

Carindale Writers' Group Meeting

23 September 2010

Start 9:30

Present: Beverley, Jeff, Marjory, Karen, Len, Lydia, Judy, Brian, Chip, Naomi, Dorothy, Gary, Leslee-Anne, Maria, Marilyn, Sandy, Shirley, Rebekah

Apologies: Pam, Heather, Richard, Nick, Dawn, Hazel, Debby

News/ challenges/ discussions/correspondence:

1. Project "Allshorts": Next meeting is the launch! It's come so quickly, and while for most of us it's seemed like an easy, and almost seamless process; I'm sure it's been a roller coaster ride for Bev, Lydia and Rebekah, which just goes to show how well they've organised it. What a talented bunch. In terms of marketing and PR, Lydia advised that the local press seem interested in our story, so hopefully we will get some exposure. Riverbend bookshop in Bulimba has also said they will take five copies and we're also approaching libraries to see if they will buy any. Desley will also be putting up a page on the website, so stay tuned for more information.

The Launch: So, as mentioned, the launch will be at our usual meeting on **Thursday 14**

October. As we practiced at this meeting, Rebekah and Dorothy will be leading us in a workshop on the critical response process. Now, a few things to remember for the day....

- In the interest of ensuring we're as organised as possible, can everyone please arrive at the library **spot on 9am** (in our usual meeting room), so we're all ready to start on 9:30am.

- Don't forget to bring your **plate of food along** for morning tea.

- Books will be on sale on the day for \$15. If you've ordered copies, don't forget to bring along your money to pay on the day. Jeff and I will be on hand, ready, willing and eager to collect!

2. Marjory mentioned that we may be able to have a launch event at the resort where she lives. She's going to look into this further and let Bev know. Thanks Marjory!

3. News: Unfortunately Dawn couldn't be with us today, but she did ask Bev and Shirley to pass on her most exciting news. She has an agent for her book and the contract has been

signed. Congratulations Dawn, so many best wishes from all of us and we hope to see you back at the next meeting. Oh my goodness, I've got little tears welling up in my eyes as I'm writing this!

4. Reminder: Karen reminds us of what a good idea it can be to give your internet provider a call to see if they have a better deal available. Cheaper plans with more downloads are often released, but you have to call to check. Thanks Karen.

5. We're Moving: Finally, some sad but also exciting news. As Bev mentioned in her email earlier in the week, after eleven years in the same meeting room, we've been informed that the library will be closing down on November 25 to make way for the new renovations at Carindale Shopping Centre. Until a new (and fabulous, so we've been told) library opens in 2012, there will be an interim library opening on November 29 near the Harvey Norman building towards the back of the shopping centre. Bev will be booking the interim meeting room for us, and while it will be a bit smaller, it'll just make our meetings that much more cosy! There is parking available, we're not sure how much, but as our meetings are early in the morning, hopefully we won't have too much trouble.

Feature Reader:

Jeff: "Fusilier of the Line"

Overview:

Following on from Jeff's last reading, we join the troops after their respite as they prepare for battle. On short rations and waiting for orders they pass a field hospital where they all witness the gruesome of effects war. Could this be what's in store for them?

Critique:

Jeff's reading was fairly short, and so we moved through the critique fairly quickly. Jeff was happy to hear general feedback.

First, it was asked what time of year the story is set. Jeff answered that it was November, with patches of rain. It was asked whether there wouldn't be more mud and bog and struggle as the ambulances carried patients to the field hospital. Jeff replied that even back in those days, the Germans were terribly efficient and the road systems were quite good.

Everyone seemed to love the battle descriptions as usual, but Leslee-Anne suggested that the last page of the reading had less reference to facial expressions and movement than the first two pages, which stilted the action a little bit.

Thanks for another trip back in time, Jeff.

Dorothy: The Byrd's Nest, Chapter 30: Charity Begins at Home

Overview:

Practicing for next meeting's critical response workshop, Dorothy continued the story of the dysfunctional Byrd family, set in North Sydney in 1948. In this chapter, Pauline and Deely continue to struggle with their Mother's manic depression.

Critique:

We kept the critique in line with the critical response feedback guidelines. The feedback was substantial and quite varied, so in the interest of keeping the newsletter to a readable length, I've summarised the most common responses.

Where did you find meaning in the story?

There was lots of feedback on this one, but the responses that came up the most were that it made a simple, ordinary life seem so beautiful with a sense of innocence and simplicity. It subdued the soul and reminded us of a better life in the past; capturing a bygone era.

Questions from Dorothy...

Is the Mother's character clearly defined? Does she come across as a kind person?

- The plate breaking on the floor sums up her character. The mother is as fragile as the plate and she's aware of her weakness. It's not that she's not kind, but she doesn't come across as kind either. Mostly it seems as if she's lazy and expecting too much of the girls.

Is it clear that the father is a man of few words? And that he wanted the boys to be disciplined?

- Yes. His personality doesn't come out much at all. It wasn't really pronounced that he wanted more discipline for the boys though.

Is the contrast between the two sisters shown?

- Yes, Pauline is strong and protective and Deely sticks to herself.

Does it give a glimpse into the socioeconomic situation of the era?

