



***Carindale Writers Group newsletter***

***4 August 2011***

**Present:** Len, Dorothy, Judith, Dawn, Leslee-Anne, Beverley, Ed, Wendy, Brian, Chip, Jeff Petersen, Jeff Matheson, Rolando, Mike, Annette, Maria Gunn, Maria Scully, Shirley, Debby.

Dates for the Brisbane Writers Festival have been announced: 7 – 11 September 2011. Many local and international writers will be in attendance. Three tickets to a single standard session of the festival can be purchased for \$39, for three people to attend that session. Tickets normally cost \$16 per person. This price can be further discounted by 10% if you buy before 12 August. These prices do not apply to master classes, workshops or the professional development series. For more information, please see the website [www.brisbanewritersfestival.com.au](http://www.brisbanewritersfestival.com.au)

Whilst understanding that writers need to be paid for their appearance at the festival, members of the Carindale Writers' Group regret that tickets cost as much as they do. Some fondly remember a time when several sessions were free.

Desley Melrose has updated our website to reflect recent changes to our group structure and contact details. To view present and past editions of this newsletter visit [www.carindalewritersgroup.org](http://www.carindalewritersgroup.org) where you can also read short biographies of several of our members, with links to some of their work. All members can submit their writing bios if they wish. You are encouraged to do so.

Whilst the facilitator of the Carindale Writers' Group is away on holiday from mid-September to late October, some kind members will need to take over the reins temporarily, for guiding the meeting and to write up the newsletter. One suggestion is that a different member each time could take charge of one of the three meetings which need to be covered. They occur on 15 September, 6 October and 20 October. This is a good opportunity to get just a little more involved in the group and to put your own stamp on it for a while.

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**How to present your manuscript for editing.**

Lines should always be double-spaced. Margins on both sides of the page should be a minimum of 2.5cms to allow for proofs and editorial comment. The opening paragraph of each chapter should be aligned left. Following paragraphs should be visibly indented. These are the basics. Some editors like to see the work both left- and right-justified; most prefer left-justified with a ragged or free-flowing right-hand edge. You should always check first with your editor or proof-reader about their preferred style.

**Featured reader.**

Wendy Squires was our featured reader today. Wendy read aloud for us chapters 2 and 3 of her novel. Although it has a working title, Wendy knows she will be changing it as the novel evolves. Her character Mary Nightingale has written a book which is undergoing transformation into a film script, loosely described as a modern-day Jesus story.

Early on we meet producer-director Benjamin Bond, an arrogant and chauvinistic man who is so well characterised he positively leaps off the page. Contrasting with him and quite intentionally portrayed by the author as such, the character of Mary seems weak. This allows Mary's character to evolve and manifest her inner strength.

The author has a gift for articulation that makes her story flow vividly for the reader from the outset. The audience was engrossed in a story that moves, and a moving story.

Mary's premise explores how technology can be used in such a way as to convince people that illusion is fact. She refers to Orson Welles' radio reading of 'War of the Worlds' which came across so dramatically in the 1930s that many of its listeners were panicked by it. Would today's listeners or viewers be equally persuaded by a hoax? The producer, Bond, agrees with Mary that fear is the key to manipulating people.

The film is in its very earliest stages of production. During preparation of computerised graphics for the film, Mary watches as storm clouds form on the screen, then dissipate to reveal the possible face of Christ. The computer operator suggests methods of subliminal imprinting in the distortion of the clouds to influence viewers.

The actors currently auditioning for the role of Jesus are found to be completely unsuitable. Ben Bond abruptly demands that Mary should go out and find the character who will play Jesus, and to produce him by the following morning.

Distracted by the demands on her, Mary takes a walk by the river. She doesn't mind that it's in an area where homeless people sometimes doss down. She chats with one man she knows quite well, a local character renowned for carrying a parrot around in his pocket. The author uses her ability here for colourful and almost tactile descriptions due to her marvellous powers of minute observation.

Mary's eye keeps straying to the long-haired man asleep under a pile of newspapers on a nearby bench. When he awakes and addresses her, she is surprised by his mellifluous voice. He appears to understand how hungry she is. Without prompting, he shares with her a tasty baguette provided to him, he tells her, by a new restaurant up the hill which has adopted him. Mary wonders about how such a well-spoken man has arrived at his current apparently homeless situation. When he introduces himself as Chris King, Mary's mind startles her by adding a T to the end of his forename. "Man cannot live by bread alone," Mary reminds herself and then realises she has found her actor, her Jesus, and right on time.

Members listening to the reading enquired about the development of the author's story. What has happened in chapter 1, for instance? What we then learn persuades some of those around to table to suggest that chapter 2 has such a strong beginning it would serve well as the opening to the novel and that perhaps elements of chapter 1 could be worked into it as flashback. Other Carindale Writers' Group members commented on how beautiful the writing itself was and how appropriate were the names chosen for the main characters. The scriptural references juxtaposed with a very modern setting and the author's use of down-to-earth dialogue were most appealing. The injunction to 'find Jesus' came through with substance.

