



# WriteAway

Newsletter of the Society of Women Writers Victoria Inc.

REG. NO. A0039632B    APRIL 2015    PP 381712/02477

Society of Women Writers Victoria Inc. 73 Church Road Carrum VIC 3197

## **SWWV SPECIAL EVENT**

### **SWWV Workshop 2**

### **Perfect Your Prose**

### **RAY MOONEY**

### **Author, Playwright, Screenwriter and Speaker**



RAY MOONEY is an author, lecturer in creative writing and inspirational speaker.

For 23 years he lectured in Novel, Popular Fiction, Short Story, Playwriting, Screenwriting, Performance Workshop, Scriptwriting and Industry Overview at various tertiary institutions. He established and coordinated the Theatre Technology course at Holmesglen Institute.

His plays have been produced at The Arts Centre, Athenaeum, La Mama, Carlton Courthouse and various venues around Melbourne and Sydney. *The Drover's Boy*, 1998, was on the VCE syllabus.

A graduate of the Drama Course at the VCA, he established two theatre companies, *Governor's Pleasure* and *Zap Community Theatre* and has directed more than forty plays.

His novel, *A Green Light*, was Penguin's second-best fiction seller in 1988 and regarded by many as Australia's best crime novel.

In 1995 he wrote the screenplay for *Everynight Everynight* with Alkinos Tsilimidis, which won awards throughout the world and was nominated for two AFI awards, including best adapted screenplay.

Ray has written numerous film scripts, short stories, newspaper and magazine articles.

He currently lectures in Screenwriting for the foundation course at the VCA Film and Television School.

**When: Saturday 23 May, 10.30 am–4 pm**

**Where: Jenny Florence Room, 3rd Floor, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne**

**10.30 am registration, 11 am–4 pm workshop (includes one hour lunch break)**

**Cost: \$25 members of SWWV, Writers Victoria and FAW Vic., \$50 non-members**

Morning tea, tea and coffee provided. BYO lunch or eat locally

Bookings essential: 03 9527 5583 or [lynnemurphy1068@gmail.com](mailto:lynnemurphy1068@gmail.com)

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Hello, Dear Members,

Kristin Henry's workshop on poetry, first in the Perfect Your Poetry and Prose series in conjunction with the Fellowship of Australian Writers, was held on Saturday 21st March at the Masonic Hall, Brunswick. In the quiet seclusion of the Library Room, Kristin took us through the essential elements of poetry followed by practical work that she critiqued.

Such an inspirational workshop was an experience not possible in the shorter sessions held at general meetings. Those attending were 6 SWWV, 2 FAW, 2 Writers Victoria and 1 visiting writer.

At the SWWV General Meeting on 27 March, a committee was formed to effectively plan, cost and promote future events. Publicity is essential to attract an audience beyond the SWWV to our workshops. The planning committee has flyers for Workshop 2—Ray Mooney on Prose—to distribute in their local areas and anyone willing to help in this way please contact me [lynnemurphy1068@gmail.com](mailto:lynnemurphy1068@gmail.com).

Our speaker for the March meeting was Alan Attwood who described the reason he became editor of *The Big Issue*. It was a privilege to listen to Alan and share the humanity of his vision.

At the 29 May meeting all members are invited to Elevenses to discuss current matters and the future direction of the Society. SWWV's intrepid travelling writer, Veronica Schwarz, will touch down in Melbourne for the 26 June meeting and describe her travel writings and the source of her inspiration.

Good writing

Lynne



Alan Attwood. Photo by Meryl Tobin

## EDITOR'S LETTER



Dear Members,

I trust you enjoy this month's essays by guest writers. Next month's interview will be with a Welsh storyteller about the continuing role folk tales and fairy stories play in the way we navigate our lives.

I look forward to receiving your prose and poems, especially on the theme of folktales, myth and fantasy.

*Astra inclinant, non necessitant*

Jennifer Leslie

[jenniferleslie360@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferleslie360@gmail.com)

Copy Deadline	10th of each month
Production	15th each month
Distribution	19th each month

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## MEMBER PROFILE

### MARY JONES



Mary migrated to Australia in November 2008 from England, where she was a member of The Writers' Guild of Great Britain and The Crime Writers' Association. Her short stories were published in magazines in the UK, Scandinavia and South Africa, and one broadcast on BBC Radio 4. In the UK, she worked extensively in amateur theatre as director and actor, and has had full-length stage scripts performed by amateurs and professionals.

Since moving to Australia she has continued writing short fiction and playscripts, but has also and segued into performance poetry. She was a finalist in the 2009 Poetry Idol competition at Fed Square, and her play, *Memory Stick* won the 2009 Boroondara One-Act Play Competition, and was produced by the Boroondara Theatre Company.

Mary's work has been published in several magazines, including *The Australian Writer*, *The Mozzie* and *Quadrant*, and included in anthologies. She has two poems in a collection of poems about Frankston, *City of Stars*, published by Ginninderra Press, due out later this year. Her first poetry collection, *Lines Dancing*, was published in 2012 and she is currently compiling a second. She hopes to produce a collection of some of her short stories.

She has a blog at [maryjonesthewriter.com](http://maryjonesthewriter.com), but is often much too busy to update it, which is entirely as it should be.

### Fish

In the beginning is the idea.  
You stir beneath the surface,  
throwing up ripples, eddies,  
troublesome bubbles

until your sleek head rises  
through swirls of foam  
to stare me in the eye  
and I am hooked.

Hauled from the depths  
into an alien world  
you slither through primeval mud  
to flounder at my feet.

In your first faltering breaths  
you look to me for guidance.  
I struggle to understand you,  
make you welcome in my world.

I feed you, groom you, nurture you,  
until you rocket through  
my dreams and out the other side  
beyond imagination.

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'Fish' will be published in a Poetica Christi anthology due out later this year. The featured poems were selected from the publisher's 'Inner Child' competition.