- Yes, especially with the inclusion of young Teddy coming to visit

Our questions to Dorothy...

Why didn't Teddy take his jacket off?

- It was something of his own, maybe the only thing he owned, like a security blanket.

What is the point of the chapter?

- It's to put an emphasis on the dysfunction of the family. Every chapter shows a development in one of the characters.

What is the conclusion you want readers to reach by the end of the whole story?

- That the children love their parents but they had to leave.

Is there a breaking point in this chapter?

- Yes, Pauline is starting to get more rebellious. It's an inkling of things to come.

Final Comments:

- The description of lemon edged clouds was just beautiful.

- Chip commented that Dorothy is usually spot on with characters but he wasn't sure about Teddy. Teddy is first described as an alley rat (someone who is typically quite shrewd) and then as being a bit slow, almost retarded. These two things contradict each other. Chip asks if Dorothy could draw attention to his lower education levels, rather than his brain function.
- A question about subtlety. Rebekah commented that Dorothy's writing is so capable of bringing subtle things to the surface but sometimes when we all ask questions she has more information than what is on paper which has made this chapter a little cloudier than others.
- It's clear that Pauline thinks she's strong, but Deely is really the strong one.

Other readers...

Chip: The Living Dead

Chip entertained us with 'The Living Dead', reminding us of the perils and pitfalls of our more 'convenient' and technologically advanced lifestyles. Someone suggested it should be called 'To Hell and Back'. Thanks Chip, observational comedy at its best. Brian followed with the story of an aspiring writer who falls on hard times with an ironic twist at the end. Marjory was next with a very clever play on friends you hate to love; it's a little scary to see how easily computers can be described as friends. Jeff was next with 'A History of the Royal Bastards'. As promised, I've had a look into the origin of the name 'Fitz' and apparently, (according to Wikipedia, which I'm not stating as correct) Fitz originally meant mean 'son of' and was later applied to the illegitimate children of princes. If anyone has any further information, please let us all know. Gary finished with a black comedy parody of George Orwell's Newspeak featuring a television show called 'Idiot Grin'.

Feature Reader for next meeting: Dorothy will be the feature reader next week as she and Rebekah lead us in a demonstration of the critical response process at the launch of Allsorts of Allshorts! Hurrah, and the crowd goes wild!

Exercise to work on if you have time: No exercise this week as the next meeting will be action packed with the launch.

**Until next time... happy writing everyone,
Naomi**

P.s. Don't stop here, Chips computer tips are next....

Now for Chip's Computer Tips

When in doubt, search by date

Despite what some of their creators might claim, search engines cannot, in fact, read your mind. As a result, their suggestions often fail to match what you had in mind or bury the right answer in a flood of less-relevant links. One simple way to steer around those problems is to look for a "search by date". Option--odds are, you remember roughly when you read the page you were

looking for, and poring over a chronologically-sorted list will be faster than retrying varying searches until you stumble upon a perfectly phrased query. Many sites offer such a feature on their internal searches; if they don't, they should. The major search sites, meanwhile, require a click or two to uncover a sort-by-date feature--or only an approximation of one. At Google, click the "Show search tools" heading at the left to uncover tools to limit searches to a particular time frame. At Yahoo, however, your only date-specific choices (available by clicking an "Options" link at the top right of a search-results page and choosing "Advanced Search") are options to show pages updated in the last three months, six months or a year. And Microsoft's Bing doesn't provide any sort of date-centric search.

Tracking-Cookie Surveillance

Here's a dirty little secret about the Internet: Though you may not pay a dime to use Facebook, search on Google, or watch YouTube videos, you pay in other ways. Every profile update, search query, or viewed video is an opportunity for these sites to bombard you with more advertising--and the more information the advertisers have about you, the more effective their targeting can be. Thanks to the tracking cookies embedded in almost all Web ads, advertisers know which Websites you're visiting, too.

Cookies can do useful things, such as saving your log-in and password information for certain Websites. But the banner ads you see everywhere are probably also sticking you with tracking cookies that report back to the advertising agency every time you go to a Website the agency advertises on. The resulting data doesn't contain your name or any personally identifiable information, but you probably don't want advertisers building up a history of your Web activity anyway.

Your browser can block these third-party cookies, though the option is not enabled by default. Here's how to activate blocking:

Choose *Internet Options* in the Tools menu, click the *Privacy* tab, and click the *Advanced* button. Check the *Override automatic cookie handling* box, and choose *Block* under the 'Third-party Cookies' heading.

Click the wrench icon in the upper-right corner, choose *Options*, click the *Under the Hood* tab, and click *Content settings*. From there, click *Cookies* and check *Block all third-party cookies without exception*. To remove any cookies that have been following you around, click the *Show cookies and other site data* button.

Choose *Options* from the Tools menu, and click the *Privacy* tab. From here, choose *Use custom settings for history* from the drop-down menu at the top, and uncheck *Accept third-party cookies*. Then click the *Show cookies button* to remove the ones you don't want to keep.

Third-party cookie blocking should be on by default. If it isn't, click the gear icon in the upper-right corner, choose *Preferences*, click the *Security* tab, and under 'Accept cookies' choose *Only from sites I visit*.