

## How Will You Live? A Tribute to Mary MacRae, *Brittle Star*, Issue 24, Autumn 2009

### Working with Mary

by Myra Schneider

I first met Mary when she came to interview me for *Magma* magazine in the autumn of 1999. There was an immediate rapport between us and she asked me if I would give her a tutorial. By the time I did, in March 2000, I was being treated for breast cancer and she was quietly but firmly sympathetic – able to advise me from her own experience. She encouraged me to ring her up if I was worried. I phoned several times and she was always practical and supportive so I already thought of her as a friend when she joined one of my Poetry School courses later in the year.

Working with Mary was exciting because she was so committed to poetry, already attending Mimi Khalvati's workshops and studying poets in her own time. Her writing blossomed and I realized that she had an outstanding talent. She was a significant group member because her feedback on other people's work was both insightful and sympathetic. The emotional and spiritual charge of her poetry, its delicate descriptions from close observation, were appreciated by many editors including Anne Cluysenaar of *Scintilla*, and by 2006 it was very clear to me and others that a first collection was long overdue. When *Second Light* offered to publish her I enjoyed helping her organize her poems. Her book, *As Birds Do*, was well received, as it deserved to be, and I'm glad she had the satisfaction of knowing this.

Mary was a very generous and loyal friend and I much enjoyed visiting art galleries with her. Sometimes she looked at poems of mine and her comments were always valuable. In the nine years that I knew her Mary became part of my life. Her death has left a terrible gap. I shall always miss her intensity, her thirst for life, her love of nature, her caring. What I want now is to help keep her poetry alive.

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