



Carindale Writers' Group Meeting

August 13th 2009

Start 9:30

Welcome to:

Present: Jeff, Annette, Gary, Judith, Bill, Chip, Brian, Leslee-Anne, Debby, Dawn, Richard, Nick, Beverley H, Io, Dorothy, Hilary

New Writer's Reading:

Although Bill cannot really be described as new to our group, this was his first reading. Bill is in the process of writing his family history, and, with a very large family (including 13 grand-children) Bill has a ready made audience for his work. I particularly enjoyed Bill's prologue to "Threads", as it revealed not only his motivation for writing the history but also his life philosophy, which will, no doubt, be appreciated by future generations of his family tree. Bill skipped over the chapters he felt the group might be bored with, which might have contributed to a disjointed reading had he not warned us before he began to read, but the parts he read provided wonderful vignettes into various aspects of his early childhood and our cultural history. Bill's writing has a sparseness of expression that he acknowledges may be due to his 'engineer's mentality', and this, to my mind is his unique writer's voice. As this is not Bill's final draft, he will no doubt flesh out some of the incidents he has written about, without destroying the personal touch that families are searching for in their ancestor's stories.

A couple of helpful hints for anyone writing in this genre came out of Bill's critique session. One was the importance of including a Chronology for the family tree so that readers can reference it back and forth as they read to get a handle on where everyone fits, and the other is to include a Glossary to define various out of date customs and machinery.

Thanks for sharing your writing with us, Bill. Please read more of it at another time.

Morning Tea: A scrumptious and very healthy morning tea was catered for by Dorothy. Loved those huge strawberries, Dorothy!

News/ challenges/ discussions/correspondence:

- It was a real treat for us to see Richard's newly published book. "Sons of Plato" has been published in hard cover, with a well designed, colourful cover illustration and a very handsome looking, absolutely impeccable photograph of the author on the back. It can be purchased via a link from Richard's webpage on our website and from various other online bookstores, including amazon.com. What was particularly humbling was Richard's mention of us in his 'acknowledgements' section. Thank you so much for your very kind words Richard, on behalf of the group and also from me. We all wish the book becomes a best seller in a very quick time. There's nothing like an 'overnight success' that has been worked for over many years...
- The other discussion was initiated by Brian who drew our attention to an article in The Australian newspaper where a publishing house was looking for submissions for collections of short stories. Brian wondered if they might be interested in publishing our (Great Aussie Jigsaw) immigration stories and suggested sending a copy of Leap in Time to show our abilities. Instead, we agreed to send a query letter first to gauge the interest and ascertain if the guidelines extended to a collection by a collection of writers. Brian very kindly offered to write the letter and I emailed it this week. The reply has come back since then and I include it for you to read.

Dear Beverley

Thank you for your enquiry regarding Long Story Shorts. Unfortunately, our guidelines specify the submission much come from a single author. However, if you are compiling the anthology regardless, please feel free to send it through to us as a general submission, as we are always seeking new material. I hope that answers your questions. Please let me know if you'd like more information.

Kind regards,

Rebecca

www.affirmpress.com.au

Feature Readers:

- Beverley H brought along her first draft for the project, which was read on her bequest by Leslee Anne. Entitled "Olive and Bread and Butter Pudding", the story had some nice allusions to childhood and memory.
- Debby read a smart and chirpy poem she wrote in 1977. I think the title was 'Upside Down Rhyme', but if not it could have been "On bed or on Floor" as that is most definitely the part that resonated with me. If you weren't there at the meeting, you won't know what you missed. Except to say the poem was written in the first flush of lust and Debby married the bloke involved (and is still happily married 35 years later I believe).
- Maybe it was the strawberries we ate for morning tea, because Brian's extremely well written short story also had an erotic bent to it. "Snobbery with Violence" certainly ended on a high note- or some might say that it hit bottom. Once again, you had to be there and I'm not going to be the one to talk outside of meetings. What is read there stays there... ☺

- Judith's story (oh dear, I was going to say was not of this ilk, but I just remembered one tiny part of it did contain just such a scenario...) was the latest version of her contribution for The Great Aussie Jigsaw. Stitched together with fact and fiction the story being written is based on research into the journey to Australia, as a convict, of her 5x removed grandfather. Judith's writing is always of a high standard as she goes to pains to ensure she gets it as perfect as she can present it – both with her writing and the research. Thanks for that, Judith.