## GUEST ESSAY

### THE RABBIS AND THE ROMANTICS

#### *The two faces of creativity*

BOB DINAPOLI



Our common conception of creativity takes in a rich confusion of ideas. We might reckon we can recognise ‘creative’ work when we see it, but we rarely think about creativity in itself, except perhaps as something good to encourage in children. When we *do* try to think about it, we tend to lump together a selection of its countless aspects, with scant regard for how well they actually sort together. Much of what we would take as the obvious results of creativity—the composer’s string quartet or the catchy pop song; the artist’s painting, sculpture or installation; the poet’s sonnet or haiku; the fashion designer’s spring collection; the master chef’s roulade or soufflé—are all, strictly speaking, transformations. Their making is a shaping, the rearrangement of ingredients, fabrics, words, stone or pigments into new and unforeseen flavours, patterns and forms. The reviewer may gush about a chef’s or fashion designer’s ‘creations’, but no one imagines they magicked them out of thin air.

‘In the beginning’, we are told in Genesis 1:1, ‘God created the heavens and the earth. For the theologically minded, this narrative constitutes the fundamental act of creation—*ex nihilo*, or ‘out of nothing’. Such creation is traditionally considered a divine prerogative: you or I can say ‘let there be purple elephants’ till we’re blue in the face, and no such chromatically aberrant pachyderms will materialise. God has merely to say ‘let there be light’, and all at once his angels are donning their sunnies and applauding. Yet that same narrative in Genesis goes on to suggest a very different process. Just before he sheds his light on the scene, God sees that the earth is ‘void and without form’. The original Hebrew is more dramatic and confronting: God sees the earth is *tohu wa-bohu*, a phrase that implies a state of roiling confusion, sometimes translated as startlingly as ‘chaos and desolation’. How is it that a perfect, all-powerful and transcendent creator calls into being a shapeless mess that requires six days of sorting out to turn into a coherent world?

Well, part of the answer is that *that* creator probably didn’t. If you compare ancient creation narratives from different peoples around the world, one of their most common elements is that of deity or spirit taming and organising a recalcitrant lower reality comprising chaotic material elements, a lower reality which is simply *there*, and not summoned into being *ex nihilo*.

The Olympian gods of ancient Greece have to subdue the wayward, chthonic titans; Odin and his fellow Asgardians carry on a chronic counter-insurgency campaign against the similarly chthonic frost-giants; Marduk, the key player in ancient Babylonian creation-myth, has to tame Tiamat, a female demon of chaos associated with the formless waters of the ocean. Creation *ex nihilo* appears to have been a much later theological refinement of a creation story that had taken shape among the distant ancestors of the priestly or rabbinical redactors that gave Jewish scripture its final shape. That ancient story shared the near-universal conception of creation as a patterning and ordering activity—the biblical six days of creation all entail a kind of taxonomical sorting-out of confused elements: light over here, dark over there; water above, water below; sea here, dry land there; plants here, animals there; and so on. God’s creation of the world from nothing and his magisterial ‘let there be light’ are later additions; by the time these stories were being woven into a canonical written text, the archaic narrative had, over long ages of oral transmission, accumulated too much authority to be revised or edited away. Thus the inconsistency still stands at the heart of the biblical creation narrative.

Curiously enough, our own contemporary thinking about human creativity seems to have preserved a version of this split-level consciousness, the end result of a fascinating network of branching and tangled traditions, of which I can here point to only a few. The art of classical Greece, whether in its representations of an idealised human form or in its deployment of equally idealised geometrical abstractions in its architecture, sought to lay bare an underlying, pre-existent perfection (more or less Plato’s notion of ideal forms) that found only partial expression in the productions of nature. The Greek sculptor or builder, through the conscious exercise of his reason, could recognise and embody in his work such ideal forms that little bit more exactly, though still by no means perfectly. At their best they communicated a vision of an ideal order of reality that did not originate in the artist’s imagination. The skill of, say, a Callimachus, a Praxiteles or a Callicrates might have won them renown for achievements well above and beyond those of their fellow practitioners. But all such artists, from the genius to the plodding hack, would have worked alike with deeply traditional materials and elements of style. Not even the most outstanding among them would have been regarded as an ‘original’, in the modern sense of the word when it is used to describe high-order creative work.

**The artist’s task was to get out of the way as much as possible and allow the light of divine reality to shine through the window his work opened**

Through the Middle Ages, most artistic production was guided by the teachings of St Augustine of Hippo, who held the purely aesthetic qualities of the painting, the poem or the statue to be entirely secondary, subservient to the need for such works to communicate religious truths. The artist’s task was to get out of the way as much as possible and allow the light of divine reality to shine through the window his work opened, if only partially, onto that reality. The worker did not *originate* the most vital aspects of his work. In its giddy rediscovery of the classical world, the Renaissance effectively combined the pietist ideal of medieval aesthetics with the idealised forms of Platonically-inspired classical aesthetics. Artists in many different media channelled ideal models of aesthetics and meaning. What was best and strongest and truest in their work, as both they and their audiences would have conceived the process of ‘creation’, did not originate in their own personal imaginations.

My own experience as a scholar and teacher of English literature allows me to speak briefly here of the great workers in the language who are my interest and study—poets such as Chaucer or Shakespeare or Milton, to name their art's most powerful practitioners. However original and 'creative' they and their fellow poets might be in their use of the English of their times—indeed, all three of the authors I've named coined many words and phrases that remain in common use to this day— not one of them 'invented' the matter of the works for which he is best known. Every tale told by a Canterbury pilgrim adapts a source-narrative. The same is true for all Shakespeare's plays, and *Paradise Lost* seems nothing but a labyrinth of Classical, biblical and contemporary political quotations, allusions and echoes.

