



# WriteAway

Newsletter of the Society of Women Writers Victoria Inc.

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

## My Only Desire

article and image by Veronica Schwarz



*Lady and the Unicorn* by Veronica Schwarz

This painting was inspired by the magnificent set of tapestries of the Lady and the Unicorn in the National Museum of the Middle Ages in Paris where they have hung since 1882. The six tapestries depict the five senses and the final one is mysteriously entitled *A mon seul désir* (*To My Only Desire*). Each piece consists of a woman dressed in medieval garments, a lion and a unicorn, a background of flowers, leaves, dogs, rabbits, monkeys and birds and, occasionally, a handmaiden. The human figures are life size, the background animals and plants—exquisite.

These six wool and silk tapestries were woven in Flanders in the 16th century inspiring novels and songs and puzzling historians for 500 years. The series is regarded as the Mona Lisa of woven artworks and is one of the greatest surviving artefacts of its kind from the Middle Ages.

It isn't surprising the tapestries featured in the Harry Potter movies.

*continued on page 3*

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear Members,

I hope you are preoccupied writing for the Biennial Literary Award and will put that extra bit of polish to your prose attending Workshop 2 with Ray Mooney. It will be an interesting session; I will be there for sure.

An email came from Mrs. Fay Price informing us her mother, longtime SWWV Member Shirley Harrison, passed away over Christmas. Fay wrote of the comfort and pleasure she has from reading her mother's writings and we send our condolences.

Alice Landau made a good recovery after her operations and has a new address. She is her usual cheerful self so keep in touch with this delightful lady by email at <[aliceelandau@gmail.com](mailto:aliceelandau@gmail.com)>.

Please, dear members, support Workshop 2 on Saturday 23rd of May with Ray Mooney on Prose. Hard work has gone into organising this event and it will be good value. Time spent at this workshop will provide opportunity to explore techniques and study the elements presented. This workshop will cover aspects essential to writing a story such as structure and plot. It may be the last special event the SWWV presents in this series. Don't miss it.

*Lynne*

### Ray Mooney Workshop

**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)

## EDITOR'S LETTER



Dear Members,

As autumn fades into winter, I trust you will spend this dour and chilly season writing all those poems and stories stymied by the distractions of summer.

Next month's issue will discuss communication—what it is and the forms it includes.

Good writing.

*Perfer et obdura; dolor hic tibi proderit olim.*

**Jennifer Leslie**

**Copy Deadline 10th of each month**

**Production 15th each month**

**Distribution 19th each month**

Please send (email) documents as Text Files. All photographs to be sent (emailed) separately in JPEG format.

*Jennifer Leslie*

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

## My Only Desire

*cover story, continued*

Each time I travel to Paris this series is the one thing I re-visit; it is beautiful and magical, filled with tantalisingly ambiguous stories.

The five senses are depicted through the woman's interactions with the lion and the unicorn and the actions and expressions of the main players compel the viewer to weave a story from the scene. If you have not seen these magnificent works of art, find them on the internet. I'm sure you'll love them, lose yourself in them and build your own stories around them. Here is an overview of what awaits you:

With the sense of hearing, the Lady plays a miniature organ with her handmaiden, while the lion and the unicorn sit listening.

In the sense of smell, the Lady makes a crown of flowers from the basket held by her handmaiden, the lion and the unicorn look on.

The sense of sight shows the Lady holding a mirror for the unicorn to look at his face. The unicorn sits with his front legs on the Lady's lap. The lion is definitely an 'also-ran', sitting on the other side of the Lady.

The sense of taste depicts the handmaiden kneeling, holding a large container of sweets. The Lady stands in front of her, choosing a sweet holding it temptingly to the unicorn. Both the lion and the unicorn are standing on their hind legs in eager anticipation. My guess is the lion will miss out.

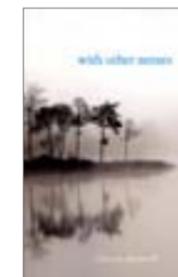
The sense of touch portrays the lady stroking the unicorn's alicorn while the lion looks on.

The final tapestry is *To My Only Desire*, leaving us to decide what that might be; your imagination is the key to the story.

My painting describes my fascination with the tapestries. It takes the Lady and the unicorn out of their formal setting and places them in a forest where they can begin another story away from the constraints of medieval court etiquette—a kind of what would happen if — .... The Lady is absorbed discovering the world of Nature around her; the unicorn is focussed on her. The rest of the story will be unique to each viewer.

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## Invitation to a Book Launch



Professor Molly Travers will launch *With Other Senses*  
Rebecca Maxwell's latest book of poetry

Meeting Room, Balwyn Library

336 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn

2.30 pm, Sunday 31 May, 2015

Guest Speaker: Errol Broome

## MEMBER PROFILE

### Judith Green



Judith was born with a book in her hand and worked her way through the local library while growing up. Somewhere in those early years she discovered a passion for playing with words. She helped produce a student-orientated newsletter during her secondary school years winning her first poetry prize with 'The Whirlywind' in a school competition.

