



***Carindale Writers Group newsletter***

***1 December 2011***

**Present:**

Debby, Jeff M, Bev, Dawn, Judith, Hilary, Rolando, Ed, Len, Dorothy, Wendy, Shirley, Brian, Jeff P, Hazel, Leslee-Anne, Annette.

Today we welcomed new arrivals Bruce and Kim. To give them an idea of each member's preferred writing genre we went around the table to give a quick précis of our writing interests.

Debby writes memoir and ditties. Jeff M writes historical fiction. Bev writes mainstream fiction. Dawn writes Australian historical fiction based on fact, as does Judith who also likes to write poetry. Hilary, Len and Shirley described themselves as 'dabblers'. Rolando told us he writes anything he can sell! Ed likes to write in a humorous vein. Dorothy writes historical fiction set to the background of World War II. We learn that Bruce likes to write fantasy fiction set in the 1800s. Wendy writes speculative fiction. Brian by his own admission writes erotica, though it's probably better described as mainstream fiction. Jeff P writes memoir. Kim writes mainstream fiction, non-fiction, poetry and Australian history. Hazel is another memoirist and also writes historical fiction. Leslee-Anne writes short stories mainly aimed at children. Annette is a dabbler and writer of whimsy.

Dorothy mentioned that her goal is to complete her historical fiction novel by the end of next year. Having goals is a great idea. As has been mentioned before, it can be helpful to break down one's writing endeavours into manageable chunks such as chapters or time lines when it comes re-drafting, editing or proofing the work. This is especially helpful for those of us immersed in writing something lengthy, in order to get it polished one section at a time.

Writing can be a solitary occupation. Having such a wealth of variety and talent in the members of our writers group makes us a great support to each other.

**Discussions.**

In order to boost our funds in readiness for our next anthology, whatever and whenever that may be, we have agreed to an increase in the two donations we make regularly to the Carindale Writers Group. From now on we will each contribute \$15 every year in January to be members and to help defray our regular (and rising) financial obligations, such as membership of writing bodies, our webhosting, etc. Any residue of funds will go towards producing our anthologies.

We will increase our meeting donation to \$3 partly to offset the cost of tea and coffee but primarily also to build up our financial reserves toward future anthologies. Dorothy has very kindly agreed to provide the tea and coffee for us on a regular basis.

Thanks to Brian's earlier prompts (see previous newsletters), we all of us engaged in a lively discussion about the vernacular and contemporary use of English compared to that language's traditional usage. As writers it is helpful to know what the rules are before we can comfortably go breaking or ignoring them.

My pet hate is the use of the personal pronoun 'me' when incorrectly used in a sentence such as "Tom and me went to the shops". We don't say "Me went to the shops" so the correct way to put it is "I went to the shops". If Tom went with you then "Tom and I went to the shops". Another incorrect example is "Mel gave the books to Danny and I". If we leave Danny out of the sentence it would read "Mel gave the books to me" so if Danny is also getting books from Mel then we would say and write "Mel gave the books to Danny and me".

Dawn brought up the incorrect expression "try and help someone" and suggests it would be better to say "try to help someone". Another observation of hers is the distinction between "talking with someone" and "talking to someone". "Talking to someone" suggests a lecture, that the talk is all going one way. "Talking with someone" allows for response; it's a two-way flow.

Judith's mantra is "to leave every person and place in her life better than she found them". A person and a place are two items, so must use a plural pronoun, 'them'. Her other grammatical difficulty when talking about a person is whether to say him, her or them. As speakers of English we tend to default to using the plural when we are unsure of gender, or when we are trying to be all-inclusive.

Bev raised the point about having an identifiable 'writer's voice', a certain style which is uniquely his or her own. This is a different feature to writing dialogue for a Cockney character, say, whose accent has him consistently dropping his h's, but which is nevertheless absolutely spot on if you're quoting people who hail from London's East End.

The writers of historical novels among us, added Ed, can bring to their readers the joy that historical fiction yields when they put on paper the dialogue of how people spoke in their chosen era. The language of the people of the north of England one hundred years ago may be a little different today than it was then but it immediately identifies the time and the setting. And the language of north Americans for the same era is probably different again. For credibility, it's important we get it right.

We are well aware that English is an evolving language. Many words and phrases our grandchildren use today would not be understood by our grandmothers. For example, even purists who accept Google as the noun for the internet company of the same name find themselves using google as a verb form, as in 'googling' for information.

Whilst discussing language it might be worth considering how closely some words are spelled when they mean very different things and how important it is to get them right. With a difference of just one letter ABILITY becomes AGILITY. These two words could conceivably be interchanged, depending on context. But DEDICATION and MEDICATION could not. And as for EXIT and EXIST, LOSE AND LOOSE: it would be supremely important to get these words down pat.