**Now the artist possesses the genius, which becomes an inward human faculty rather than a spirit external to the human it inspires**

'Originality', a concept we moderns often pair with our notion of creativity, simply did not figure in those notions of creativity that held sway prior to the later eighteenth century, and thereby hangs yet another complex tale. If a reviewer in the earlier eighteenth century were to comment that Mr Pope's 'Essay on Poetry' was a highly 'artificial' poem, Mr Pope would have thanked him for the compliment. The word then meant something like 'intricately wrought' or 'artificed', and its connotations were wholly positive. In an ideal consciously borrowed from Horace's *Ars Poetica* (of which Pope's 'Essay on Poetry' is a loose translation), art was viewed as 'nature improv'd', a process whereby the human intellect and imagination transform the given good of the natural world into something higher and better. On its own, nature could be crude, rough and 'Gothicke'. It was the poets of the Romantic Movement, reacting against their predecessors' dutiful neo-classicism, who rejected what they saw not as fidelity to a pre-existing ideal but as arid formalism, bereft of any inward vitality. It is in the poetry and the ideas of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and many others of the time that the word 'genius' loses its older meaning of a spirit who infuses the being of the artist and inspires his work. Traditionally, the 'genius' possessed the poet, who might have said, up to Pope's time, 'I have *a* genius', in the way we might say a witch has a familiar. The Romantics came to use 'genius' to refer instead to some mysteriously hidden *inner* resource, some facility of verbal and visual imagination that allows the creative artist to originate visions and truths hitherto unglimped by anyone else. Now the artist possesses the genius, which becomes an inward human faculty rather than a spirit external to the human it inspires. Indeed, if the work justifies the claim, he or she *is* a genius.

In an analogous revolution of thought, the neo-classicist's delight in pattern for its own sake, for formal symmetry and proportion, came to be devalued in favour of an engaged delight in and dialogue with the forms of nature as human cognition perceives them. In the classical or neo-classical ideal, the creative artist works *by* and *through* nature, finding there her materials and forms, and using her higher imagination to perceive the eternal ideal forms of which they are a partial embodiment. She then practices her art in trying to realise those ideal forms in a material medium, closer to the ideal than nature on her own could manage.

The romantic artist feels herself to be separate from nature, though in an intimate sympathy with its ceaseless processes of change and metamorphosis rather than with some static ideal its phenomena may embody. The flux of nature and the flux of thought and imagination in the individual human psyche come into an ideal alignment, and, just as nature herself can, like a fountain, toss forth forms worthy of marvel and wonder, so too the imagination of the inspired romantic poet can, seemingly from nowhere, engender large and intricate forms of beauty, wonder and wisdom.

The romantic revolution continues to inform modern notions of creativity, just as it still infuses present-day environmental activism's regard for a nature from which the industrial revolution and its aftermath has so severely alienated most of the developed world. 'Make it new!' Ezra Pound declared in the early years of literary modernism, and the greatest of the romantics and their successors down to our day have appeared, to their admirers, at least, as meteoric flashes of unheralded brilliance. To name only a handful with whom I am closely familiar, William Blake, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson and W.B. Yeats appear, at least to their many admirers, as one-off wonders, unparalleled and unprecedented. Nothing in their genealogies as poets can account for what we find the most compelling in their work. It sometimes seems as if we have come to a point where the creative imagination, in order for us to recognise it, must generate the *ex nihilo* masterpiece, wholly its own and indebted to no predecessor, like the theologically absolute creator of Genesis 1:1.

The commercial forces of late capitalism, which tend to latch on to any manifestation of novelty, however trivial or stupid, as commercial opportunities, have led to a thinning out of the ways in which we conceive of creativity. PR and marketing divisions will start bellowing 'Brilliant!', 'A Work of Genius!' and 'A Brilliant Work of Original Genius', long before the song, the play, the movie or the book burdened with so much pro-forma praise will have been available long enough for anyone to come to a considered judgement about its creativity. Genuinely innovative and creative works spawn countless imitations that are anything but. Amidst all the hoo-hah it can be very hard to think at all about the long, slow processes that have led to this juncture in history. Yet, in the end, I suspect, the genuinely creative element of all human endeavour, anywhere, in any age, must combine both sides of the picture I have sketched so inadequately in these reflections. It is one of the grand paradoxes of creative achievement: the *mot juste* in poem or novel or play, the harmony or turn of melody that pierces, the choreography of colour and form that entrances. When they happen, they leave their witnesses both convinced of their rightness and awed by their very implausibility. Who'd have thought them possible? Yet, once seen or heard or read, who could imagine them in any other way? The most compelling creativity stirs us by combining surprise and inevitability, as right as it is rare. By recognising its two faces, its audiences participate in its becoming a fact of space, time and experience.

Visit [themellbournliteratureseminars.com.au](http://themellbournliteratureseminars.com.au) to find out about more about writer, scholar and musician Dr Robert (Bob) DiNapoli and the Refectory Series at Ross House.

*SWWV Editor Jennifer Leslie's  
interview with  
Philip Davydov and Olga  
Shalamova  
about  
the things of earth  
and the things of heaven*



Olga Shalamova and Philip Davydov. Photograph by Marina Hohlova

*Do you agree iconography and writing are similar in process and intent?*

Philip: They have a lot in common. Both are structured to bring the beholder or reader into a certain state of mind or soul that changes or shifts perception.

*Would you say both are about communication and transferring information?*

Philip: Yes, in a simplistic sense. An icon tells a story. It has a special place in the spiritual world as part of meditation and an indication of something else.

Iconography has its own language and to paint icons, it must be understood. However, simply knowing the rules won't make a person an icon painter, the same as understanding grammar doesn't make a writer or poet. Authentic art requires technical knowledge combined with the appropriate psychological and spiritual attitude. I think in that sense they are similar.

*Do you need faith to work with and appreciate iconography?*

Olga: Yes, because I think it's important to spend your life with things that are important and faith is an essential part of existence. If something is unworthy of you it won't work.

Philip: The creation of something presupposes you are immersed in the process and that's impossible if you don't believe in what you do. Also, the beholder is overwhelmed by information and distractions so it is important to put him or her in an environment without interruption. A break in ongoing reality needs to be created so the message can be perceived.