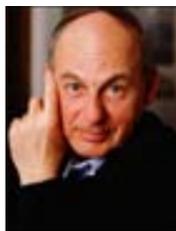
As a kindergarten teacher Judith wanted to imbue children with a love of language, a love of listening to, of telling and creating stories. One of her greatest frustrations is the focus on 'educational' books designed to teach a child to read. Judith believes any book capturing a child's imagination is educational because when a child discovers the wonder of books—he or she wants to read.

Throughout these many years Judith continued to play with words. She has had success in competitions, and been published in magazines and anthologies. She continues to write poetry and is exploring short stories and essay writing. She joined the SWWV because the Postal Workshop was a vital link with fellow writers when she could not attend meetings. These workshops are still an essential part of her writing life.

Judith's first love is poetry. She has however started a longterm project exploring 'female resilience and the spirit of community connectedness'.

Judith says—Life experience may change the hair colour and add a few wisdom lines to the face, but it opens a wonderful array of doors for a writer to step through and explore.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH



Adlai Stevenson, photograph from [www.pixgood.com](http://www.pixgood.com)

**Man does not live by words alone, despite the fact that sometimes he has to eat them.**

Adlai Ewing Stevenson II (February 5, 1900–July 14, 1965) was an American politician and diplomat, noted for his intellectual demeanor, eloquent public speaking, and promotion of liberal causes in the Democratic Party

## My Mother's Hands

her hands, embraced by time, caress the jewellery box  
in the centre of her dressing table, where it has always  
been, her fingers tracing the once familiar polished  
wood design, as though repetition will conjure  
up memories as a wand waving magician conjures a rabbit  
from a hat

the contents, priceless only in the memories each trigger,  
await her touch, as I do, the names of those who wore or gifted  
the gems, the places she wore them, the jackets or dresses  
each looked best on, 'these will be yours' her words of other  
days linger, as do the unspoken words 'treasure the giver as  
much as the gift'

her left hand rests, cradling the side, right hand index finger  
sliding over the catch, backwards, forwards, around the edge,  
backwards, forwards, around the edge, 'It seems to be locked',  
her voice a whisper, almost to herself, 'It seems to be locked'

I hesitate, tentatively reach out, bridging the final few inches,  
slide the catch open, a quiet click reverberating in the silence,  
right index finger traces the now open catch again, and again,  
and again, I wait, as the items cocooned within wait, for her  
caress, to be lifted one by one, valued for their story,  
to be placed in my hands by her gnarled and wrinkled mother hands

I wait, to once again watch her touch each item as she has always done,  
as though she is touching the person the item connects her with,  
to feel her touch, hear her voice, feel her fingers touch mine, to  
hear her voice retelling the stories with words that polish the gems  
nestled in the soft velvet

I wait

the lid remains closed

© Judith Green

'My Mother's Hands' was published in *Memory Weaving: An Anthology of Dementia Journeys* in 2014. The anthology was edited by Carolyn Vimpani and published by [Poetica Christi Press](http://PoeticaChristiPress.com).

*SWWV Editor Jennifer Leslie's*  
*interview with*  
**Christine Willison**  
*about living the life*



Pembrokeshire coastline by [Fred Bigio](#)

*Tell me about Storytellers UK.*

I am the chair of Storytelling UK, a national organisation promoting storytelling. Oral storytelling is an ancient art form and remains a vibrant part of world culture. The Society for Storytelling was founded in 1993 to promote storytelling in England and Wales and provides information about events, advice on using storytelling, and keeps a register of storytellers.

*Why have you chosen to live in Wales?*

I fell in love with a Welshman and with a country. I found the people, language and culture fascinating and the countryside beautiful. Where else would you want to live?

I met my partner 18 years ago. His mother and her sister came from Leipzig and were the only surviving family members of the Nazi Holocaust. As a refugee, his mother chose Wales as her home and my partner regards it as his. He's a writer, broadcaster and historian, a fluent Welsh speaker and his life is imbued with Welsh culture.

We live on a smallholding in Pembrokeshire where we can sing and play the piano until 3 am if we want. There is a town nearby with everything we need and several organic farms in the area where we get wonderful food and—food is important to us.

*It sounds like Escape to the Country. I think your life in Wales is one many people would like.*

Yes, friends say we are living the dream and—we try. I try to live in an ecologically sound way. I grow vegetables and make bread and I'm aware I need to reduce my carbon footprint as I come to Australia once a year.

*Tell me about your work.*

My repertoire includes the *Mabinogion*, an ancient piece of literature first written down in the 13th century and Lady Charlotte Guest translated it in the 19th century. It's an interesting collection and the more I work with it, the more I discover.

*Mab* in Welsh means boy or son and some say it's a manual for apprentice storytellers. It has every possible theme and device used in a story.

