947, Birch grew up in Fitzroy, was expelled from school twice, and at 15, became a telegram boy and then a Firefighter for 10 years. As a mature student aged 30, he enrolled at the University of Melbourne, gained degrees, and has a PhD in Urban Cultures and History. Birch has won many awards, including being the first Indigenous writer to win the Patrick White Award in 2017. He was appointed to the Boisbouvier Chair in Australian Literature at the University of Melbourne in December 2022. Janette read the following poems from *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia* (ed. Anita Heiss) and from his collection *Whisper Songs (UQP, 2021)*: *Stillborn*, *Desecrate*, *Scenes of Domestic Life*, *Away* and *Isabel*.

Peter White led the March meeting with the poetry of Wendell Berry (born 5.8.1934), a US novelist, poet, essayist, environmental activist, cultural critic and farmer. The author of over 50 books of poetry, fiction and essays, his poetry celebrates the holiness of life and everyday miracles often taken for granted. The recipient of numerous awards, in 2015, Wendell became the first living writer to be inducted into the Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame. Peter read poetry from *The Peace of Wild Things*, including *Architecture*, *The Apple Tree*, *The Want of Peace*, *To Know the Dark*, and *Travelling at Home*.

Janette Fernando led the April meeting with poems for Easter. Good Friday poems included *Stigmata* by Peter Stiles (from *Trumped by Grace*, 2015); *Hands* by Elizabeth Rooney (*A Widening Light – Poems of the Incarnation*, 1984); and *The revolutionary* by Luci Shaw (*Listen to the Green*, 1971).

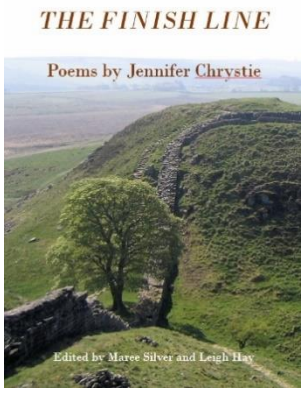
Easter poems included *Truly this was the Son of God* by Matthew Brown (*The Country of the Risen King*, 1978); *Suddenly* by RS Thomas (*Laboratories of the Spirit*, 1975); and *Wounded* by John Shaw (*A Widening Light – Poems of the Incarnation*, 1984).

Unless notified otherwise, meetings will be held, at Carolyn Vimpani's at 8 Woodhouse Road, Doncaster East. Zoom facility will also be available if possible.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Month	**Leader**	**Afternoon tea**
May 10	Carolyn	Jean, Daryl, Cecily
June 14	Greg	Maree S, Jemma, Carolyn
July 12	Maree S	Greg, Peter, Leigh

MEMBER NEWS



Following the death of poet **Jennifer Chrystie**, Maree Silver and Leigh Hay have just edited a posthumous collection of Jen's poetry titled ***The Finish Line*.** Jen was last published by Ginninderra Press in 2021, so with the permission and encouragement of Jen's husband John, Maree and Leigh have compiled a selection of poetry from 2022 to 2024. *The Finish Line* will be available from the beginning of May.
To order contact Leigh Hay on 0401 00 1935 or treehousepoet318@gmail.com
or order directly from the website www.talesfromthetreehouse.com.au.RRP $25.

Graeme Turner has been running podcasts in which he interviews writers about their work and his latest one features him talking to **Earl Livings**, known to some of the Wordsmiths, about his journey from science to myth.
You can listen to it here https://open.spotify.com/episode/0toJnVMAC3a1WmoOxTxmjv?si=RqmWKEk7TqW5GcSlDf84rw

Congratulations to **Joy Chellew**, who turned 100 years old on February 22nd. Wordsmiths Janette Fernando and Xiaoli Yang attended the celebrations in Barwon Heads, where Janette made a short speech about Joy, mentioning that she was a founding member of The Wordsmiths 36 years ago!

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual membership fees of $25 or $20 concession are now due. For members who don't attend Wordsmiths meetings face to face we are reducing the membership fee to $20 or $15 concession. Direct transfers to : Poetica Christi Press, BSB: 633-000 Acc: 118162593.

POETICA CHRISTI PRESS

Now that the annual competition has finished, if any Wordsmiths who missed out on entering, or who have suitable poems already published, they can now submit up to three poems on the topic of *Life's Tapestry* to poetica@iprimus.com.au by May 31st please.

WELLSPRING CENTRE

Winds of Change through Art & Poetry
28th of June 2025 9:15am-1:00pm (in person)
A morning of reflection, creativity and conversation with the opportunity to consider 'winds of change'. Facilitators: Liz Johnson and Janine Johnston

WellSpring also has two remaining silent retreats planned for 2025. Silent retreats

provide a safe, welcoming space, silence, accommodation, prayer/reflection, and spiritual direction to rest, read, walk, journal etc. The first is at Wantirna South, $600 from 19-21st of September

- 2025 Spring Retreat (19 - 21 September)

And the second is at week-long silent retreat at Queenscliff, $1800.