*Why is it called icon writing?*

Philip: For Russian speakers it's a literal translation. In the Russian language a professionally painted work is described as 'written'. I think emigrants continued to describe iconography as writing pictures or icons in their adopted languages hence the continuation of the term. Their followers use this description not realising the richness implied in the word 'painting'. Also, some properties of the visual world elude definition and are easier to explain that way.

*Would you describe the process of developing an icon?*

Philip: Every creative work involves learning so it is impossible to describe the process accurately because so many aspects influence me. When I have an idea about an image, I keep it in my mind and start the process of developing it. I study medieval images—not to compare them with the one I have in mind—but for inspiration in revealing my idea with greater clarity.

*Does a special quality compel you to work with one idea and not another?*

Olga: No never. Before I draw an image I can't imagine it. I can only think with a pencil or brush in my hand on paper or another surface.

Philip: I'm completely different. I wake up and say—Look! I've seen such a wonderful green! I want to work it into my next image. I try to think what kind of image should be built to make this green work. Or, I've seen an interaction between two figures in a painting and say—Such a dynamic or static interaction! That's what I want in my next image. I analyse how it's constructed and try to make something similar or different using the same principles.

*A writer will start with an idea and then plan how to describe it. Is the process similar starting a new icon?*

Philip: Yes. I see a special green first or want to tell a different story about a figure or theme then I find the best way to express or reveal it.

Olga: I start with the board. I can change that because I control it. Then I decide the means of expression that will best reveal the image.

*Would you describe your research methodology please?*

Philip: I analyse what my predecessors and contemporaries did with the same image and select that which can help me with my project.

*Do you check factual details?*

Philip: In the early stages of building the image, I'm not distracted by details. Research comes later and - like a writer—I must prove things existed for my work to be authentic. In some cases it involves researching anatomical features or the details of a garment from a specific historical period.

*Do you desire to say something meaningful through your art?*

Philip: When I'm in the actual process of working I think about what is appropriate to the image and how to make it speak the way I think it should. It must communicate visually what I want it to 'say', and I make every effort to ensure the message is clear.

Olga: When I'm working I cannot think about another person's perception. I think about that when the work is done.

*How do you transpose a personal statement into your work?*

Philip: It is about making something because I feel I must. I can't stop myself. I can paint an icon as just filling in time but when I have something to say, I can't paint just any image. Then, I treat my work as a serious message otherwise it's a waste of time and materials.

*Give me an example of making a statement through an icon.*

Philip: The iconographer is in a tricky situation because this art form has existed for 2,000 years as part of the church tradition. There are thousands of medieval icons and some iconographers just reproduce them without thinking that the original master strove to impart truths to the world through them. Also, since we exist in a world with a huge amount of visual information the images we construct should not only be based on church tradition because that provides the context, but also speak to our contemporaries. Having all this knowledge, tradition and experience means every time I paint an icon I have to mediate between the tradition and my message.

An example would be the challenge of informing a person who knows nothing about John the Baptist. In my answer, I would use means appropriate to the person that are also worthy of me. I would give a contemporary answer because I'd be speaking to a person living now and use language common to my time.

*When you show someone an image say, of John the Baptist, you are saying—this is what I think—so you must be confident your vision is accurate.*

Philip: Yes absolutely. I must position my interpretation in a way that is worthy of me because I have to prove it without doubt. If I use someone else's words or image to describe or explain, I become that person. I must be authentic. I must say—This is what I think.



Above: *Icon of the Mother of God* by Philip Davydov 2014  
Below: *Icon of the Holy Family on a gray-umber background* by Philip Davydov 2013  
Photographs by Philip Davydov



*You said in a lecture there isn't any point starting a work of art unless you believe it's going to transform the universe. Would you develop that idea please?*

Olga: With iconography we are talking about eternal truths. Every generation of iconographers describes faith and even though the generations of humans and the language we use for verbal and visual communication changes, eternal truths remain constant.

Philip: An icon must sustain and nourish or else the onlooker doubts its substance and purpose. I think writing is similar. Writing can be about frivolous things but in that sense, is it art?

*The spoken and written language changes due to the influence of the time in which we live. Has the language of iconography changed?*

Olga: Certain things remain unchanged such as Christ and the Gospel stories. These are the subjects of iconography and every generation represents them in different ways. During the nineteenth century the images were realistic whereas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Yaroslavl School for example, dedicated time and effort to producing beautifully painted details. The similarities are there with the written word. Nineteenth century novels were about realism, take Russian writing for example.

*Do you think iconographers experiment with colour the way writers experiment with words?*

Philip: Colours play a similar role to words in that they help us communicate. Colour is as significant as words as they can distract or enhance and—as with words—every colour has unique qualities. Colour is part of the architecture that makes the onlooker feel a certain way. To use it successfully a painter has to fall in love with it. If colour doesn't inform then it is mere decoration for its own sake incapable of expressing something authentic or profound. Absence of colour is sometimes better but a decision such as that is about visual literacy and knowledge about the way elements relate.

*Do you think the use of gold says anything about spirituality or is it a statement about the material world?*

Philip: Gilding is a metaphor for perfection and wealth. In medieval times the meaning of gold was more complex and iconographers used it as a symbol of the untarnished reality of heaven and other similar matters.

Olga: Gold on an icon often works as a barrier. Some people see a surface with a golden halo and a dark figure, identify it as an icon and aren't interested in looking closer. We decided to reduce the use of gold down to a bare minimum because we think in our time icons should work in a different way.

*Do you agree there is a similarity between the overuse of gold in iconography and excessive sensuality in a novel? In the wrong hands both can distract rather than inform.*

Philip: I think gilding excites people. It is so exquisite and wonderful that the artist must be a specialist to use it well and in the wrong hands it can make the image unnecessary. Some writers can write magnificent and relevant scenes of sensuality as some iconographers can use gold well. What an artist reveals or hides is part of the message.