*How were you drawn to it? Describe the wake up moment when you realised this book resonated.*

When I moved to Pembrokeshire, West Wales, I became aware I was living close to the location of many of the stories in the *Mabigonion*. There are references to the stories within local culture and I decided to research the locations and write about them. I travelled along the coast and visited the land where Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed hunted and met the beautiful Rhiannon.

The more I listened and asked questions, the more I wanted to know. They are entertaining folk tales from one of Britain's ancient cultures and I was captivated. The stories are in the oral tradition and reflect the wisdom of the county and its people.

Pembrokeshire, or *Gwlad yr Hud* means Enchanted Land. It has a rich and ancient tradition of story telling including among others, the Mabinogion saga and, the tale of the bluestones of Stonehenge. How could I fail to be captivated?

*Do you think bigger questions about your life were answered through working as a storyteller?*

I think we always put that spin on things we are drawn to. When I was researching my book, I did it from my perspective and felt empowered because I am a storyteller. I tell stories through my own experience and point of view as I think it's the only way to entertain and inform people, and assist them to reach understanding.

*How do these stories resonate with your life?*

There are a lot of resonances and I think much of it has to do with the humour and sense of fun. With my theatre background, directing pieces such as *Under Milk Wood*, I worked with the sense of naughtiness the wonderful Dylan Thomas used in the naming of his characters such as 'Nogood Boyo, Mrs Ogmores Pritchard and Organ Morgan. Dickens did the same with his characters, giving them names describing their personality traits.

Those playful characteristics are in the *Mabinogion* and the story of Culhwch and Olwen, for example, reflects this kind of humour. In Welsh, *Olwen* means white feet. In the English version she is Olwen of the White Footprints because wherever she walks she leaves footprints and in them, white flowers grow.

*Culhwch* means pig. He was born in a pigpen and it was predicted he would marry the daughter of the King of the Giants, who was indeed Olwen. They met and they married. It's a long, convoluted story especially as the prospective father-in-law, who was a monster, gave him forty impossible tasks to perform.

*The stories of the Mabinogion are reflected in other cultures. Australian Indigenous stories, for example have similar themes. As a storyteller, what do you think are the reasons for these similarities?*

Yes, there is a wonderful storyteller in Melbourne, Uncle Larry Walsh who is a joy to listen to with an oral tradition second to none. His stories reflect the people and places of Victoria. Aboriginal stories, Norse myths, the *Mabinogion* and other cultures share variations on similar themes. It is interesting because most of them would never have met so there's something in the human psyche drawing us to the same themes.

I've heard several explanations. Some people say there are only seven stories in the whole world but I don't believe it. I think in order to make the journey through your personal story you need to travel to something common to every culture—the four elements—earth, wind, fire and water.

These elements are found in almost every story including simple nursery tales. For instance, in the story of the three little pigs, the houses are made from earth elements—straw, sticks and bricks. The wolf personifies the wind huffing and puffing and blowing down the first two houses. The wolf enters the third house by the chimney and the surviving pig traps him in a pot of boiling water and slams the lid on. The element water is heated by the element fire and represents the means through which the wolf is killed.

Our lives depend on these four elements—if one is missing we can't survive—and that is the reason they're important. I think this is why those elements run as a thread through all stories, irrespective of culture.

*What other cultural stories have you worked with?*

I've worked with Native Americans from the Inuit tradition and the Deep South. In 1993, I was a guest at the Native American Festival during an eclipse of the moon and invited to celebrate it. We sat around for twenty-four hours telling stories and singing and I felt privileged to be there. I have done a lot of work with Indigenous peoples, sharing my Celtic stories and listening to theirs. It's fascinating how much communality there is.

*What is your opinion of writing today in terms of language, narrative and theme?*

I think British publishers produce around 80,000 titles a year—some good, some bad. Just as I begin to despair about language, theme and character and all those other things that make a good story something surprises me. I have been struck by the work of Zadie Smith, Phillip Pullman and Bernard MacLaverty. My tastes are eclectic but my current reading shelf always includes a volume of folk tales, myths or legends, either traditional or reworked.

*Sometimes storytelling and fantasy are confused. Do you think they are different genres?*

As a genre, fantasy is ill defined. I believe fantasy occurs within the oral tradition due to the way stories are structured so I don't separate them. You know, characters travel through many lands—the land 'in between' or the lands beneath the waves—which is part of fantasy.

*There are several moral lessons to be learnt from the Mabinogion about how to live a good life. Would you say similar messages exist in fantasy?*

Yes, I describe the message as implicit rather than explicit. It isn't quite borne out. I think you draw your own moral from some stories, while others are used as educational. Storytellers were the first teachers before school was invented and the storyteller in any community was the teacher. Young people were sent to the storyteller for their education, so in that sense a good deal of moralising would have taken place.