Other pet hates or bug bears in the use of contemporary English also arose. Here's hoping we'll come to grips with them in similar animated discussions in future meetings.

**Featured reader.**

Our featured reader today was Rolando Rizzo. Rolando read aloud to us from his book *The Switch*. He began by giving us the précis written on the book's back cover, which is a good way to condense a book's story. The work is described as a fantasy based on realism.

The switch of the book's title is perhaps best described as the adrenalin rush which triggers an action or a reaction. In summary, our author described how his main character fell instantly in love with a voice he first heard on the phone. At the time he was a university student. The caller was the sister of his best friend. The section of the story Rolando read to us concerned the efforts his character made to meet the owner of the wonderful voice, to see if she was as beautiful in the flesh as her voice suggested to him she might be. She did indeed turn out so, and several decades later they are still married.

Although it is too late for our writers' group to critique a published work, some of the suggestions offered to the author might be instructive for him with writing future books. It was felt that some sentences could be tightened up as their repeated use somewhat laboured the point. One of the members of the listening audience stressed how refreshing it was to hear a masculine voice expressing emotional feelings in the book. The light humour throughout was enjoyed by all.

Before self-publishing this book Rolando gave it to several people to read, to help him with researching what market the book might best suit. He found that people over the age of 30 tended to pick up on the grammatical points that could be improved upon whereas those under 30 looked at the story and enjoyed it more. Hence this age range will be the target audience for *The Switch*.

Rolando acknowledged the great help given him by another of our members, Chip, in re-positioning some of the chapters to help make the story flow better.

Well done and good luck with your sales!

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Today's topic was **Lost**.

Hazel read from the section of her memoirs describing her immigration to Australia from Burma, how unsure of herself she felt upon arriving, and how new and different were the attitudes of the people she first encountered here. The immigration officials surprised her with their kindness. On passing into the main terminal of the building she was concerned at seeing all the placards held aloft. She thought it must be a political protest till she read they were all names of visitors to be met and welcomed. Hazel gave a colourful impression of her new day in this country and wrote glowingly of tasting the sweetness of a new life. On her first bus ride she accidentally dropped her purse and her last few coins rolled out, all the money she had in the world. She was distraught to find the nearby passengers all hurrying to scoop them up, thinking she was being robbed. She was stunned to find every coin handed right back to her. On hearing a newspaper boy call out about his papers Hazel misunderstood the newness of his accent and looked around to find the 'pipers' she hoped to see playing.

Rolando wrote a philosophical piece on the loss of something that is not necessarily tangible; love we may have lost or loss we may have inflicted on others when the company we manage or own goes out of business. These are very different losses to the visible loss or absence of a limb, for instance. Our emotional reactions to such loss can cover quite a spectrum. To respond to it with a sense of 'Oh, poor me!' is selfish. It is far better to look on the positives we still have, whether they

are our own accomplishments or the position we hold in the hearts of others. It is more uplifting to concentrate on the things we still have.

Hilary wrote amusingly on the confusion encountered when meaning gets lost in translation. German friends came to visit. They told Hilary they would send her a 'massage' when they arrived at the airport. Hilary duly went there to collect them. Over dinner one night her friends told her they enjoy eating fish and love to barbeque trousers, when trout was what was meant. Preparing a salad one day one of the ladies shocked the other by announcing there was a snake in the lettuce. The snail turned out to be of the harmless variety. The howlers were not all one-sided. Our Australian friend made an attempt at practicing her German with the question, "Would you like some emperor on your sandwich?" Kaiser was easily confused with Kaser, meaning cheese. The annual Christmas letters brought much mirth, with initial puzzlement at wondering where the yacht has flown (how can a yacht fly?) when the word yacht and year were confused. Dictionaries have their place in any language but much still gets lost in translation!

Bev told a story that had long been tucked away in the folds of memory. A chance meeting with an old school friend brought to mind an equally 'old flame' when news of his death was relayed to his former girlfriend, long since married to someone else. A sister of the man in question announced that the deceased's heart had been broken years earlier by a fickle girlfriend. He had never made much of his life and he had taken to alcohol since. "It was all your fault!" claimed the sister, never considering for a moment that her brother had spent his life living in the past, not being able or willing to deal with the present. The story's author knew in hindsight that she was far better off living the later life she chose for herself, which had turned out to be most successful, with the different man she chose also.