The meeting concluded at 12:45 so that the kitchen and meeting room could be left spic and span. Dorothy has asked me to remind everyone to try to bring your own mug, and to wash up the cups and saucers you use if you don't. The next meeting is August 27th and I have readers Nick, Ian and Brian down as feature readers. If you have any writing dilemmas you want some help with, don't forget to bring this to the meeting and put it on the agenda.

Chips Computer Tips

1. If you are looking at a website and the type font is too small or large to read easily, you can shrink or expand it. Just hold down the control key and tap + or - as many times as you need to create the size of type you want. Try it and let me know what you think.

2. *How do I type special characters like the copyright symbol that don't appear on the keyboard?*

The easiest way is to copy them off a Web page or a document, then paste them into whatever you're working on. But you can also use tools in Windows and Mac OS X to generate these characters.

In Windows XP, go to the Start menu's All Programs menu, select Accessories, then System Tools, then Character Map. (In Vista, type "character" in the Start menu's search box.) Select the character you want, double-click it, and click the Copy button to have it ready to paste elsewhere.

In OS X, go to the Edit menu of most newer programs and select "special characters" then copy the character you want.

3. *If your computer has slowed down and you want to clean it so it runs faster, you might try the following:*

The Windows registry -- a fiendishly complex database-- can slow down a PC when too many uninstalled programs and leftover registry entries accumulate. But registry-cleanup tools have issues of their own.

If something goes wrong during a registry-cleanup session, you can be left with a broken or inoperative system. If you avoid that fate, overly aggressive defaults can cause other issues: One program I've recommended before is the free CCleaner; www.ccleaner.com. However, it can zap useful Internet data unless you adjust its settings.

And even if you do everything right in a program such as CCleaner or the [also well-regarded EasyCleaner](#), you [may not see much of a speedup](#) for your troubles. However, each will tell you how much it has cleaned up. A good practice is to clean up your computer weekly.

Continuing from last newsletter:

Extrapolated from: *The Art of Dramatic Writing* written by Lajos Egri: Touchstone Books; 2004. First edition 1942.

The bones of good character

Your guide to creating tri-dimensional characters: the bone structure the author must know to build believable characters.

Physiology

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Height and Weight
4. Colour of skin, hair, eyes.
5. Posture
6. Appearance: good looking, over- or underweight, clean, neat, pleasant, untidy. Shape of head, face, limbs.
7. Defects: deformities, abnormalities, and birthmarks. Diseases.

Sociology

1. Class: lower, middle, upper.
2. Occupation: type of work, hours of work, income, condition of work, union or non-union, attitude toward the organization, suitability for work.
3. Education: amount, kind of schools, marks, favourite subjects, poorest subjects, aptitudes.
4. Home-life: parents living, earning power, orphan, parents separated or divorced, parents' habits, mental development and vices, neglect. Characters' marital status.
5. Religion:
6. Race, nationality.
7. Place in community: leader among friends, clubs, sports.
8. Political affiliations,
9. Amusements, hobbies: books, newspapers, magazines etc...

Psychology

1. Sex life, moral standards
2. Personal premise, ambition
3. Frustrations, chief disappointments
4. Temperament: choleric, easygoing, pessimistic, optimistic
5. Attitude towards life: resigned, militant, defeatist.
6. Complexes: Obsessions, inhibitions, superstitions, and phobias.
7. Extrovert, introvert, ambivert
8. Abilities: languages, talents
9. Qualities: imagination, judgment, taste, poise
10. I.Q.

You need not mention most of these (including the physical). They should come through in the behaviour of the character, not in any expository material. (It is still 'show not tell'.) If you know what your character is in every detail, you will know what he/she will do in any given situation.