*How do contemporary narratives measure up against traditional themes say, Harry Potter?*

JK Rowling uses the devices traditional storytellers use and sometimes I give workshop participants—especially young people—a kit introducing them to stories. The kit contains things familiar to their lives. My kit includes a sword, goblet, map, box, key and ring. Roald Dahl and Tolkien used some of these devices and I believe it is a way of creating a good yarn.

*Do you have any comments to make about the technical aspects of writing such as vocabulary and grammar?*

I think language usage has declined but occasionally I come across writers who inspire. One is Angela Carter who draws from the oral tradition. She has taken fairy tales and put her own spin on them—her use of language is delicious. Dame Marina Warner is another person who writes in a similarly erudite way.

In one respect changes in our language are positive as young people are adapting it to communicate in written form through text messages. Despite the peculiar spelling there are some gems doing the rounds.

I am alarmed the apostrophe will be removed from grammar and I don't see how we can live without it as it's such a useful tool.

*What are your thoughts on inappropriate language such as inaccurate word choice and use?*

Annoying. As a storyteller I feel rather like a guardian of the language and custodian of the vocabulary. Some things are tragic such as confusing *superb* with *superlative*, and putting a *k* on something so it becomes *somethink*. *Momentarily* is misused to mean shortly or soon.

*What drew you to storytelling?*

I have always been a wanderer and created my own story wherever I went. I was born shortly after WWII and one of three. My father was a jazz musician and my mother was a housewife. She managed the house, which wasn't an easy occupation in the days of rationing. I was born in Hayes, near Heathrow Airport, and later moved to Hertfordshire.

At the tender age of 20, I married my first husband and we lived in Toronto for three years. He was an engineer and I travelled with him all over America. We couldn't live in the United States due to the draft, because even if a male wasn't an American citizen he could be conscripted into the Army and sent to Vietnam. We were domiciled in Toronto, which was full of draft dodgers and conscientious objectors and I met some terrific people.

After 15 years and three children, our marriage ended as my husband started to resemble his father and one doesn't need to be married to one's father-in-law. We were very young when we married, matured in different ways and grew apart. I believe the maturing process continues forever.

When my first marriage ended, I had three children and no support. I decided not to sit in a corner and cry but actually do something positive about my life and my children's lives. I started an arts project—a travelling bookshop—promoting good quality literature for children and working alongside writers and publishers.

I took children's literature into rural East Anglia where I lived at the time. Then, East Anglia consisted of six counties—Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Huntingdonshire and Bedfordshire—it was a large geographical area. My travelling bookshop went mainly to schools and worked well.

I started this project after I returned to the UK in 1972. The Arts Council funded the travelling bookshop as it was seen as a community resource. I did this for eight years and in a professional and personal sense it was a success, especially as I was able to use my skills as a storyteller and reader. As a single parent, I had school holidays free and during term time a school-hours job.

In 1990 the bookshop project ended. I became director of community theatre for seven years and then General Manager of the Norwich Puppet Theatre promoting and directing puppetry for children and adults and touring throughout the UK.

*When did you branch out by yourself?*

It took a while. I was director of the Berkshire Literature Festival, creating a two week long festival of celebrating writers, readers and poets at venues throughout Berkshire—Reading, Slough and other towns.

It was a two-year post after which I became Artistic Director of Community Arts North West based in Manchester for five years. Then I moved to Wales.

*Did meeting your partner influence your move to Wales?*

I was ready to move on anyway. I met my current partner at a storytelling festival in Wales and fell in love not only with the man but also the country, culture and language. I speak some Welsh—not fluent like my partner. If you don't let the language into your life you can't get a sense of the stories and culture.

*How would you sum up your working life?*

Visual art has dominated my life, but early on I realised my paintings and drawings weren't good enough to make a career from them so I became a storyteller. I believe my strength lies in being able to paint pictures in words.

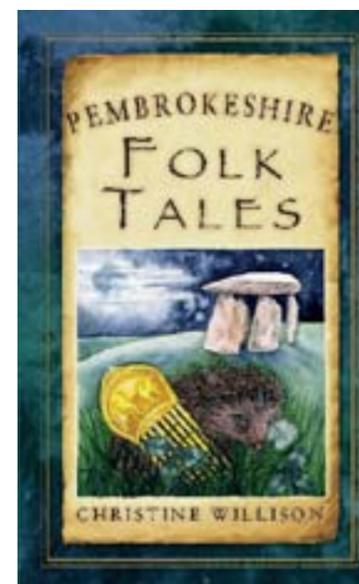
#### **Links and further information**

Christine's book: *Pembrokeshire Folk Tales*, History Press 978 0 7524 465654 [www.thehistorypress.co.uk](http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk)

*The Mabinogion*, a new translation by Sioned Davies, Oxford University Press 978 0 19 921878 3

[www.christinestories.co.uk](http://www.christinestories.co.uk)

The Society for Storytelling: [www.sfs.org.uk](http://www.sfs.org.uk)



## FEATURE

### As Time Goes By

Jean Morris



Memories are stored in the mind. Moments are fleeting; memories are permanent. We share our most powerful memories; they grow with time rather than fade—giving us the ability to remember friends and family long after they have passed.

