



September 2013

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From Lesley McNaughton, President

Albert Camus, wrote; "Fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth." Below is a nice example of this from *The Once and Future King* by T.H. White, an author whose tales of King Arthur include commentaries on war and human nature in the form of a heroic narrative.

"The best thing for being sad," replied Merlin, beginning to puff and blow, "is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing, which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn."

I think most of us will identify with that! That's one of the reasons why we love U3A. Lesley

August Meeting with Rex and Valerie Hunton Maggie Murray-Lee reporting

Rex was happy as a doctor at Auckland Hospital and a department head at the Auckland Medical School while Valerie was an artist, art teacher, art therapist and fabric and clothes designer. In 1987 life presented them with a turning point when Rex agreed to help train indigenous doctors in the Marshall Islands. At the time doctors came and went from the USA. The nearest medical school was in Pohnpei in the Caroline Islands, so Rex moved there to set up a training programme using a strategy called "problem-based learning". Candidates with quite disparate education backgrounds were chosen by the chief of each island. They then worked in small groups to study the prevalent diseases of their ancestors and existing families. The education system was heavily based on the oral communication tradition of the islands and the course took five years. Graduates later set up a *Public Health Dialogue* journal on Population, Women and Development, which is today recognized as the medical journal for the Pacific Basin. Finally, Rex moved to Fiji to join the staff of the medical school in Suva.

Val found that visual arts in the Western sense did not exist. The men did sculpture, while the women became expert weavers using the leaves of the pandanus plant. However, for cultural reasons, women could not exploit or exhibit their weaving unless requested to do so by someone in authority. Wishing to learn more about the women and their weaving skills, patterns and designs, Val was able to develop a relationship with top weaver Elna, who shared her weaving knowledge with her, while Val taught her about painting and illustration. They developed projects together. One involved a calendar of Val's paintings of women doing their daily chores accompanied by a health message and the name of the health centre that people should visit when there was a problem. Another was a community legend project for a Hawaiian bank in which Val created images depicting the legend on wooden panels placed on five large mats woven by Elna.

Val has since published a beautiful book, entitled *Pacific Journey: a Celebration*, illustrated with her vibrant colourful paintings, weavings and patterns depicting her personal journey in the Pacific. Her work is represented in galleries, museums, cultural centres and public places around the Pacific.

From your committee

Group News

Margaret Rasmussen, Course Convenor

Please note a change of day for the Western Civilization group. This group will now meet on the second Thursday of the month at 10.00 am.

We are interested in broadening the range of interest groups in U3A to include some new ways of enjoying the company of other members. Some ideas are:

- **Art House Films** - a chance for film buffs to watch in each other's homes films that are not usually available in commercial theatres. These could follow a variety of themes such as foreign films or the films of a particular director.
- **Local History** - a group likely to appeal to people who are prepared to contribute ideas and share in arranging visits to places of historical interest.
- **Poetry for Pleasure** - members meet to share their love of poetry and read some of their favourites to the group or perhaps discuss one poem or poet in more depth. Personal composition is not part of the format.

Some of these groups could be set up to start in October if there is sufficient interest and if we have a facilitator. Please contact me if you are interested in joining or facilitating any of these groups.

In some groups the facilitators take responsibility for preparing materials and hosting a group in their own homes and many find this a very rewarding experience. Iris Steensma, one of our enthusiastic facilitators says, "If you have a special interest or hobby, then why not take the opportunity to share it with other members and become the facilitator of a new group. I run two groups, Art History and Ancient Greek History. It is such a pleasure to be with a group of people who are all enthusiastic about something that I love. And that is not all; through discussions and sharing knowledge and ideas I have learnt so much more myself."

In other groups the facilitator's duties are shared. Different people may host the group, lead meetings, write reports for the newsletter or organise the next month's activities. Some groups share these roles on a rotating basis. In these cases the facilitator acts more as a point of contact who makes sure arrangements are in place for each meeting.