Some few inconsistencies with the author's use of tense were brought to light, as were some sentences deemed to be somewhat 'wordy'. Tightened up, this is a story with lots of potential. The style is immediately recognisable as that of the author's, which is a great feature to encourage consistent loyalty in her readers for future books she may write.

Some description of the studio in chapter 2 where the auditions take place might assist the reader to visualise the setting, as might descriptions of the riverside walk in chapter 3. These are minor points which don't detract in any way from the story's concept. Being one of a modern-day Jesus means that the reader sometimes knows more than the characters do, giving it a very engaging quality.

One listener was so enraptured by the story he became quite lyrical in his commentary. He described it as a tapestry of words and said that we had 'the Monet of writers' in our midst!

This story is very well thought through. It is the author's intention to ultimately portray how the best and the worst can come out in people. Without doubt we all want to hear more. Thank you so much, and well done Wendy!

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Our featured writer for our **next meeting, 18 August** is Mike McMorrow. The featured writer for the following meeting on 1 September is Chip Karmatz.

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Today's exercise topic was **Meeting The Foreigners**.

Jeff Matheson has written such a wealth of words already in his novel *Fusilier of the Line*, set in the time of the Napoleonic wars, that he can almost always draw from it in support of our suggested assignments. His protagonists are the soldiers of the French army, who are currently out foraging to supplement their food rations. They come unexpectedly upon soldiers wearing a different uniform and speaking a different language. At first the Frenchmen are frightened, suspecting the enemy, until they realise the others are Italians, fighting on the same side. Friendships are made as food is shared. They all go on to live and fight another day.

Brian Rowell wrote from a first-person perspective a story from the archives of the Witenagemot. This was the name for a diverse group of aristocrats and churchmen who formed the council to the king, many centuries ago. The lead character observes that brotherly disputes are like civil wars. Going on from there Brian dropped historical clues throughout his narrative, naming the characters and towns where hostilities were taking place. By the close we come to understand that Harold should have won the day for Saxon England but by an unlucky arrow shot and his misjudged military tactics, the French William of Normandy took battle honours instead, at Hastings in 1066.

Dawn Johnson presented an abridged section from a family memoir of a time in 1919 when a young schoolgirl first encountered Chinese people working their market gardens. Some of the students were frightened by the obvious difference in appearance and clothing of the foreigners. As the gardens flourished and the Chinese sold their produce locally, people became more accustomed to them. Trust in the outsiders grew. The Chinese would deliver and sell their produce to the household but they were equally happy if the woman of the house would bake pies in exchange for their vegetables.

Beverley Asmus wrote a touching story about an Afghani refugee, a teenage girl called Alazra, who had a gift for learning the language of her adopted country, Australia. Alazra was a bright, ambitious

girl, keen to leave behind the horrors of the country she had escaped and also the memory of the many months she and her family had spent confined in a detention centre. Bev effortlessly worked into her story elements from our last exercise, which was to use the verbs slithered, slammed and slapped, when she described as 'agonised twin snakes' the tears shed by Alazra when painful memories resurfaced for her.

With some little time still remaining, Dorothy Vicary read out a short excerpt from her novel about the Byrd family, describing with great clarity and attention to detail a meal being prepared in the family kitchen. Dorothy also wrote of the period when the children were at school learning their catechism. Some of the answers they gave when questioned were naïve and amusing in the way that only young children can interpret life.

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**The Morning** is our suggested exercise for our **next meeting on 1 September 2011**.

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August's edition of WQ magazine (Writing Queensland) is available by copying the following link into your browser:

<http://www.qwc.asn.au/Portals/0/QWC%20Files/Writing%20Queensland/WQ%20issues%202011/wq%20august%20web.pdf>

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### **Competition Announcements**

With so many writers festivals coming up in the near future it appears there have been no independent announcements of writing competitions recently. However, the latest edition of WQ magazine (Writing Queensland) from the Queensland Writers Centre contains four pages of competition announcements so could be well worth visiting. Please see the link noted above.

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Here's something of interest to budding writers. Publishers Pan MacMillan are currently accepting manuscripts on Mondays. The website below suggests the electronic-only submissions this company is seeking will circumvent the hard-copy slush piles of legendary proportions. Please send first chapter only of your manuscript with a covering 300-word synopsis to:

[http://www.panmacmillan.com.au/manuscript\\_Monday.asp](http://www.panmacmillan.com.au/manuscript_Monday.asp)

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### **Forthcoming literary events**

Queensland Writers Centre has some great courses coming up in its Online Learning Centre.