For the past year, the world has been remembering the Great War. Memorial services have been held as families remember loved ones. Heroic deeds, stories of medals and honours won, old letters and photographs have been included in thousands of books written about the conflict.

My memories go back a long way. One's long-term memory stores large quantities of information for unlimited duration—sometimes a whole life span. I believe I remember the day I was born; of course, I can't, but I have a clear picture of my mother and father's bedroom. My mother talked about the dismal weather on the day in November I came into this world, and this is the reason I think I remember it.

My childhood was normal. We lived in a small house with two bedrooms upstairs, one room and a kitchen downstairs, no electricity or hot water, an outside toilet and a bath hung on a nail on the out-house door.

I remember the Jubilee celebrations of King George V and Queen Mary, as, by then, I had started school. Then came the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth as King Edward VIII abdicated to marry Wallis Simpson. The news of a handsome King and a wicked 'wannabe' queen, sounded exciting to a child with a vivid imagination.

At the time, there was a resurgence of new homes built in urban areas. We moved to a house with a garden, three bedrooms, electricity, hot water, an indoor bathroom and toilet. Soon after, my little sister was born and we enjoyed two years of domestic bliss until World War 2 started.

My memories of World War 2 are clear. Father took us to be fitted with gas masks, which we had to carry at all times. My sister was issued with a funny one called 'Mickey Mouse'. Father knew someone who made triangular leather cases into which the masks fitted. I felt very grand, sporting one made from green leather as my friends had to carry theirs, slung over a shoulder by a string handle and still in the cardboard boxes.



Photographs this page: Top left, Jean Morris, Above: (From left) Gas masks, an Anderson Shelter, a Morrison Shelter. Photos supplied by the author.

Neighbours in the street attempted to build a corrugated iron air-raid shelter, large enough to house every family. The project failed, so the local council came round, giving everyone an Anderson or a Morrison air-raid shelter. The Anderson had been designed in 1938 named after Sir John Anderson, the man responsible for preparing Britain to withstand German air raids. Once constructed, these shelters were buried in the ground and covered with a thick layer of soil and turf.

Anderson shelters were effective at saving lives and preventing major injuries during air raids, but they were cold during the winter months. As a way of preventing people returning to their houses at night, the Government issued guidelines about how to make the shelters comfortable. Many Anderson shelters have survived with several dug up and used as garden sheds.

The Morrison shelter was designed by John Baker and named after the Minister of Home Security, Herbert Morrison. The shelters came in kit form, which could be bolted together in the home. The Morrison shelter was not designed to survive a direct hit from a bomb, but it was effective against a blast.

In 1940 I was struck down with Diphtheria, a disease affecting many of the children at my school. There was no National Health Service and my mother had to save the money to pay the midwife when my sister was born. I've often wondered if my parents had to pay the doctor who diagnosed my condition and the ambulance that took me to hospital. I was put in a ward of women and girls at the local 'fever' hospital and no one was allowed to visit. There were about twelve of us with all sorts of different diseases. One lady had typhoid. A three-year old named Elizabeth, who was in a bed opposite me, died from meningitis. I cried when they took her away, as it was the closest I had been to someone dying.

After several weeks, I was released and my parents came in a taxi to take me home. It was just before my birthday in November and the bombing was ferocious. Every night we went to the air-raid shelter and as I was still in isolation due to my illness, my mother told my sister and me to lay back-to-back, 'Don't breathe on each other', she instructed.



Above: (left) Children pick through a bombed school looking for books, (right) The Blitzing of Coventry. Photos supplied by the author.

My father worked every evening at a motorcar factory that by then made tanks. One night, before we went to the shelter, Mother and I stood on the kitchen doorstep, watching the biggest fireworks show I had seen. We saw the outlines of German planes flying over dropping flares, lighting up the sky and heard the explosions of bombs and incendiaries on a nearby town.

'My God,' my mother said. 'Somebody's getting it tonight.'

Twenty-six miles away, we saw flames of blown up buildings as Coventry was blasted to smithereens. The next night, it was our turn and we had to stay in the shelter for fourteen hours; we weren't sure if my father would make it home, or if we would ever see him again.

The war seemed to go on and on, with no sign of ending. My mother struggled to buy enough food; she was a good cook and I watched and learned as she skinned rabbits, gutted fish and did a dozen different things with the innards.

Chickens ran around our back garden, so we always had plenty of eggs and my father spent his spare time tending the vegetable garden. Vegetables and pulses were added to the ‘gobbly pot’—our main source of food. We called it the ‘gobbly’ because it gobbled up everything put into it, as it simmered away on the hob. The milkman, baker and coalman delivered supplies daily by horse-drawn carts; there was always plenty of manure shovelled into a bucket for the garden.

