

Writers on Writing

Swollen eyelids shut tight. Head shaven bare. The woman strokes the baby's face. A seven year old girl holds onto the woman's skirt. A plastic tube feeds into the baby's nose and a drip is taped onto her arm. A catheter empties urine into a bag. Her arms are in splints. Her small body wrapped in gauze. Her hands are in mittens also tied to splints. She tries to open her eyes, searching through the swelling,

The nurse comes to check tubes and vital signs.

The woman brushes back her dark wispy hair and looks up at the nurse. "What is wrong with that baby? Where is her hair?... Her face? ... Her body?"

"Remember the doctor spoke to you about it?" The nurse's voice gently persists.. "Remember? Remember?"

"No. Spoke to me? No."

"About her body, her face." Pulling a chair close, the nurse sits next to her. "The baby will she will look a little different."

The woman stares confused at the nurse in her white uniform. "Where is Katherine? Where is my baby? My little girl?"

The nurse answers softly. "This is Katherine. You can see her."

"But I can't. I can't see her. I can't see her."

(Chapter 5 *Butterflies* by Susanne Gervay: - An extract from Katherine's story of meeting the challenge of burns in ultimately, a celebration of life.)

Readers often ask if I had ever been burnt. No, I haven't physically been burnt, but to write *Butterflies* I became psychologically burnt. I live my writing, investing my emotions and values, intertwining feelings as a child, adolescent, mother, adult into story.

Writing is hard. I love it. I hate it. I do it because it's a compulsion, releasing endorphins like a jogger running for that high. I'm always looking for that hit. It's so sweet when the words flow and suddenly there's that special resonance. I've always wanted to be at the bottom of those desk calendars with a quote of the day. I wrote this line in my novel *The Cave*. It's one of those lines I savour.

War is not brave, but men can be brave in war and in life.

(The Cave, Chapter 13, page 141)

I'd like that to be a 'quote of the day'.

Emotionally, physically, intellectually writing sucks you in, exercising demons, releasing angels. It's scary, exhilarating, frustrating. I often don't want to go there, but I trip and down I slide into the rabbit hole. Wonderland is startling and I've always sought to change sizes. So when I'm writing, just call me Alice.

Writing is different for every writer. However for me it came out of the trauma of growing up from a post war Hungarian refugee family fraught with conflict over resettlement, war, loss, religion, migration, yet filled with rebuilding family, community and driven by hope for the future. Writing nursed me through those dark times, laughed with me during those funny times, and held me when I was afraid.

The road to publication changes writing. It is only for the brave. Publication is when you are judged, rejected, battered, face road blocks, armies, get lost on detours, carry injuries. It's when your words are tested and you are forced to make them better, craft them, believe in your writing despite or because of the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'.

I am grateful that I slid down the rabbit hole, faced the confusion of the Cheshire Cat and survived the Queen who wanted to chop off my head. Today I'm a published children's and young adult author, an adult short story writer and my words reach other people, maybe even change lives.

Susanne's website:- www.sgervay.com

NORM GERAS' Writers from Around the Globe: -

<http://normblog.typepad.com/normblog/2008/02/writers-choice.html>

PAPER TIGERS – Pacific Rim Writers:-

<http://www.papertigers.org/personalViews/archiveViews/SGervay.html>

PERSPECTIVE – ABC Radio Nation, The journey of migration:-

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/perspective/stories/2006/1634484.htm>

PERSPECTIVE- ABC Radio National, Writing 'That's Why I Wrote This Song' by Susanne Gervay with music and lyrics by her daughter Tory Gervay

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/perspective/stories/2007/1976620.htm>