#### **Kim Wilkins' Year of the Novel led by Trent Jamieson**

Year-long course starting August 2011. Cost \$445

Challenge yourself to complete the ultimate writing journey in Kim Wilkins' Year of the Novel under the tutelage of author of *Dust*, Christine Bongers. Christine will guide you through this course created by Kim Wilkins and help you get that manuscript finished in a year.

### **Writing Science Fiction Short Story**

Six-week course starting October 2011. Cost \$150

Join one of Australia's most successful authors of science fiction, fantasy and horror, Lee Battersby, for a journey through the fantastic art of the science fiction short story. Over six weeks you will learn how to build worlds, character, voice and mood in this challenging and rewarding form.

### **Pitching to Publishers with Tiana Templeman**

Four-week course in October 2011. Cost \$150

This four-week course will show you how to push all the right buttons to attract a publisher's eye. Discover what commissioning editors love and what they loathe. From writing a captivating synopsis to deciding where to send it, learn about all facets of the proposal process for a range of writing including non-fiction, fiction, and children's.

### **Introduction to Creative Writing**

Six-week course in August and October 2011. Cost \$130

There are a lot of us out there who write, scribbling ideas on bus tickets, boarding passes and coffee shop serviettes, but who never seem to turn these notes into anything. If you have been scribbling away quietly but have never taken the leap to finish anything or call yourself a writer, clear a few hours a week in your schedule to sit down and rediscover the art of creative writing in this practice-based series of online activities and resources.

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From Carindale Writers' Group member Jane Furey we are pleased to pass on the following useful websites:

**DIGITAL BOOK COVERS:** Even when publishing only in digital format, book covers remain an essential part of your offering. However, when it comes to the size and resolution of the book cover some thought is required. The goal is no longer 9 x 6 inch (300 dpi) - it's now the 1024 x 600 px (118 ppi) of a typical netbook's screen or 800 x 600 px (167 ppi) for a Kindle 3 display. This excellent article delves into the nitty-gritty of preparing your cover for publication and is essential reading for any self-publishing writer: <http://bubblecow.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ad919329a3da1a2068ca05a1e&id=dea94d03c7&e=52dda614b3>

**NOVEL IDEAS:** No matter how strong the structure of your novel, a poor idea will never be good enough for either a traditional publisher or a reviewer of a self-published book. In this article writer Kristen Lamb sets out her Lead Objective Conflict Knockout or LOCK methodology. This turns out to be a system that any writer can use to ensure the foundation of their novel is as strong as possible: <http://bubblecow.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ad919329a3da1a2068ca05a1e&id=6c991589a7&e=52dda614b3>

**FILMS ABOUT WRITERS:** We all love a good film, but what about films about writers? Well, GeekWeek have set out to list their top twenty films about writers. It's a pretty impressive list: <http://bubblecow.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ad919329a3da1a2068ca05a1e&id=798682037b&e=52dda614b3>

## **Chip's Computer Tips**

Microsoft has a lot of free or little known apps and data bases for school children and uni students, all ages. If you have children, grandchildren or know your neighbours kids, you might want to pass along this site: [HTTP://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/explore/stay-on-top-of-your-studies](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/explore/stay-on-top-of-your-studies)

### **HTTPS Everywhere**

The Web is an insecure place and getting more insecure all the time. The latest threat, the [Firesheep](#) add-in for Firefox, is particularly dangerous because it is exceedingly simple to use. Someone with absolutely no hacking experience can grab your private login information to sites such as Facebook and Amazon, and then log in as you and do anything they want, as if they were you. The free Firefox add-in HTTPS Everywhere helps protect against that threat and other privacy invaders by effectively encrypting information when you visit certain Web sites.

A collaboration between the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the Tor Project (which employs a network and free software to help protect people's privacy), HTTPS Everywhere ensures that when you visit certain sites, all of your communications are encrypted and secure.

To use it, all you need to do is install it. Once you do that, HTTPS Everywhere does its work invisibly. Among the sites it works on are Facebook, Twitter, Google Search, Wikipedia, Paypal, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and others. It works only when the sites themselves use the HTTPS protocol, and works only on a group of specific sites. So it won't protect you everywhere. And it won't protect you when you use other Internet services, such as an instant messaging client, or use client-based email such as Outlook.

For a more comprehensive security tool, you'll want to use a Virtual Private Network, such as the free [Hotspot Shield](#), or the for-pay [AlwaysVPN](#). But for quick-and-easy free protection at popular Web sites, HTTPS Everywhere is a great choice.

**Note:** This link automatically installs the file from the developer's site into your Firefox browser - <http://www.eff.org/https-everywhere>

FN Karmatz

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Chip alerts us to this site [http://www.ability.org.uk/genre\\_fiction\\_mag.html](http://www.ability.org.uk/genre_fiction_mag.html) for e-zines that accept short stories. You can also read them from this site.

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