School was an important part of my life. The number of pupils in each class was greater than previously because of the shortage of teachers. Apart from one ancient male teacher, who wore glasses with thick lenses and the headmaster too old for service, our teachers were female as men were away fighting.

I sat the eleven-plus exam and was awarded a scholarship for tuition and books. Although my parents were proud of me, they didn’t discuss my future; I would need a uniform costing them a lot of money, bus fares, lunches and other extras to be considered. They decided the extra years spent at school after the compulsory leaving age of fourteen would be a waste of time and money, as I would get married, have children and be a ‘housewife’. I didn’t put up an argument, knowing it would prove useless.

Leaving school at fourteen and working appealed to me as it meant more freedom. None of my friends were going to grammar school and I would have money to spend on whatever I wanted. I was sure the extra money coming into the house had something to do with my parents’ decision about my future. My father found me a job through one of his friend’s daughters who worked in an insurance office in the city. I left school on a Friday in February 1945 and started my job the following Monday and—suddenly—my life became exciting. In May of that year, World War 2 ended.

Floating around in my head are memories of the many happenings in my life; a happy marriage, two wonderful children, three beautiful grandchildren and the three countries I lived in.

I am often asked if I have considered writing my autobiography but I think if I told all, it would be too long for one volume. The title would have to be *Every Now and Then—Unusual Happenings in a Life Less Ordinary*.

© **Jean Morris 2015**

Jean Morris was born and brought up in Birmingham, England. She now lives by the sea in East Sussex. She is past Chair and Vice President of the UK’s Society of Women Writers & Journalists. Jean has won many awards for her short stories and her book, *‘The Church Lads’ in the Great War*, published by Pen & Sword, will be launched in July.

See Jean’s link on [www.swwj.co.uk](http://www.swwj.co.uk)



Above: Victory Party, Gillscroft Road, Glebe Hill, Birmingham. Photo supplied by Jean Morris.

## The Coy Moon

Early this morning  
the moon is  
fat round  
opalescent

She floats out  
from a dark night sky  
into clouds left over  
from last night’s rain

Drawing a hazy veil  
across her face  
she dons  
a shimmering halo

She emerges  
shaws herself in colours  
drifts into  
neighbouring clouds

Dawn flushes the sky  
accompanied by currawongs’ fluting  
clouds sink to horizon  
The sky blues

The coy moon  
sheds her wrap  
floats free,  
fades into sunrise

© **Maree Silver 2015**

## Swarm

Humming announces  
the arrival of scouts  
seeking a new home for their queen

The air thickens as bees circle  
cluster and clump, one upon another,  
hang in a vibrating bunch,  
like dark grapes  
trembling on a bough  
of the lemon tree

Days later, lifting the compost bin lid,  
I find a dripping honeycomb  
descending deeply into its warmth  
Pure honey’s sweet aroma  
infuses surroundings

I watch workers stream out  
searching for nectar

As they toil,  
the local beekeeper  
moves queen and wax  
into a man-made hive,  
seals the bin’s opening

Returning from foraging  
they forsake it  
swarm into new home

All is now removed,  
no sounds of their industry  
float in the ensuing silence

Without their buzzing,  
I feel somehow bereft,  
left in a void

© **Maree Silver 2015**

## OPINION

### The Case for Ancient Languages

Peter Bryce



My acquaintance with ancient languages is limited to Latin with a smattering of Greek. I can, for example, say 'Kyrie Eleison' with conviction!

As far as Latin goes, I tend to avoid the expression *dead language*, as Latin still has currency. Apart from use in mass settings by composers such as Palestrina and Victoria, prolific recording of 'Ave Maria' and other Latin texts, it was encouraging in 1965 that Pope Paul VI commissioned a revision of the *Sacra Biblia Vulgata*—the official Latin text of the Roman Catholic Church.

The original *Vulgate* translation was prepared in 382 by St Jerome using the *sermo vulgaris*—market place Latin. In St Jerome's opinion, this translation made it accessible to most people as the all-conquering Roman legions disseminated it throughout the Empire. The *Vulgate* underwent several revisions along the way, notably under Pope Clement VIII in 1592, and the interesting thing about the latest revision (ultimately adopted in 1979) is its form and structure is close to classical Latin.

I concede the new revision of the *Vulgate Bible* will have limited readership, but the fact it was undertaken shows the importance placed on having an authoritative text in Latin.

Ecclesiastical Latin apart, I would argue ancient languages have never *died*—rather, evolved. Latin lives on in Romance Languages, such as Italian, Spanish and French, which have their roots in the above mentioned *sermo vulgaris*. Even ancient Phoenician lives on, having evolved into the unique language spoken on Malta.

English, at its core, is a Germanic language, but about sixty per cent of vocabulary—perhaps ninety per cent of polysyllabic words—derives from Latin, either directly or through Norman French with William the Conqueror.

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The above is about nuts and bolts—grammar, syntax and vocabulary—of language. These are matters of interest to the philologist and the etymologist and would, to them, provide sufficient reason for the survival of ancient tongues, even if only within restricted academic circles.

