

'If one of the truisms of humour is that we laugh at what scares us, then *Things Bogans Like* mines laughs out of some of the most appalling antisocial behaviour.' *Things Bogans Like*, reviewed – Page 7

# books

extra

## FOOTNOTES

### The girl with the Stieg book

*Millennium* series author **Stieg Larsson's** partner of 32 years, **Eva Gabrielsson**, says she will finish his fourth book, started just before he died, if she can secure the rights. Larsson died of a heart attack in 2004 before the publication of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played with Fire* and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*. The crime series has sold more than 45 million copies worldwide and Larsson had written about 200 pages of the fourth book in the series when he died. Gabrielsson, who is in dispute with Larsson's family over his inheritance (he died without leaving a will and the couple had no children) states in her just-released memoir *Millennium, Stieg and Me*: "I am able to finish it... Stieg and I often wrote together."

### Endangered crafts

Author and arts writer **Leta Keens** will be at Stanton Library at 1pm on Wednesday to discuss her book *Shoes for the Moscow Circus*, a look behind the scenes of Australian trades and industries fast disappearing in the modern world. With photographer **Oliver Strewe**, Keens visited 25 factories and workshops, including an umbrella maker, a cricket ball factory, a taxidermist, a bicycle maker, a tannery and a dolls' hospital and tells the stories of the characters and their crafts. Stanton Library is at 234 Miller Street, North Sydney. Admission is free. Details from Constant Reader Bookshop at [constantreader.com.au](http://constantreader.com.au).

### Authentic voices

Authors **Michael Wilding** and **Inez Baranay** will be at Leichhardt Library on Thursday at 6pm, talking to Australian Writers' Network director **Irina Dunn** about their latest novels. *The Prisoner of Mount Warning*, by Wilding, and *With the Tiger*, by Baranay, are published by Press On Publishing, set up by Wilding in 2009 to publish and promote new Australian fiction directly by subscription. On its website, Press On boldly declares that it "brings the voice of the individual writer with the minimum of intervention, not genetically engineered by editors, nor contaminated with additives by agents". Leichhardt Library is at the Italian Forum, 23 Norton Street, Leichhardt. The talk is free. To book, call Irina Dunn on 0403 486 363 or email [irinadid@ozemail.com.au](mailto:irinadid@ozemail.com.au).

### All together now

Nine Sydney-based literary societies, each dedicated to a single author, have formed an umbrella group in the cause of fostering communication between the groups and encouraging public involvement. Called Literary Societies of Sydney, the loose federation includes The Dylan Thomas Society of Australia, The Jane Austen Society of Sydney, The D.H. Lawrence Society of Australia, The NSW Dickens Society, The Australian Bronte Association, The Kipling Society of Australia, The Anthony Trollope Group of Australia, The Sydney Passengers (Sherlock Holmes Society) and The Byron Society in Australia. More at [www.litsocsyd.net](http://www.litsocsyd.net).

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## TEN OF SELWA ANTHONY'S STAR AUTHORS



Tara Moss.



Juanita Phillips.



Kate Morton.



Andrew Daddo.



Bessie Bardot.



Toni Lamond.



Di Morrissey.



Peter Phelps.



Jacinta Tynan.



Sorrel Wilby.

stubborn character myself. Selwa's the only person on earth I'm guaranteed to listen to."

Age may not have quite wearied her – she flexed a toned biceps to her writers on Sassy day – but that doesn't mean Selwa Anthony is prepared to reveal that age, sitting in the cream-tiled lounge of the waterfront Pyrmont apartment she shares with her second husband, Brian Dennis, a former book company sales representative.

She once said: "I thought I was going to be a very happy wife and have a few children and have a husband who was going to support me." Then she added, surprisingly in light of what she became: "I had no ambition other than to be a good wife and mother."

She had travelled the world for 18 months and come home to Australia at 21, feeling pressured to marry. Even as she signed the church registry in 1962, marrying a Greek man, she questioned giving up her maiden name. "I married too young and married for all the wrong reasons."

Brought up in the NSW country town of Cowra, Anthony was raised to think for herself. One of seven children, she and siblings Dawn, Elaine, Yvette, Roger, Eden and Josephine lived above their parents' drapers shop. She had her book epiphany at eight when her father, Abraham, gave her a library card.

A well-educated man from Lebanon who spoke fluent English and read the classics, Abraham had come to Australia at 21 and fell in

love not only with his future wife, also named Josephine, who'd come from a Lebanese village to Australia during her teens, but with Australian writers.

Josephine, their mother, devoured bodice-ripping page-turners. "My mother always had empathy," Anthony recalls. She insists they never faced racial prejudice growing up in a country town – her eldest sister Dawn disagrees – though the family did much to fit in, her parents always insisting the children speak English.