Next month we will be sharing with you some ideas for groups to start in the New Year. Your suggestions are always welcome. Margaret Rasmussen: 09 402 8949 or ras1@clear.net.nz

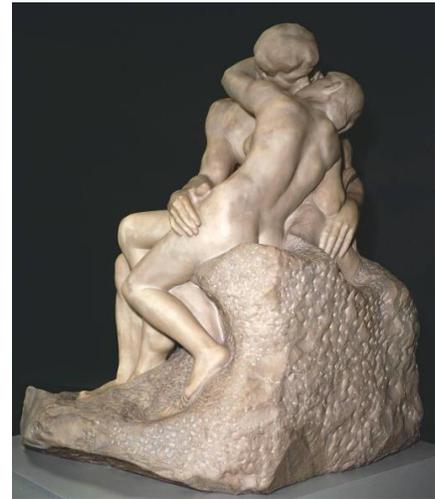
Welcome to our 2013 - 2014 Committee			
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From the groups ...

Art History: Margaret Rasmussen reporting

Was Auguste Rodin, the French sculptor (1840 to 1917), the greatest sculptor since Michelangelo or was he a depraved artist who produced sculptures that shocked? The answer probably depends on which century the viewer lives in. This month we watched a DVD about Rodin's sculpture *The Kiss*.

The sculpture was inspired by the story of the adulterous lovers Paolo and Francesca, who were slain by Francesca's outraged husband. When the sculpture appeared for the first time, people were scandalised. It was seen as too erotic and there was shock at the nudity. These days *The Kiss* is one of the best-known and well-loved sensual sculptures in modern art.



Rodin's work marked the change between the classical tradition of Greece and Rome and the beginning of modern sculpture. He used a naked man and woman as models for his sculpture, definitely not accepted custom at the time. We were surprised that he did not carve the final marble version himself, but used a master carver instead to copy his clay model.

We watched the reactions of viewers of *The Kiss* at London's Tate Gallery and were impressed that a sculpture made from a block of marble could evoke such emotion in people of all ages.

We ended with a discussion about the ethics of an artist being permitted to alter another artist's original piece to make a new work, as happened at the Tate when an artist wrapped *The Kiss* temporarily in string. Most of us felt that this seemed wrong.

Our next meeting will be at Iris Steensma's home and the topic will be *Paolo Uccello*

Computer/Camera: Heather Pickup reporting

We had a lively meeting on Thursday. There were apologies from two members, but Jean had sent in her "Time" photos. Most members had used traditional time keeping clocks and watches in their photos, but Ian used his photos to show a time difference, by showing him as a child, and again as an adult. Great stuff! We went on to helping members solve problems that had arisen. We had the pleasure of welcoming Margaret Rasmussen to our meeting, and she was also pretty clued up with computer technology! She was able to help solve some of the members' problems.

Our next meeting will be at Judy Barrett's home and the topic will be *Spring*.

Creative Writing: Joy Olds reporting

With six members attending this month we had lots of lively discussions, along with some very diverse and interesting stories read out about *A First* and *On the Night of the Full Moon*.

Amazing how differently our minds think when given a subject. For September we have tasked ourselves with three commands. One being "Don't Do That!", the other a simple 'Shut Up!' command. Our third task is to write about a computer giving commands. Should be hilarious.

Next Meeting is on Friday 13th at 2 pm at Joy Old's home and the topic will be *Three Commands*.

Former Iberian Studies: Eileen Welch reporting

Members who belonged to the Former Iberian Studies group will get together again to discuss forming a new group on a new topic.

Our next meeting will be at Joan's home and the topic will be deciding what to morph into.

Book Discussion One: Cecilia Robertson reporting

Since this was our first meeting without our able Facilitator Marilyn, we started with a poem written by Lavender Sanson about Marilyn. This gave us happy reminiscences and laughter about her unique character.

The host for the group each month and the report taker will always be decided on at the previous month's meeting. The host may do both or delegate the report taking for the newsletter to someone else. Cecilia will be the contact for the group and relay any information that is relevant to the others. The topic *Nature* produced a great diversity of books and lively discussions.