More important, in my view, is language be it ancient or modern, it is the vehicle of thought and ideas. And just as the architect's creations are limited and constrained by available building materials and techniques, so the philosopher, the poet, the historian and all writers must work within the linguistic framework available to them in time and place. Translation is all very well, but there is much to be said for meeting ancient authors on their own turf. This is true, whether we are speaking of Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, Persian, Farsi or any other ancient language.

In most ancient cultures, poetry reached a sophisticated level well before prose, as is exemplified in Greek and Latin through the noble hexameter verses of Homer and Vergil. Certainly, translation provides us with the substance of what they were saying—for example, most of us are familiar with the tale of the wooden horse of Troy and the dramatic story of Queen Dido of Carthage throwing herself onto a funeral pyre after being jilted by Aeneas. These events are not simply related to us by ancient authors in flat prose, nor in a poetic form which we, as users of English, would find familiar. They come to us in a form of verse that helps tell the story with importance placed on the stress conveyed by each syllable, metre and rhythm, to which carefully ordered words contribute.

The information ancient authors impart is important, and the vehicle carrying their thoughts is also worth preservation and study.

Languages tell us a lot about a people. For example, the ancient Spartans (more properly known as the Lacedaemonians or Laconians) were proficient in the arts of war and had little time for indulgence in philosophy or poetry. Their language, therefore, was unadorned and to the point, with no frills. We use the English adjective *laconic* to describe the language of people whose speech patterns remind us of the Spartans. This is a matter of language reflecting the way in which a group of people thinks.

I have wondered about the cultural forces at work when languages have evolved in such a way grammatical gender is ascribed to nouns. In Latin, nouns may be masculine, feminine or neuter; a sword may be seen to be masculine and the sheath into which it is placed is feminine. But why, I wonder, have virtually all the finer qualities, such as friendship, kindness, benevolence, charity, pity, mercy and loyalty been given feminine gender? Why is a city (*urbs*) feminine, while a town (*oppidum*), neuter?

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Modern German has masculine, feminine and neuter nouns, and I have wondered the reason 'Mädchen' (a girl or a maiden) was ascribed neuter gender. There is surely an explanation a study of linguistic roots could supply. French and German are without neuter nouns—only masculine and feminine. English, on the other hand, and perhaps rather prosaically, does not give nouns a gender at all unless it is biologically appropriate—so male creatures are masculine, female creatures are feminine and inanimate objects lack gender.

The study of languages, whether ancient or modern, is not just a study of words, nor is it only a consideration of grammatical forms. Such a study is a window into a people, its self-concept and an exploration of the means it uses to express its ideas and beliefs. No-one would doubt the study of archaeology has value, but the study of ancient languages is not a study of ancient artefacts which can be looked at, drawn, photographed and put on display in a museum. Like music, ancient languages need to be fully experienced—read and spoken—if we are to appreciate their richness and the contribution they have made to all things human, such as literature history, philosophy and religion.

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Peter Bryce, BA, BEd, GradDipEdAdmin, GradCertTheol, MACE, majored in Latin and History at the University of Melbourne and taught in Victorian State secondary schools (mainly History, some Latin and English) for more than thirty years. He was Principal of The University High School for eleven of those years. After leaving the Education Department, Peter was CEO of Freemasons Victoria for six years.

Currently he teaches an adult Latin class.

## SWWV RADIO WORKSHOP APRIL 2015

### Review by Maree Silver

At last month's meeting Lynne Murphy lead a workshop on radio and microphone technique—basic techniques for radio production.

Dividing into groups of two or three, we wrote a dialogue between two people not in agreement and performed it using the microphone. Lynne advised on using the microphone to improve voice delivery.

There were some humorous pieces and hilarious moments.

Another exercise was to write a letter of thanks to the publisher of our latest book or a speech at a book launch thanking those involved. Again, we were treated to some imaginative and humorous pieces.



Maree Silver and Betty Caldwell, photo courtesy of Veronica Schwarz



Clockwise from top left: Marguerite and Veronica; Meryl and Lynne; Judith, Del and Mary; and Jenny and Agnes, Photos courtesy of Veronica Schwarz

The following amusingly quirky letter is by Betty Caldwell (E E Caldwell).

### 17,000 books

My deepest thanks to you for printing my few humble words about my life and hard times in the salt mines. Well, not exactly, but working in a rat infested basement for twelve months with no natural light was no fun—particularly when the electrical workers went out on strike.

Admittedly, the war was over but nothing in the luxury line was back on the market.

And now you have 17,000 copies of my struggling life's grumbles and if my family and friends are any guide, you'll end up with 17,000 on your hands.

If nothing else, they'll come in handy as drawer liners ... 17,000 sets of drawers.

© E E Caldwell 2015

A script from the Radio Workshop.

### Making Up

The actors were E E Caldwell as the mother, Maree Silver as the daughter, Ruby.