- 2025 Retreat by the Sea (21 - 28 October)

Info: https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au

KARDIA FORMATION

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin Retreat
29 September–17 November 2025
Eight-Week Retreat in Daily Life
The Retreat is based on the book *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* from the Modern Spiritual Masters Series edited by Robert Ellsberg. The selections and introductions to each chapter are by Ursula King, The publisher, place and date are: Orbis books: New York, 1999. Read more/book now.

Ageing with Wisdom and Grace: Eight-Day at Home Retreat
13 - 20 October 2025.
Kardia is offering you an invitation to join in forming a community of prayer during an eight-day retreat while you are at home.
The retreat will be drawn from the book *Aging with Wisdom and Grace* by Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au. 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. The cost of the retreat is $395 Australian. Read more/book now

COMPETITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Healing Power of Poetry *with* Afra Atiq
In-person at The Wheeler Centre Saturday 10 May, 2:30–5pm, Concession Price: $120, General Price: $140
Presented in partnership with the Melbourne Writers Festival. In this stimulating workshop, award-winning Emirati spoken word poet **Dr. Afra Atiq** will introduce you to the many benefits of injecting a bit of poetry into your life. Whether you're a beginner or looking to hone your writing practice, this workshop will lead you through some key techniques to start building your repertoire and show you how to find daily inspiration in unlikely places. **Book now on the Melbourne Writers Festival website**.

Writing Ekphrastic Poetry *with* Emilie Collyer
Online via Zoom, Saturday 24 May, 10–4pm
Concession Price: $150, Member Price: $170
Non-member Price: $230
Ekphrasis is a broad term that generally refers to poetry written in response to art. In this interactive workshop, Emilie Collyer will share her passion for the many ways ekphrastic poetry can be imagined and written. This includes writing in response to visual artworks but also performance pieces, pop culture, television and even other works of literature. **Book now on the Writers Victoria website**.

Eastwood/Hills FAW Literary Awards:
Philippa Holland Award for poetry – all forms of poetry except bush poetry. Up to 80 lines.
Boree Log Poetry Competition – Open to everyone. Australian Bush theme. 80 lines. Entry fee for each competition is $8 or $30 for 4. Closing date 15 May 2025. More info: https://hillsfaw.wordpress.com/judges-reports-2020/

Catchment – Poetry of Place
Open to Australian residents. Theme : Linked to location. Accepts Poetry (30 lines) & Tanka (5 lines). No entry fee. Closing date : 21 May 2025. More information: https://www.bawbawartsalliance.org.au/bcms/submission-guidelines/

June Shenfield National Poetry Awards

Open to emerging Australian poets. No theme. Poetry 80 lines, Entry fee $20 (Members $15). First prize $1000. Closing date: 12 May. Info: https://marion.ink/june-shenfield-poetry-national

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Send any news for the August 2025 newsletter to treehousepoet318@gmail.com by July 15, 2025. Newsletter edited by Leigh Hay and Janette Fernando.

POET'S CORNER

"YYUR …"*

A dog dead keen, the Customs man
says is what he wants.
Our Dylan's all of that,
so, the test, and Mike
(our long-time trainer)
just dropped in to watch.
I wave a rolled up cloth,
throw it to retrieve,
swing it again and whoop,
cry 'Fetch' and urge him on.
He dashes off, and back …
"Now!" the test man calls.
"Sit!" I say, and "Stay!"
then place the towel prize
just out of each reach
within a nearby tree …
I call "Go free!"
But no, he sits and eyes
the Customs man and Mike …
"Dylan, Fetch!" I urge.
Still he sits and waits…
Mike and the Customs man
and me, all watching …

so now the testing man
shakes his head, remarks
"Sorry, he's not for us …",
walks off with Mike, conversing.
As it a switch is thrown,
Dylan is up and leaps –
the trophy's grabbed,
wrenched from its perch,
retrieved,
held for me to take
and throw
and throw,
The message clear –
now 'they' have gone
We can play!

*YYUR
YYUB
ICUR
YY4me

© Joan Ray

Joy

To turn that corner
that crooks you in a hug,
to see those trees
familiar as garden plants.
Sun grins beneath a lid of cloud,
peeks between rooftops,
still warm against your cheek
as you wish you could cup this light
backed by a choir or clouds
that ring orange, to violet, to vermillion.

As it streams between your fingers
against a darkening of blue
hold it firm but loving
just a little while longer.

© Graeme M Turner

Solitude

at the end of each day
may i come here to pray
and at each day's start
surrender my heart

my soul, spirit, will and joy
for your services to employ
o Lord,
let us be in peaceful accord

© Peter White

Pentecost

Oak trees celebrate Pentecost
with yellow flames
flickering amidst the green.

In antipodean season
each leaf turns to blood
then drops.
Trees recollect
the cost of such celebration
casting all they have
to the earth
in libation
for liberation
then renewal
of the spring.

© Greg Burns