Jeff M wrote of an historical opportunity lost by an incompetent army which might otherwise have completely changed the course of history. He wrote from the point of view of a single soldier, a man who was proud to wear the light blue uniform of the genuine Cossack. The drawback to being in the Cossack regiment was how you were treated by your superiors in High Command who, coming from other societies or cultures, often had no idea how a real Cossack fought in war. It was an acknowledged fact in the early 1800s that a man was obliged to commit to several years of full-time soldiering. Only then could he go home to work his farm and bring it back to full production before he had to return to the army again. Out on patrol one day, our Cossack and his comrades-in-arms were subverted by higher ranking officers from arresting a small troupe of passing soldiers which had at its head a dapper little man on a white-coated Arabian horse. This man and his French army would next day beat those same Russians in the battle of Austerlitz.

Annette wrote her story in the form of political whimsy. Using the analogy of a spouse about to divorce her husband (Britain versus the rest of Europe?), Harriet indulged in a culture of purchases according to EU countries. A shopper in a grand mall, Harriet moved between stores (countries), to make her extravagant purchases. From the Spanish store she could have anything she wanted for an easy life as long as she waited till 'mañana'. The German store keepers were just limbering up for decisive action as Harriet went in to have her hair done, in what was considered a 'bold' style. She was impressed by their efficiency. The ladies lingerie of the French department saw her with gorgeous silk underwear and a figure-hugging overdress by Louis Vuitton. From the Italian department Harriet treated herself to Gucci shoes. But before stepping out she stopped off to get a fake tan in the department representing all things Greek. It didn't have much in it. She just had to bide her time to get a free treatment. Harriet was aware of the maxim 'shop till you drop'. She outdid herself. Refusing to acknowledge she was already dead, Harriet just kept on shopping.

Len was inspired to write his story in the style of flash fiction. He wrote of a woman who conned a wealthy young man to marry her so that she could get her hands on his money. He was advised by his parents against the hasty marriage. They could see past her constantly smiling eyes and suspected her motives. What they should have been more deeply concerned about, had they known, was the conspiracy between the young woman in question and an older man, a confidence trickster who had seduced other young women in the past and set up similar marriages for his own financial gain. He would arrange to adopt young women in turn and put his name as the girl's father on the adoption papers. According to his country's legal system, the father of the bride was entitled to half her inheritance upon the death of the groom. He always engineered such deaths and those of the bride too so he would not be found out. The girl with the smiling eyes was more astute than her putative father realised, though. She had her own plan for getting the better of him in the end.

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Len sent through a couple of links about English usage which I pass on again here.

[http://www.linkedin.com/groupItem?view=&srctype=discussedNews&gid=2277497&item=82173366&type=member&trk=eml-anet\\_dig-b\\_pd-ttl-cn&ut=0-jZffJmr501](http://www.linkedin.com/groupItem?view=&srctype=discussedNews&gid=2277497&item=82173366&type=member&trk=eml-anet_dig-b_pd-ttl-cn&ut=0-jZffJmr501)

[http://www.linkedin.com/groupAnswers?viewQuestionAndAnswers=&discussionID=83282145&gid=2277497&trk=eml-anet\\_dig-b\\_nd-pst\\_ttle-cn&ut=0fhZOMh4sR01](http://www.linkedin.com/groupAnswers?viewQuestionAndAnswers=&discussionID=83282145&gid=2277497&trk=eml-anet_dig-b_nd-pst_ttle-cn&ut=0fhZOMh4sR01)

Jane sends us a quote of the day: "O, there is a lovely feel to a book, a good book, firm in the hand, for its fatness holds rich promise" [bit.ly/rQR4me](http://bit.ly/rQR4me) #quoteoftheday

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### **Competition Announcements**

Creative Print Publishing Ltd. December 2011 – Young Adult and Teen Fiction. Unpublished fiction authors print ready competition starts December 2011. The closing date for this competition is the 31st December 2011 23:59 BST.

This is a genuine, no fee competition that stretches over 12 months. Each month a different genre; each month a winner. Winners are offered a contract, paid royalties, and receive full promotion and marketing strategies. This is not a competition with prizes. There is no entry fee. Only Print Ready novels of genuine merit will be chosen. Your book could be a winner. Full details of rules, genres and how to submit on our website, <http://www.creativeprintpublishing.com/publishing/competitions.php>

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Savage Victory: announcing the 18<sup>th</sup> Scarlet Stiletto Awards Results. Melbourne author, Angela Savage, has won 1<sup>st</sup> prize in Sisters in Crime Australia's 18th Scarlet Stiletto Awards – the first crime writer with one or more crime novels under the belt to do so in the 18 years of the short-story competition. "It's a turn-up for the books," says judges' spokesperson Phyllis King. "The Stiletto Award has previously gone to writers who might have published lots of stories but haven't yet managed a novel."