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She's very direct and straightforward. I respect that. Selwa's the only person on earth I'm guaranteed to listen to. Tara Moss

She can't speak Arabic but remembers her family getting together with other Lebanese families in neighbouring towns on weekends, the men and women betting on races then playing poker into the night.

"The room would be full of smoke," she says. "Nobody was ever drunk but there'd be curse words in Arabic and tinkling of coins."

Anthony never saw her mother without make-up, hence "I like to keep the glamour in books if I can". She thought she'd end up a fashion designer but instead she married, though for 18 months she worked as

an assistant at the Grahame Book Company in Sydney until the birth of her first child. The marriage lasted nearly 14 years, producing two children, daughters Linda and Anthea.

"When I left, I didn't own anything. I walked out of a very, very bad marriage and I had the best family support... I just knew the day I had to. There was just no staying; I think I would have committed suicide. I knew there was Valium in the cupboard and I thought if I took X amount – and then I thought, 'What

will happen to these two little girls?'"

She went back to the Grahame Book Company's store on the corner of Pitt and Hunter streets, became manager and built up the business, specialising in Australian and other titles difficult to get elsewhere, offering personalised service.

In 1977, when *The Thorn Birds* was published, author Colleen McCullough, fresh from signing copies of her blockbuster at David Jones – oddly, in the lingerie department – was chuffed to find that at the Grahame Book Company Anthony had laid out some of her favourite things in readiness: coffee,

sugar, an ashtray and white and pink flowers. They became firm buddies.

In 1978 Anthony had an astrologist in for a book signing. The astrologist suggested that Scorpio would be the star sign most compatible for her. The next day, in walked Brian, a book company sales rep whom "I couldn't stand". She asked him his star sign. "Taurus," he said. "Would you like a cup of coffee?" she asked.

They married in 1981. Anthony remained with the Grahame Book Company for nine years, until, at McCullough's strong suggestion, she became an agent and set up the Selwa Anthony Author Management Agency in 1984, which became a full-time concern in 1988.

Jody Lee, an editor and one of Anthony's former assistants, says her old boss can be "tough, she doesn't put up with any crap". Lee offers the example of covers: the "strong Selwa look", for instance, typified in a Kate Morton novel cover; a big picture of a woman's face. Publishers usually "cave in" and give her the cover she wants.

Anthony was promoting Australian popular fiction long before the publishers were keen, Mark MacLeod says: "Twenty years ago they'd say, 'Oh, Selwa's been in the office peddling crap again.' Now they're busting for it."

But she also "hangs onto people longer than she should," MacLeod says. "She has a sentimental attachment to people. There's nothing ruthless about her. Sometimes I wish she would have that about her but she never will."

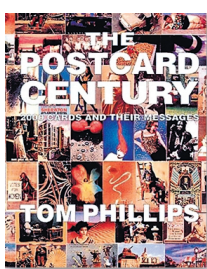
About 10 years ago, Anthony went through a bout of panic attacks, insomnia and depression for 10 months. Her authors didn't know. "My father died at 54, he committed suicide," she reflects, quietly. "I look back now and think: if we knew the symptoms, we could have saved him. But in those days you didn't know that."

She finally saw a doctor, the husband of one of her authors, who put her on a tiny dose of antidepressants. She still has occasional therapy: "I get the demons out of me by sitting and talking to someone."

Anthony's daughter Linda has worked as her assistant but has no designs on taking over. Anthony says the days when she spends a lot of time developing authors are getting "less and less" and she could close off her books to newcomers and still have a profitable business with her established authors.

But with so many people relying on her, it's hard to imagine the grandmother of two stopping completely. After her awards night and our interview, we talk again on the telephone. "People see me as tough," she says, "but I'm not. I'm really gentle. I'm a paper tiger."

Three years after graduating, this was the novel that rekindled my appetite for novels. Huge, sprawling, bizarre, unpredictable and addictive, it reminded me that novels are meant for entertainment, not for writing essays about.



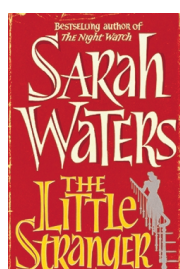
### The Postcard Century Tom Phillips

Something a bit different. In this massive book, Phillips assembles 100 years' worth of picture postcards, from the start of the 20th century to

the end, transcribing what was written on them by the original sender, as well as showing the picture. The result is an astounding account of changing preoccupations. If ever there was an example of a picture being worth a thousand words, this is it. But the words are worth a fair amount, too.

### The Little Stranger Sarah Waters

This was the most recent thing I read that reminded me why I think a good novel is



impossible to beat. A Gothic horror story set against a landscape made real by Waters's uncanny eye for detail, it's unbelievably exciting and addictive and proves that even in a busy, restless, X Factor-watching world, there's nothing quite like the thrill of a great book.

Mark Watson is an English comedian and author, whose novels have been described by Stephen Fry as "brilliantly hilarious and hilariously brilliant". His third and latest novel, *Eleven*, was launched at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