Human nature was covered in a book called *Venture into the Interior* by Laurens van der Post set in Central Africa, an account of an adventure on foot discovering differences in cultures.

Henry Williamson in 1935 wrote of *Salar the Salmon* migrating through the rivers of Devon on his perilous journey upstream, one of nature's greatest journeys, and gave a picture of how both people and wildlife rely on a river and its estuaries.

An older book, *Wild Animals I Have Known*, was written in 1898 by Ernest John Seton, a Canadian naturalist and artist. He wrote about 8 different animals and illustrated the book with black and white sketches

Flight Behaviour by Barbara Kingsolver was about global warming issues, and Monarch butterflies having to find a new wintering area because their previous forest in Mexico had been felled and was then followed by devastation.

Native Animals of New Zealand by A.B. Powell, an old NZ classic about our native fauna, and was handed down through the generations. It is well illustrated and great for identifying them.

Galapagos of the Antarctic by Rodney Russ and Aleks Terauds is a photographic study of the seven oceanic islands to the south of New Zealand and describes their wildlife, geology and history.

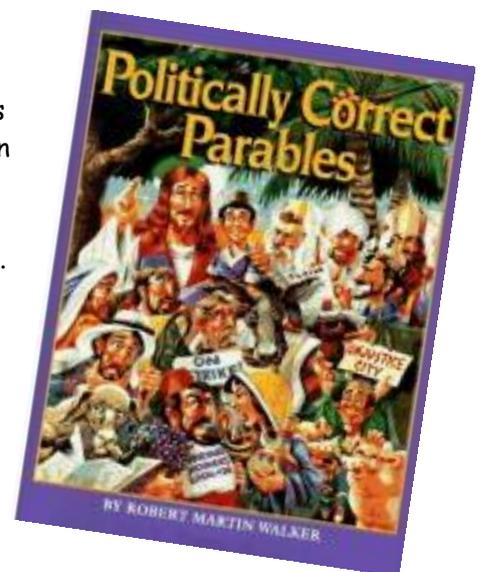
Four Seasons of Country Diary is a humorous account written each month by E.B. Sale. After years as a journalist he retired to Whangaroa and rediscovered the country life he remembered as a young boy.

Our next meeting will be at Jennie Abbott Barnaby's home and the topic will be a New Zealand author born the same year as the person choosing the book

Book Discussion Two: David Lawton reporting

The meeting was held at the home of June Crowden. The topic was a quirky book. *Art and Love* selected by Kate Farrell is a collection of love poetry illustrated with reproductions of paintings. *The Great New Zealand Songbook* compiled by Martin Thom contains the words of some of the more famous songs we hear on the radio. It comes complete with a CD and is illustrated in scrapbook style with contributions by the songwriters. However the star of the show was definitely *Politically Correct Parables* by US pastor Robert Martin Walker. The contributor read the author's version of the *Good Samaritan* in admirably deadpan style which had the group in stitches.

For general reading a member read *Sweet Tooth* by Ian McEwan about a female MI5 spy which was generally more upbeat than other novels by the author. Well recommended is *The Elephant Keeper's Daughter* by Peter Hoeg about children who think their parents are up to no good and need rescuing. Our next meeting will be at Dave Lawton's home and the topic will be *Medical*.



Current Affairs Thursday: Stuart Leitch reporting

In this month's meeting we tackled the difficult and massive subject of *The Economic Development in Northland*.

The discussion began by questioning what is possible to achieve with the current Far North population of 56,000+ and approximately 18,000 employed within 7,500 businesses. These figures, although slightly dated, gave a reasonable representation of the current situation. They indicated that it is basically a "cottage industry" area.

A key point discussed was that of the "infrastructure" and the conundrum of where to begin - is it road, rail, air communication, or the preparation of the work force through formal education to fill the anticipated needs? Quite a "chicken-and-egg" situation!

When considering employment, should it be the introduction of new business/industry or the development of the current local industries, i.e. tourism, hospitality, timber, abattoir, and fruit growing?