Above (detail) and below: *The Crucifix* by Philip Davydov 2013. Photographs by Philip Davydov

*Recently you said people expect perfection of form in everything from household appliances to the shape of an apple. How does this obsession affect your creativity?*

Olga: As iconographers we shouldn't strive for formal perfection. We should make something that takes us away from this obsession—something calm, precise and dynamic. For example, the images made for a church are for a specific purpose and should not be subjected to the rules that apply in the material world.

Philip: Every choice an iconographer makes must be a spiritual one. Striving for perfection can be the modern iconographer's idea of how icons fit in with today's society. An icon isn't a print or a computer generated image that has been perfected through the use of a software package. Everything has its own texture and other qualities and only organic human effort can reveal or hide them. In the past iconography was a sacred meditative art, requiring more than just craftsmanship. It is sad that these days some iconographers believe they must acquire the highest level of technical skill and in doing so lose something precious.

*Is iconography subject to similar business considerations as other art forms?*

Philip: I think so. There are rules and they are to do with times in which we live. These rules are based on how and what people read and the business of publishing companies. In our world clients may be priests or a private person and in most cases we are talking about huge commissions therefore we have to fit in with the rules. This applies to all creative art.

*A writer might want to describe an event in a certain style but the publisher calls the shots. Do similar constraints apply to iconography commissions?*

Olga: It's important to listen to the clients but not ignore my working principles. If I am asked to make a copy of an icon I will refuse because it's not interesting to me. I don't want to work with it. We prefer to work with clients who share our vision and values.

Philip: As I live on this earth I try to make choices the art deserves. All choices are spiritual down to the kind of sandpaper I use. Sometimes I forget art is part of the material world.

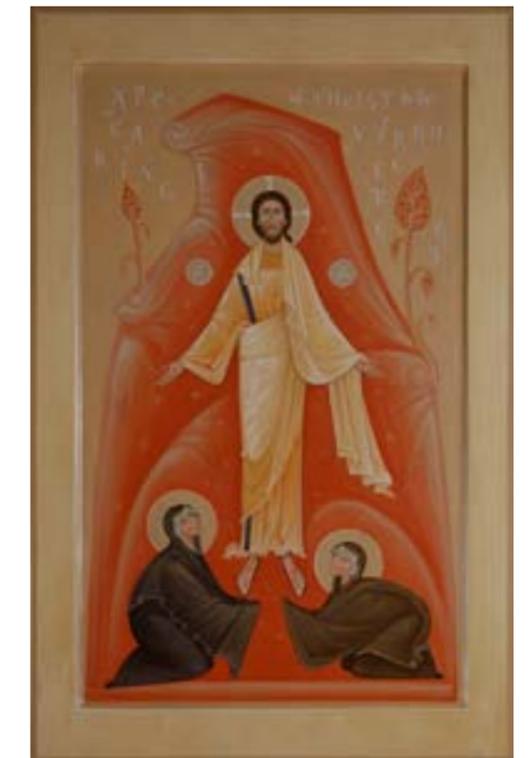
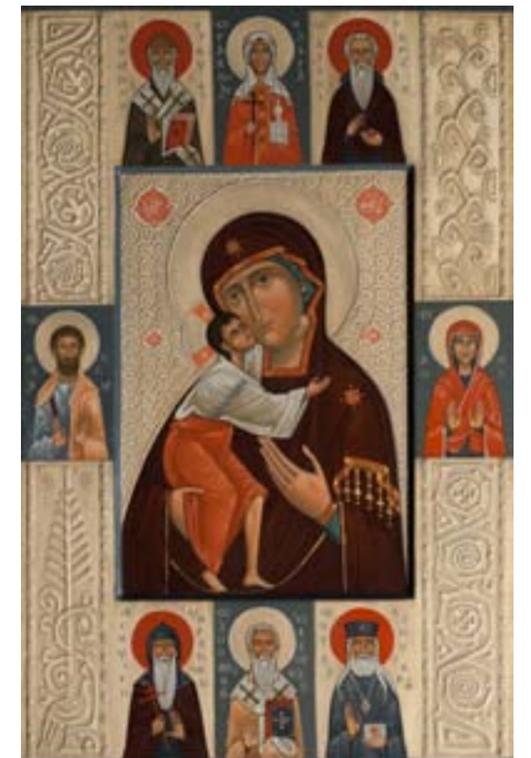
*How should icons work in the 21st Century?*

Olga: People need to be drawn to the image and the way we have done that is through breaking stereotypes. Providing a means for active and conscious interaction with the Prototype is the most important thing an icon does.

Philip: It's the same role that words play—the best of both help us communicate an idea or reveal a truth.

*So we must look after our languages. Thank you.*

Philip Davydov and Olga Shalamova hold annual iconography workshops in the USA, Canada and Melbourne. To discover more about Philip and Olga and their iconography, please go to [www.sacredmurals.com](http://www.sacredmurals.com)



Above: *Icon of the Mother of God Feodorovskaya with Saints Spiridon, Princess Olga, David of Garedja, Joakim, Anna, Symon the Myrrh-Giver and Lukas of Crimea* by Olga Shalamova 2014  
Below: *Christ Appearing to the Holy Myrrh-bearers (Resurrection of Christ)* by Olga Shalamova 2013.  
Photographs by Philip Davydov

## OPINION

### 'WHO WILL SHEW US ANY GOOD?' (Nocturn 1 Psalm 4 *Cum invocarum Tenebrae*)

Fr RICHARD WILSON



Organisational theorist, Charles Handy, may have been the first person to use the analogy of a frog and a pot of boiling water to illustrate the dynamics of cultural change. He uses the analogy in the context of business organisation, but it applies to society as a whole. If a frog is dropped into a pot of boiling water, it reflexively and immediately saves itself by jumping out. If the frog is put into a pot of cold water heated until boiling, the change is gradual; the frog doesn't notice until too late, eventually succumbing.

Societies change slowly unless exposed to shock like the frog in boiling water. In the west there has been gradual change from a society depending on the cohesive structure of its communities, to one in which the individual's capacity to live independently from others is perceived as strength.