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**Australian Government**

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
Office for the Arts**



**PRIME MINISTER'S  
LITERARY AWARDS**

### **Call for entries**

Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Arts Minister Simon Crean launched the 2012 Prime Minister's Literary Awards.

This year sees the introduction of a new award for poetry and the incorporation of the Prize for Australian History to further acknowledge the valuable contribution all genres of literature and history make to our cultural identity.

Entries are now invited for the categories of adult fiction, non-fiction, Australian history, poetry, young adult fiction and children's fiction. The winner of each award will receive \$80,000 tax-free and shortlisted entries will receive \$5,000 tax-free.

### **Prime Minister's Literary Award for Poetry**

A poetry category has been introduced to reflect the significant contribution poetry makes to Australia's literary landscape and to the Australian identity.

Collections of poems by up to two poets first published in book form between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2011 are eligible for entry. Prose novels will be eligible in both the poetry category and one of the fiction categories.

### **Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History**

The Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History is the nation's pre-eminent award for excellence in Australian history and is awarded annually for an outstanding body of work that contributes significantly to an understanding of Australian history.

Works first published, produced or broadcast between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2011 are eligible to enter and may include a published book, film or radio documentary, CD-ROM, DVD, other form of multimedia or a series of these works. Australian History Prize entries may also be entered in the non-fiction category.

### **Judging panels announced**

The [2012 judging panels](#) for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards bring together eleven industry professionals including published authors, award-winning journalists, publishers, literary critics and university fellows.

### **Submitting an entry**

Entries close on 1 February 2012. Online entry forms and the 2012 guidelines are now available on the [Awards website](#). We encourage you to submit your entries as early as possible. Want to find out more about the Prime Minister's Literary Awards? Visit the [website](#) or follow us on Twitter. Subscribe to the [PMLA eNewsletter](#) or to the [Office for the Arts eNewsletter, Art & culture stories](#).

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To download December 2011's edition of Writing Queensland magazine please copy and paste the following link into your browser:  
<http://www.qwc.asn.au/Portals/0/QWC%20Files/Writing%20Queensland/WQ%20issues%202011/wq%20dec%202011%20web.pdf>

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## **Chip's Computer Tips**

### **Capture Screenshots in a Flash with Windows' Snipping Tool.**

Want to save an image of what's on your computer screen? That's called a screenshot, and savvy users know that one tap of the **Prt Scr** key will copy the entire screen to the clipboard, where you can then paste it into the image editor of choice. (Even savvier users press **Alt-Prt Scr** to capture just the active window.)

That gets the job done, but I think there's a better way: the Snipping Tool. Built into Windows 7 (and some versions of Vista), it lets you capture a custom chunk of the screen, then mark up, save, and share that image. It's fast, simple, and free. How can you go wrong?

To get started, click the *Start* button, type **snip**, and then click *Snipping Tool*. The program will start "activated," meaning it's immediately ready for you to start snipping. (This dims your screen somewhat, which is normal, so don't freak out.) If you're not quite ready to "snip" yet, just click Cancel until you are.

Snipping involves clicking and dragging a box (which you'll see outlined in red) around the area of the screen you want to save. The moment you release the mouse button, that captured area will appear in the Snipping Tool window.

From there you can save the snip (in your choice of GIF, JPEG, PNG, or HTML formats), copy it to the clipboard, e-mail it, or add some basic notations using a pen and highlighter.

FN Karmatz

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Our **next meeting** on 15 December at Holland Park Library will be our last meeting for the year. It will have a Christmas theme. Please try to write a 'Christmassy' limerick if you can. A limerick has five lines and follows a recognizable rhyming pattern, something like this:

There once was a boy from Brazil  
Who thought he was terribly ill.  
Bit by a snake  
By the side of a lake  
He improved after he took a pill.

That was a clean limerick. They are often saucy in nature, so choose how you write your limerick with care... ☺

To join in a voluntary Christmas present exchange please contribute a gift suitable for either gender but don't spend more than \$10 on it. Don't wrap it either, as all gifts will go into a basket, selected at random, and will then be swapped with another.

Please bring along a small plate of food to share. To add to the Christmas spirit, some literary games are planned. We intend to have a good time and look forward to seeing all members there.

Please note our **first meeting** next year will be the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012. That's the **THIRD THURSDAY** of January. We look forward to seeing everyone then too.

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To view present and past editions of this newsletter visit [www.carindalewritersgroup.org](http://www.carindalewritersgroup.org)

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