This brought us back to where we began, the need for greater accessibility for hospitality and tourism. This requires investment in the various communication means - road, rail or air. Should timber be returned to being moved by rail thus requiring appropriately located marshalling yards, and taking logging trucks off State Highways?

The consensus was that it would be better for the Far North to further develop the existing industry. However we did not dismiss the potential for mineral mining and deep-sea oil/gas exploration off the Far North coast, and we will look at that more closely at next month's meeting.

Our next meeting will be at Stuart and Anne Leitch's home and the topic will be Mining, oil and gas in Northland.

Music Appreciation: Hilary Mowat reporting

The DVD we watched was of the Verbier Festival Academy's 10th Birthday 2003 concert. What a tour de force. It had us clapping our appreciation after each piece.

The Academy's youth orchestra was formed to encourage musical excellence and have well established artists playing with them. It was amazing to see eight grand pianos and eight of the best pianists in the world on stage playing Rimski-Korsakov's Flight of the Bumblebee. Sir Thomas Beecham stated that "the English do not understand music, they just like the noise", but we were all enamoured of this noise. The other works were by Mozart, Smetana, Heidebrich with his "Happy Birthday Variations", Rossini, Wagner, Benjamin, Gould, Gottschalk and the aforementioned Rimski-Korsakov. Next month we will hear members' favourite singers/instrumentalists with a performance of fifteen minutes or less.

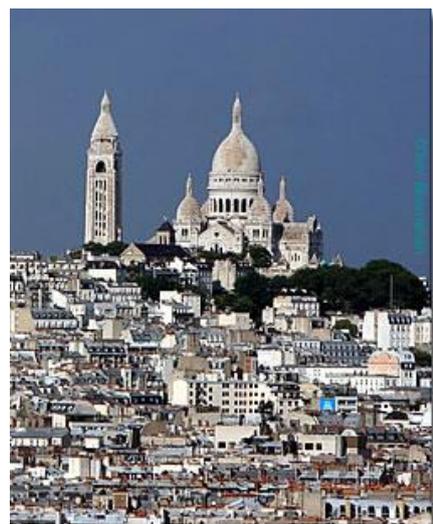
Our next meeting will be at the Beggs's home, and the topic will be Favourite Singers and Instrumentalists
History of Aviation: Hilary Mowat reporting

French Conversation: Hazel Brown reporting

Half a dozen of us spent an interesting afternoon watching programmes about Paris's Notre Dame Cathedral and Sacré Coeur Basilica, with quite a bit included in the second about old Montmartre (Hill of the Martyrs, which I hadn't realised...) We saw a good deal that is not open to the public in both places, and a lot of the conversation was in quite colloquial French, with sub-titles if you cared to read them. We all enjoyed it, I think, from those who knew Paris well to those who had never been there, and for all our levels of understanding of the language.

Our next meeting will be at Mike Dee's home.

Please call Mike and let him know whether you are coming or not. 09 401 9607



Current Affairs Monday: John Gibb reporting

We, once again, took up the challenge of varied topics.

The agenda began with a first-hand report from Bob Bubendorfer following his visit to Wellington during the recent earthquake. Our discussion included the location, frequency and effects of earthquakes in NZ.

Fonterra was the next subject firmly in the news, with all expressing concern about the events, the reporting and the potential aftermath. The discussion naturally led on to other unwanted chemicals and products in our food. Recent reports expressed that *Roundup* is not as safe as previously reported and DDT may be back in use.

The animal testing of party pills was next on the table and many considered that, perhaps, the pills should be tested on the consumers rather than the unsuspecting animals.

The FNDC campaign to educate us and consult us about our sewerage options also came in for considerable discussion. We considered the three options and the possible course of action by the Council after consultation and the likely effects on us individually. The FNDC cost estimates for the three options were also critically examined.

We then became futuristic and scientific, looking at power generation with mirrors and further developments with solar power in Germany and Australia.