There are pernicious side effects to this change; communities are less friendly and independence results in a more competitive life. Changes to economic structures have resulted in neo-liberal economics rewarding material accumulation, defining it as a significant marker of an individual's worth and success.

It has also brought about a culture that seeks safety, especially in the familiar rejecting the foreign. The inexcusable state of Australia's refugee policy and its implementation is the most visible example of this—see the Moss Report for the most recent assessment of conditions on Nauru.

We need to change. There is a rising voice of protest at the excesses for which we as a nation are responsible, especially in human rights, and the dependence of our economy on greed as motivation, with consumption as its fuel.

But change is hard unless there is a shock, like boiling water to force a reflexive life-saving response; even global warming is too slow to generate the responses we need.

The life of Jesus Christ served, amongst other things, to inspire social change. He generated a crisis by confronting the lack of equity and morality in society, and described an alternative, more ethical option.

He offended people in the process.

He was an activist; his belief that an alternative society was not only possible and necessary offended the religious hierarchy, challenging the privilege of wealth and power. The society at the centre of Jesus' vision in his sermon on the mountain was centred on the gospel values of equity, generosity, cooperation, empathy, respect for the person and creation—a society challenging vested interest and privilege.

This kind of change is more than just fiddling at the edges, but so profound the old life will be lost giving way to the new. This kind of change requires sacrifice; for Jesus it resulted in his execution. For us today, it will require sacrifice to create a society dramatically different from the one we currently enjoy.

But real change can happen. It is in our hands to decide the kind of change we want and what to sacrifice in order to bring it about.

In her essay<sup>1</sup>, the Reverend Elenie Poulos describes the changes in the role of society, from community creation to servicing wealth generation. Moreover, she believes that the systems and structures of world communities have become, at their core, economic. Further to that, she asserts the economy has ceased to serve people, but instead people serve the economy.

Poulos argues that human well-being and what it means to lead a good life are now defined in primarily economic terms. My observation is that our social and political conversation is almost always about economics in one form or another.

Two 'isms' underpin this shift: individualism and consumerism, and these in their own ways undermine the value of community, of human relationship and of social justice.

In an economically servile, consumption-based society the person is reduced to a unit of consumption. The most valuable social member is the greatest consumer. If you cannot consume you are rejected. You need only to look at the people attending the homeless breakfast program at my church, St Peter's Eastern Hill in Melbourne, to see, somewhat starkly, what I mean.

I worry that every aspect of community life becomes a financial transaction. In a community that is merely a bundle of economic exchanges, how do you participate if you are not able in an acceptable manner? What if you choose not to participate in the economy on its present terms? What happens if you want to change those terms?

The problem, as I see it, is further compounded by the capacity of capital investment and management systems to deliver market efficiency, especially when it is operated using a skill set that is the preserve of only a few. Competition and greed result because efficiency and competitiveness are richly rewarded, although they are not richly shared.

Do we ever challenge the appropriateness of competition? No, it is taken as an economic good and therefore universalised. Do we ever challenge the modern concept of property rights on which competition and greed depend? No. Not even the church does this, even though the biblical understanding of property (Leviticus 25) restricts the period of exclusive ownership of property in order that fair redistribution may periodically take place, and all are guaranteed their basic needs—unlike the guests of the homeless breakfast program at St Peter's Eastern Hill.

<sup>1</sup> Poulos E (2015) 'Neoliberalism, values and the public interest'. In: Douglas B, Wodak J, eds. *Who Speaks for and Protects the Public Interest in Australia?: Essays by notable Australians*. Weston, ACT: Australia



Images from the [New Guinea Matyrs Window](#) St Peters Eastern Hill, The Medical Mission (above) and The Teaching Mission (previous page)

Poulos says in our present society the good of the whole community is understood in particular neo-liberal economic terms of 'progress', and progress has become the default measure of community wellbeing. That this progress is shared unequally is not questioned. In my view the inequality is unjust and must be contested.

This vision of community wellbeing leaves aside the values of equity, generosity, cooperation, empathy and respect for the person and for creation. These are dismissed as idealistic. They are idealistic; they are the ideal of the Gospel. Ideal does not mean beyond the reach of change.

As Jeremiah says, we need a new covenant. We must place gospel values at the centre of community life. This does not mean overturning or punishing capitalism, far from it, as capitalism has the capacity to drive advances in human wellbeing. That is one reason my life is better now than when I grew up on the family fruit farm in the Mallee.

But the ability of the capital economy to drive wellbeing does not qualify it to be at the centre of community life. Nor can it replace the importance of people and those things on which they depend—community, justice, and creation.

Change is hard. We are always hesitant, we fear the unknown. Jesus himself was fearful to approach the Cross. In faith Christians accept the necessity of dying from one life to live in another. In order to secure a more equitable, just future that places the person at the centre of community life, we do have to die from some aspects of the old life.

The creative imperative is not to accept the preferences of minority vested interests. We must hold populist governments to account and deny their right to exercise only a short-term vision. The creative imperative needs to look further into the future, to have the real common good of the community as its measure of success. Probably for most, this means being prepared to give up some of what is currently considered a right or expectation. To do this requires a real toughness of spirit.

Richard Wilson is an Anglican priest at St Peter's Eastern Hill, Melbourne. He had a thirty-year career in government, information technology and management consulting. He is preparing a doctoral research project at the University of Divinity and works in chaplaincy and ministry to the business community. [www.stpeters.org.au](http://www.stpeters.org.au)

## NEWS AND REVIEWS

### PERFECT YOUR POETRY AND PROSE WITH KRISTIN HENRY

#### JUDITH GREEN

As a tutor, Kristin Henry adapted her program to encourage questions and stimulate ideas from participants. Essential poetry constructs and devices were discussed during the workshop including rhyme, alliteration, consonance, assonance, repetition, juxtaposition of words and ideas and use of the senses. She showed us how to take a poem somewhere through the example of wonderfully delicious poetry created by masters of this specific art.