**Mother:** Really Ruby, must you be doing that now and in public. The bus is no place for you to be plastering your face with make-up!

**Ruby:** But, Mum, I didn't have time to do this at home—you were in my way from the moment I got out of bed.

**Mother:** Of course, had you been up at a reasonable hour you'd have made time for breakfast and all that ghastly muck you're spreading everywhere. What's it all for anyway?

**Ruby:** This is foundation fluid. I always start off with that.

**Mother:** But all those brushes, tubes and paraphernalia—what are they all about?

**Ruby:** This is for my nose—a special line down the centre—this is for my eyebrows and that for the lashes. This pencil is to outline my mouth and then I put on the lipstick.

**Mother:** But it's bright red! Doesn't match that orange fringe sticking out from under that ridiculous scarf you've tied your hair in. You've got such nice blonde hair, most girls would kill to have your colouring!

**Ruby:** Well, I think it needs a bit of a lift. It's too insipid the way it normally looks.

**Mother:** Hurry up and put all that cosmetic collection away. We'll be getting off soon.

**Ruby:** Thank goodness. You might shut up then.

**Mother:** Here we go—push the button! And to think it's taken half an hour to get here and you look LIKE THAT!

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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](http://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.

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.



**COMPETITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

**Compiled by Lynn Smailes**

**Closing 29 May**

The University of Canberra **Vice-Chancellors International Poetry Prize** is worth \$15,000. The entry fee is \$20, unless you are a university student. Entry is online, entrants need to register to enter and further details can be found at [www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/competitions-and-awards/vcpoetryprize](http://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/competitions-and-awards/vcpoetryprize)

**Closing 12 June**

The **FAWNSW Shoalhaven Literary Award** for a short story of up to 3000 words offers a \$1000 prize and a two-week residency at Bundanon on the Shoalhaven River. Entry costs \$10, send two copies of the work. Entry form and details are available from [www.fawnswoalhaven.org.au](http://www.fawnswoalhaven.org.au) or P O Box 154, Nowra, NSW 2541.

**Closing 31 May**

The **Best of Times** humorous short story competition offers \$500 (first) and \$100 (second) for stories on any theme of up to 2500 words. No entry form is required. Include a cover sheet with name, address, story title and word count, and where you heard about the competition. Don't include your name on the story itself. Entry fee is \$10 per story, cheque or money order made out to Chris Broadribb or use PayPal to pay cabbook-19@yahoo.com.au. Post your entry to PO Box 55, Blaxcell NSW 2142. Include a large SSAE for a results sheet and return of your story, or a small SSAE for results only. Online entries: [www.spiky\\_one.tripod.com/comp19.html](http://www.spiky_one.tripod.com/comp19.html)

**Closing 1 June**

The **Hunter Writers Centre Grieve Writing Competition** accepts prose of up to 500 words or a poem of up to 36 lines. While it is not openly stated in the competition guidelines, the theme appears to be related to Grief Awareness Month and the winning entries may be published in an anthology. Cost to enter is \$10 and prizes range from \$1000 to \$100. Details: [www.hunterwriterscentre.org/grieve-project](http://www.hunterwriterscentre.org/grieve-project)

**Closing 31 July**

The **Veteran Community Short Story and Art Competition (SWAC)** is open to the veteran community of Victoria. The competition offers prizes of \$250/\$125/\$100 in the following categories: True Life, True Wartime Experience, Fiction, Poetry and Mateship. Word limit is 3000, except for Mateship (1500). Details and entry form: Siobhan Hodgins, 9496 2290 or (Country) 1800 134 864 SWAC@austin.org.au, [www.dva.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/health-events/story-writing-and-art-competition-swac](http://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/health-events/story-writing-and-art-competition-swac)

**Closing 31 August**

The **Lord Mayor's Creative Writing Awards** offers Victorian residents the chance to win up to \$6000 in prizes for emerging writers (including self-published writers) in the following categories: short story up to 3000 words, poetry of no more than 100 lines, novella of 10,000–20,000 words, graphic story of up to 8 A4 pages, and narrative non-fiction of up to 10,000 words. Apart from graphic stories, all entries must be submitted online. Please see the Melbourne Library Service pages on [www.melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au) for further details.

**Pantera Press** invites submissions from writers, particularly unpublished writers and writers of commercial women's fiction Please see their website for submission guidelines. [www.panterapress.com.au](http://www.panterapress.com.au)

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## MEETINGS and EVENTS

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

**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)

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

**Sunday 31 May**, Professor Molly Travers will launch *With Other Senses*, a book of poems by Rebecca Maxwell at 2.30 pm on Sunday 31 May, 2015 at Balwyn Library, 336 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn.

**Friday 26 June**, Please note change of program: Rebecca Maxwell will run a workshop on writing poetry. Veronica Schwarz will speak about travel writing at a meeting later in the year.

*The Society of Women Writers  
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