Other topics included the progress of Team NZ in San Francisco, the cost of developing Auckland, Keynesian economics, unemployment in the north, Zimbabwe elections and fracking.

Our next meeting will be at Lindsay and Mary Johnson's home.

Opera Wednesday: Elva Clark reporting

Due to overseas holidays, operations, etc. our group was reduced to just four ladies this month - and naturally the antics of *Don Juan* weren't exactly appreciated.

However, the setting in Venice, Mozart's music and in particular the beautiful singing of the ladies in the cast which more than compensated for the subject matter.

On a very much lighter touch our next opera will be *The Daughter of the Regiment* by Donizetti, a 2008 Metropolitan production, starring Juan Diego Florez and Natalie Desay - 126 minutes.

Our next meeting will be at Lesley and Keith McNaughton's home and the topic will be *The Daughter of the Regiment*.

Philosophy: Robert Wright reporting

Our group's July discussion examined Michael Heumer's theory of Intuitionism which he suggests is a means of unravelling the mystery of how we can know the ethical properties of rightness and wrongness. This is a theory claiming that there is no scientific empirical way ethical properties can be known; they are in some way supernatural. We continued this investigation at our August meeting with an alternative theory, that of evolutionary forces having a significant role in shaping our evaluative attitudes, which claims naturalism and denies intuitionism. An essay explaining this theory was given to the members to read over the period before the meeting, and questions and opinions on this theory were freely discussed. Our discussion ranged over not only the evolutionary theory, but related themes including possible 'double standards' in naturalistic theories. This objection proposes that scientific claims such as the existence of neutrinos, which can be neither seen nor measured, are accepted to exist, so why deny intuitionism? Our meeting's conclusion is that the evolution theory is plausible but it does not deliver the 'knock-out blow' to intuitionism. Therefore, to widen our search our next meeting we will look at a man Bertrand Russell suggested as a founder of modern philosophy René Descartes.

Our next meeting will be at the home of Ngaire Bates and the topic will be René Descartes

Greek Odyssey Wednesday: Liz Berry reporting

"Are we on a journey of total immersion?" I asked myself as the group checked their homework of writing the course participants' names in Greek.

Having developed an awareness of some of the letters of the Greek alphabet we studied slides of shards of ancient writing and were amazed that we could decipher some of the words, but where the story began or ended was a complete mystery!

Agricultural images on pottery made before 6000 BCE depicted ploughing, grapes and olives.

Almost 3000 years ago Hesiod wrote a piece called *Works and Days* which is now regarded as the first farmers' almanac and an indispensable guide to practices of ancient agriculture.

Tyrian purple or Imperial purple, a reddish purple natural dye, a secretion of the rock snail, Murex is now considered to be one of the most valuable commodities traded beyond the island of Crete refuting earlier assumptions of the Minoans being self-sufficient.

An assimilation of art and objects depicting the myth of Herakles was viewed and discussed.

As a finale we were treated to a delightful caricature series of the Feats of Herakles, NZ style, by the artist Marian McGuire followed by a Disney rendition of the song and dance routine *Zero to Hero*. A stimulating and fun session indeed!



Herakles attempts to construct a chariot from No. 8 wire

Our next meeting will be at Iris Steensma's home and the topic will be *Get your hands dirty*.

Greek Odyssey Friday: Hazel Brown reporting

We spent a fascinating afternoon learning more about the Minoans and many other topics.

Firstly we learned that "ostracised" comes from the Greek *ostrakon*, a shard of pottery on which citizens wrote the name of another citizen who should be sent out of the city for ten years. We saw that Ancient Greece is still alive, Pallas Athene's owl being reproduced on a current 1 euro coin. We were advised to read Hesiod's *Works and Days* and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Classical Mythology*.

From the video we learned of changing ideas about Minoan civilisation, and that Crete was the Bronze-Age centre of a trading network stretching from Italy to the Red Sea and Spain to Aleppo.

We learned also of the deciphering of the Linear B script, an early Greek writing, but that Linear A, possibly the Minoan language, has not yet been understood.