Kristin took us beyond our comfort zones encouraging us to play with the unfamiliar and challenging through a series of exercises.

We were challenged and sometimes struggled to create a first draft that we were brave enough to share with the group. Kristin didn't expect perfection from us but willingness to take risks and write beyond the familiar.

We left the workshop our minds busy with the poets we had talked about, keen to read more, possibilities and ideas to explore, partial poems raw and rough just waiting to be sculpted, words and patterns curling and drifting amidst treasures of images that we know will become poems.

### A POSITIVE INITIATIVE—ALAN ATTWOOD AND THE BIG ISSUE

#### MERYL BROWN TOBIN

At the March meeting Alan Attwood spoke about *The Big Issue*, the fortnightly general interest magazine he has edited for eight years.

All vendors selling *The Big Issue* on the streets have a story to tell. The 'My Word' column publishes descriptions of first person experiences that Attwood described as '... real and raw and not going through a filter.'

The magazine runs on a shoestring staff of five, working three or four days a week and uses many columnists and contributors.

*The Big Issue's* annual short story competition is currently open and Attwood encouraged SWWV members to enter. His writing tips include: have a good title, use humour and simple language.

All present were impressed at the practical way *The Big Issue* assists people in challenging circumstances overcome disadvantage.

#### QUOTE OF THE MONTH



Albert Einstein and his wife Elsa [www.nobelprize.org](http://www.nobelprize.org)

'Human beings, vegetables, or cosmic dust, we all dance to a mysterious tune intoned in the distance by an invisible player.' **Albert Einstein 1879–1955**

German-born theoretical physicist. His work is known for its influence on the philosophy of science. He developed the general theory of relativity, one of the two pillars of modern physics.

## SWWV FEATURED WRITING



### Sweet Assorted *A mixture of metaphors*

It's square, red and flat  
Like a blotter, word-porous  
Some people, mundane  
Call it Thesaurus  
A rainbow-assorted lexicon box  
Its temptation  
Taps its refrain  
To open the metrical door of my brain  
The salty and sticky  
Seductive and sensory  
Wholly absurd  
Whimsical Word  
Like *Bouquet*  
Tossed in the air  
A wondrous array of romantical schemes  
A whirlpool, a whirlwind of visions and dreams  
*Opulent*  
Overweight, sumptuous  
Marshmallow word  
Luscious, lascivious  
With lingering smell  
So swallow this bonbon  
Not wisely: too well

*Subtle's* a fresh-tasting, strawberry-word  
Fragrant with promising, peaceable haze  
Acid-bright, mellow  
Soft yellow summertime days  
Dribbly, desirous saliva to run  
*Subtle's* a word to hold on your tongue  
*Savage*, to carefully pick up with tongs  
For the twitch, and delight  
Of its nose-running bite  
*Squeamish* and *Nausea*—cough out, and spit  
Or *Vellum*, or *Varnish*  
To stroke and caress, and hold and desire  
*Crackle* of cornflakes, and *Sparkle* of fire  
Thesaurus has tempted me  
Sung me her song  
Combed out her transient, temporal tress  
Whole minutes are gone  
In *Mire*, *Metaphysical*, *Scanty* and *Stress*  
My word is unfound in the spider web spin  
The sugary, shampoo-ey, fairy floss mess  
And I'm left to redress  
My vain waste of time  
With this feeble defense, this vain plea of fools  
That Thesaurus doesn't have *Kilojoules!* (Mine doesn't anyway!)

© 2015 Janice Williams

Janice Williams' stories won awards in the 2014 FAW National Literary Awards, which were announced at a ceremony on 10 April in Brunswick. *Coals of Fire* was Highly Commended and *An 'L' of a Problem* was Commended in the FAW Mary Grant Bruce Award for short stories of up to 5000 words written for children of between 10 to 15 years.



### Vale Mother and Father

Death became my Mother  
as though ready for a celebration  
peacefully went to God.  
Father envied her parting  
her whispers called him to come  
He went to her gladly.  
How selfishly we wept  
We had them for sixty years  
They were as one.  
A cup and saucer  
needing each other to be whole  
together once more.

© 2015 Sandra Topp

### Writer's Block

The writer sits alone  
staring at the blank page  
confounded by confusion  
and clutter.  
Computer, Printer,  
External hard drive,  
bookshelves bulging with  
'How to' books  
for idiots and dummies,  
all unexplored.  
Files filled with hope,  
short stories, prayers  
poetry, uncatalogued.  
Memory sticks forgotten.  
Piles of paper full of,  
desecrated, discarded words.  
Walls of memory cards.  
Calendar and diary  
a mass of highlighter hints  
a carnival of confusion,  
cameras, compact discs deserted  
concealing a past carefree life.

The writer sits alone  
staring at the clutter,  
confused, reflective  
bewildered.  
Abandoned bag of togs, towels,  
sand and silverfish.  
Sewing machine silent  
after years of service,  
babies clothes, party frocks,  
Superman cape, graduation  
gown.  
Keyboard silent  
beneath a black satin shroud  
Childish voices from distant  
days  
replaced by harsh electronic  
sounds  
from another room  
now invade her space.  
The writer sits alone,  
recalling days full of life,  
yet now a servant to words  
and asks, why?

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The Society of Women Writers, Victoria Inc.

Reg. No.A0039632B

Biennial Literary Award for Women

Australia Wide

Closing date: 14 August 2015

Conditions of Entry and Entry Form

Fees: \$7.00 per entry, 2 entries \$10, 3 entries \$15.00 (separate entry form for each entry)

Prizes: First prize \$400, 2nd prize \$200, Highly commended (these are awarded at the Judge's discretion)

Mail entries to: The Receiving Officer: Lynne Murphy, 12/2B Hawsleigh Ave, Balaclava, Vic. 3183.

Entry forms are available from the SWWV Newsletter or from the website: www.swwvic.org.au

Entry forms may be photocopied.