We also made the acquaintance of a hero, Herakles (Hercules), and saw how his Twelve Labours have continued to provide subjects for artistic representation to the present day and worldwide, including New Zealand. Altogether a most stimulating afternoon.



Our next meeting will be at Iris Steensma's home and the topic will be *Get your hands dirty*.

History of Aviation: Hilary Mowat reporting

We found out lots of interesting information on top dressing planes at the last meeting, so decided to continue the theme with "workhorse planes" added. That source of all things, Wikipedia, had a lot about topdressers. It stated that "the first known application of agricultural materials was by John Chaytor, who in 1906 spread seed over a swamped valley floor in Wairoa, New Zealand, using a hot air balloon with mobile tethers." More information on topdressers was passed around, including books on deer recovery, and that workhorse known as a DC3 in civilian life and a C47 in RNZAF colours.

Unfortunately there are only sooooo many hours in a day and we did not have time to go through all the information available.

Our next meeting will be at the Pickup's home, and the topic will be *Passenger Transport Planes*.

History of Ireland: Lesley McNaughton reporting for both groups

The first Normans to arrive in Ireland were mercenaries recruited by Dermot McMurrough to help him regain the kingdom of Leinster. They were led by the FitzGerald, descendants of the beautiful Welsh princess Nesta and her husband, the Norman Marcher Lord Gerald of Windsor, or her many lovers. The more powerful Richard de Clare, called Strongbow, soon joined the Fitzgeralds. Together they conquered the towns of Wexford, Waterford and Dublin and restored Leinster to Dermot. Strongbow married Dermot's daughter Aoife and became the King of Leinster when Dermot died the next year. This brought Henry II to Ireland with a vast army to ensure that Ireland did not become a rival Norman kingdom. Faced with overwhelming odds the Normans quickly submitted and most of the Irish kings, chiefs and bishops acknowledged Henry as their overlord in the hope that he would curb the expansion of his barons. Henry granted Leinster to Strongbow and Meath to his own supporter Hugh de Lac and divided the adjacent territories among his barons, all to be held by feudal tenure of knight service. He took for himself the city and kingdom of Dublin plus all seaports and fortresses.

The Norman conquerors transformed Ireland. They took the fertile lands and brought in thousands of English and Welsh settlers to work for them. They treated the Irish as inferior savages and reduced them to the status of serfs or pushed them into the poorer lands. Thus began the division which plagued Ireland for 800 years.

Our next meetings will be at Lesley's home and the topic will be *Tudor conquest and the Reformation*.



Gerald of Wales portrayed the Irish as inferior to justify their conquest.

Opera Thursday: Mary Johnson reporting

When the Austrian Emperor Joseph II set up the National Singspiel company to perform works in the German language 25 year old Mozart composed one of the first operas for him using a supplied libretto which happened to be pirated from another composer Bretzner. He complained long and loudly about the theft, but has since been given credit for the work.

The Abduction from the Seraglio was our first taste of Singspiel where the story line is carried along in spoken form between set numbers instead of as a sung recitative. The opera was a huge success in its day and even now there are said to be dozens of complete recordings available to choose from. The story line involved a master and his servant being caught trying to rescue their lady loves from the harem of the Pasha whose servant Selim wanted them put to death and was most upset when his master released them.

There were only six characters in the story, the Pasha in a spoken only role, and all the action took place on just one stage set. The singing and acting was of a very high standard with Matthias Habich as the evil Selim and Ruth Ann Swenson as the beautiful Konstanze being outstanding performers.

This was a 1991 recording and we wonder why we have not noticed this attractive and talented singer in other roles.

Our next meeting will be at Mary and Lindsay Johnson's home and the topic will be Bellini's opera *I Puritani* with Anna Netrebko in her acclaimed debut as Elvira at The Met.