Specific Conditions of Entry

- 1. Entries must be original, unpublished, and not have won any award.
2. Entries must be typed and double spaced on one side of A4 paper.
3. Name must be given on entry form only. Use a paperclip to attach the entry form please (not a staple).
4. A coversheet to be attached to each entry showing:
Title, Category, Word count for Short Story and Articles, Line count for poems (do not include spaces).
5. Send copies only. All entries will be shredded after judging.
6. Entry fees must be enclosed with entries.
7. No limit to number of entries. A separate entry form with each entry (use a paper clip, not a staple)
8. Copyright remains the property of the writer.
9. Competition results will be published in the SWWV Newsletter and on the SWWV Website.
10. The judges' decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.
11. Winners will receive their results through Australia Post or by telephone.
12. Prizes will be presented at the SWWV meeting on 31 October 2015, at Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne or by post.



COMPETITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Closing 22 May The Bundaberg Poets' Society Inc. invites submissions for its Bush Lantern Award for Bush Verse. The first prize is a trophy and \$200 and the entry fees are \$8.00 per poem or \$20 for three. There is also a separate Bush Verse Junior Category. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope (SSAE) to Bush Lantern Award, Bundaberg Poets' Society, PO Box 4281, Bundaberg, Qld, 4670 or download entry forms at www.abpa.org.au

Closing 31 May Eastwood/Hills FAW Literary Competition features four categories—Short story to 3000 words, Poetry (except bush poetry) to 80 lines, Memoir of up to 1500 words and Pauline Walsh Award for a short story of up to 800 words. Entry fee is \$5 per entry, three for \$20. Prizes vary for different categories, but range from \$200 to \$50. The group also invites entries of up to 80 lines for the Boree Log Award for Bush Verse. The prize for that category is \$100 and entry is \$5. Visit www.hillsfaw.webs.com or send a SSAE to Competition Secretary, Eastwood/Hills FAW, PO Box 4663, North Rocks, NSW 2151 for entry forms and conditions of entry.

Closing 31 May Prospect 5 seeks submissions for a haiku and tanka issue. Send a maximum of 10 haiku and/or 6 tanka (unpublished and not on offer elsewhere) to the Guest Editor Beverley George at PO Box 3274, Umima Beach, NSW 2257 or at beverleygeorge@idx.com.au

Closing 30 June FAW Tasmania Henry Savery Award for an original unpublished short story of up to 2500 words that has not won a monetary prize and is not on offer elsewhere. The entry fee is \$5 per story, first prize is \$400 and second prize is \$100. Make cheques or money orders payable to FAW Tasmania Inc., PO Box 234, North Hobart, Tas., 7002. Normal competition conditions apply. Details: www.fawtas.org.au

Closing 30 June Scribes Writers offers prizes of \$200 and \$100 for their 'Poetic Licence' Open Poetry Competition in two categories: Rhyming verse and Free verse of up to 60 lines (excluding title). For an entry form visit their website at www.scribeswriters.com or send a SSAE to Scribes Writers Poetry Competition, South Barwon Community Centre, 33 Mt Pleasant Road, Belmont, Vic 3216.

Closing 21 August The FAW Tasmania 2015 Poetry Prize is open to all Australian residents and is for an original, unpublished poem of up to 60 lines. First prize is \$150 and second prize is \$50. Entry fee: \$5 per poem. Make cheques or money orders payable to FAW Tasmania Inc., PO Box 234, North Hobart, Tas., 7002. Normal competition conditions apply. Details: www.fawtas.org.au

Closing 25 September A prize of \$500 is offered for an unpublished winning short story of up to 3000 words in the FAW NSW Marjorie Barnard Award. The entry fee is \$10 for email and postal entries. Entry forms may be downloaded from www.fawnsw.org.au, email compconvenor@fawnsw.org.au or send a SSAE to The Convenor, FAW Marjorie Barnard Award, c/- 5/15 Bogan Road, Booker Bay, NSW 2257

Closing 31 October Caboolture Historical Village in Queensland has launched a Writing Competition for prose of up to 2000 words that must mention Caboolture Historical Village at least once. The prizes are \$250, \$100 and \$50 and it costs \$10 for one entry and \$15 for two. For conditions of entry and an entry form send a SSAE to The Receiving Officer, Writing Competition, Caboolture Historical Village, 280 Beerburrum Road, Caboolture, Qld, 4510 or visit www.historicalvillage.com.au

Azuria, Geelong's new independent literary magazine, seeks essays, poetry (esp. in languages other than English with translations) and short prose. Further details from the editor Dr E Reilly at geelongwriters@gmail.com

Please print your name and address details clearly

Name:
Address:
Suburb: Postcode:
Phone: Mobile:
Email:

Category (please tick)

- Poetry—max. 50 lines
Short Story—max. 2500 words
Article—max. 2000 words

Title of entry:

Entry fee enclosed:

Cheque/money order payable to the Society of Women Writers Victoria Inc.

Signature:

Mail entries to: The Receiving Officer: Lynne Murphy, 12/2B Hawsleigh Ave, Balaclava, Vic. 3183.

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Carpe Diem: Judith Green
Arianthe's Thread: Patricia O'Keefe

## MEETINGS and EVENTS

### Ross House Meetings, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

**Friday 24 April**, 11 am–3 pm, Workshop on Radio and Microphone Technique by Lynne Murphy, Hayden Raysmith Room, 4th Floor, Ross House.

### Saturday 23 May, 10.30 am–4 pm, Perfect Your Prose with Ray Mooney

Jenny Florence Room, 3rd Floor, Ross House

Bookings essential: 03 9527 5583 or [lynnemurphy1068@gmail.com](mailto:lynnemurphy1068@gmail.com)

See front page for details.

**Friday 29 May**, 11 am–3 pm, Elevenses—morning tea and a discussion about current matters and future direction of the Society. Hayden Raysmith Room, 4th Floor, Ross House.

**Friday 26 June**, Veronica Schwarz on travel writing and inspiration. Details next issue.

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