Shakespeare One: Lindsay Matterson reporting

The story of *The Winter's Tale* was covered in the August Newsletter when it was reported by Jack Beggs. Five of us were also impressed with the acting and special effects in a very "modern" setting. Although written in 1611, when "Shakespeare" retired to Stratford after a very busy life, it was not published till 1623 with all the first folio plays. This was seven years after his death.

The special effects were great - from being pursued by a bear and the horrific storms - to all the dancing, music and happy times in the more colourful second half. Old Father Time with his soliloquy and hourglass covering 16 years was most helpful to those of us who didn't know the play well.

Next month we will watch the tragedy of *Othello* starring Anthony Hopkins and Bob Hoskins in their early days. This has a longer running time so we will start promptly at 1.30 and have a shorter tea break. Plenty of room for others in U3A who would like to join us. A synopsis will be sent to those in the group shortly before September 11th. Our next meeting will be at Lindsay Matterson's home.

Shakespeare Two: Margaret Lindsay reporting

Twelfth Night - We enjoyed this excellent BBC production. The action was superb.

The main events in this play were, the Duke of Orsino was in love with Lady Olivia, but she wouldn't have anything to do with suitors. Viola was shipwrecked and believed her twin brother Sebastian, dead. She pretended to be a boy and became a servant to Orsino, and was sent to woo Olivia. However, Olivia fell in love with Viola, believing her to be a boy. Viola fell in love with Orsino.

Sir Tony Belch (Olivia's uncle), Sir Andrew Aguecheek (his friend), Maria (a maid), Feste (a jester) and Fabian (a servant) plotted to make a fool of Malvolio (Olivia's head steward). They wrote a letter, apparently from Olivia, where she confessed her love for Malvolio and wished him to dress and behave in a ridiculous manner. Believing this would get Olivia to marry him, he did everything the letter asked, but Olivia, who knew nothing about this, had him locked away for being insane. They eventually set him free, but he was furious.

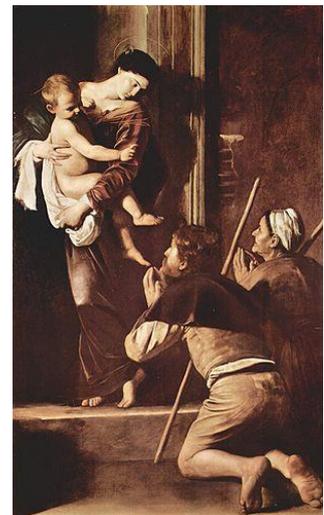
Sebastian, Viola's brother arrived, and believing him to be Viola, (who Olivia thought was a boy), asked him to marry her - and he did. Viola's identity was revealed and Orsino fell in love with her and they married. Then it was revealed that Sir Toby and Maria had also married.

Our next meeting will be at Tom and Margaret Lindsay's home and the play is yet to be decided.

Western Civilisation: Judy Ramsey reporting

In this meeting we viewed the Simon Schama DVD *The Power of Art* on the turbulent life of Caravaggio.

Michelangelo Caravaggio was born near Milan, Italy in 1571. After serving an artists' apprenticeship in Milan, Caravaggio moved to Rome. From the outset Caravaggio broke away from the accepted traditions of art. He painted directly onto canvas without preliminary sketches and drawings, and his subjects were more likely modelled from the poor people he met in the city rather than idealised saints and other accepted religious figures. He soon gained wealthy patrons who often bought his works of art which had been rejected by the church for their realism. His painting of the Madonna of Loreto shows the Virgin Mary with bare feet standing in the doorway of a dilapidated building being honoured by two poor pilgrims with callused feet.



Caravaggio's lifestyle of drinking and brawling was probably no different from any other man in Rome. However when he killed a man in a duel in 1606 he was declared an outlaw with a price on his head. Forced to leave Rome he moved to Naples and then onto the island of Malta. However after a short period of relative tranquillity in Malta he once again became imprisoned for brawling. He escaped from Malta and on his way back to Rome, where he believed he would receive a pardon, he died of a fever at Porto Ercole in 1610.

Our next meeting will be at Judy Barrett's home and the topic will be *Protest and Communication*

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