

The Write Stuff

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – August 2023

Who will be this month's guest speaker? Melaina Faranda.

Organised by our convenor Grahame Moore, Melaina comes all the way from England (ok, via the Byron Bay Writers Festival... 😊)

Here is an extract from her Bio: *'She has written over fifty Young Adult and Children's books, published nationally and internationally, by major publishers who keep swallowing each other to get bigger. That's the out-loud public google-it version of her writing career, but she's equally passionate about teaching and working with young people, helping to foster their creative talent, and be inspired by infinite possibilities. A highly engaging speaker, her workshops and presentations at literature festivals, writers' centres, and in schools throughout Australia, result in rave feedback and repeat-invitations.'*



Are we looking forward to meeting Melaina? Are we ever!

Last month's guest speaker: Ken Vernon



Some people have an almost unfairly eventful life. Visualise: born and bred in Australia, in 1970 Ken shot off to Africa on a stopover on a surfing holiday to Europe, then buys a motorcycle and rides back down Africa to South Africa. He ended up becoming a journalist in South Africa, covering for some 30 years the various wars in Angola, Namibia, the upheavals of changing from apartheid to independence in 1990, to Nelson Mandela's ascension from prison to government in 1994.

Ken lamented that, fiction is hard for him: "Because I'm a journalist, I'm anchored on facts" he said. The guts of his message is that to be successful, most authors need to have a core market - he calls it a niche market. "My first book was about an expedition to Mt Everest in 1996 I covered as a journalist which was very controversial. It was only after I wrote the book I serendipitously discovered that Everest was quite a big niche market" he said.

His book 'Everest'96' a story of the deadliest year in the history of climbing mt Everest, focuses on the worst of the Everest mountaineers: a man who turned out to be a charlatan and a conman.

Ken says books about Mt Everest are a good example of a niche market: "in the USA there are 250,000 people who will buy anything to do with climbing Mt Everest" he said. And here is a top-notch tip for you: did you know about Amazon's kindle unlimited? People pay per page. Yes, per page. [Click on this link.](#)

Referring to one of his other books ‘Last Shots of the Cold War’ Ken said he thought it had disappointing results because the book does not fall easily into a niche. Ken intends to re-launch it, changing the title from “Last Shots of the Cold War” to “Last Shots of the First Cold War (referencing the current Russia – China versus the Western world situation). “the title is good, the cover is good, the content is good - now I just need to find the right niche in which to market the book” he says.

Why you should have been there yourself:

Peter Loveday was very impressed with a course he recently attended: ‘Storytelling made easy’ by Michael Hauge, as well as a book ‘8 Ways to Bring Fiction to Life’ by Noah Lukeman and if you are interested in the Ukraine/Russia war: ‘The Russo-Ukrainian War’ by Serhii Plokyh. Both **Livia York** and **Jan Tarbuck** have completed another one of their books, just about ready to publish. **John Griffiths** and **yours truly** both had our stories published in this year’s Outback Anthology. **Megan Norris** will have a new book ‘**Look What You Made Me Do**’, a story about “the evil inflicted by vengeful fathers who have killed their own children simply to punish partners”. It is coming out in August. **Stacey King** provided her customary plethora of very handy tips. Here is one: **Booklinker** - it is a free tool to help you sell your creations and increase your earnings! Click on this link:

<https://booklinker.com/>

Ah, and you might want to follow up on the controversy about **Dark Emu** (by Bruce Pascoe). There is a documentary on ABC TV. [Click here](#).

There was much, much more. For example, did you know, as **Jan Kuperman** outlined, that you can list your books for sale on Pinterest? Sorry my friend: you should have been there!

This month’s challenge: Can you improve on that?

“... fair hair, perfect skin, deep blue eyes with a pleasing upturned nose in an oval face that was in no way pretty but possessed a strange, breathtaking attractiveness, very Parisian, her innocence and youth overlaid with a perceptible, constant, tough unconscious sensuality that begged to be assuaged.” James Clavell – Taipan

Found any special sentence or paragraph you have re-read three or four times just for the joy of it? **Send your entry as a photo, text, email or doc to helensvalewriters@gmail.com** (or simply reply to the email in which I sent you this newsletter).

Upcoming Writers Competitions

- a) [Maureen Freer Literary Competition](#) This is run by the Fellowship of Australian Writers Queensland (FAWQ). Max 2000 words, first \$300, \$200 2nd prize. **Closes 25th August 2023**
- b) [Ernestine Hill Memorial Short Story Award](#) Short Story – max 4000 words – Rural setting. \$1,000 first prize. Closes 21st October 2023.
- c) [Scribes Writers Prose Competition - 2023](#) Short Story – 1000 word limit, \$200 first, \$100 2nd prize. Closes 30th September 2023
- d) There are another 583 (last time I looked) competitions on reedsy.com – There must be one or two which suit you!

Last month's Member's Survey results

The participation rate was disappointing: The purpose of the survey was to find out what members would like to happen, don't like, want to change, particularly those who don't or cannot attend. As the survey (deliberately) was anonymous, we don't know who answered the call. But all but 3 of the respondents indicated that they attend every meeting; the remaining 3 selected one each of the other options. This indicates that most of respondents also are attending regularly.

We are acting on some of the requests, particularly to tighten up the meeting so we don't run out of time and everyone has a chance to speak if they want to. Convenor Grahame has acquired a bell! 😊. Other comments indicated that the writer thought the meetings to be "male dominated" (beg to disagree on that one!) to "longer coffee breaks and more chocolate biscuits" (that's why we go for coffee after the meeting!) and there was a request for playwriting tuition.

So, if you'd like changes, enhancements, or would like us to drop certain segments, please tell us! Simply reply to the email this letter was sent to you.

Who won the bottle of red? (AKA the May/June 100 words

competition). Before the July meeting, I sent out a numbered list of the 8 entries we received, so check your Inbox. It was **Number 7 – Maxine Chaseling! Congratulations!** Here is her story again:

The dinner was delectable, the wine expensive, while arousing glances and foot shagging ensured pure lust for dessert. Walking along the beach, moonlight bounces off the waves and not a soul in sight. Throwing caution to the wind, we run naked into the surf, squealing and laughing. Becoming one, to the sway and motion, floating in and out, feeling saturated, bliss.

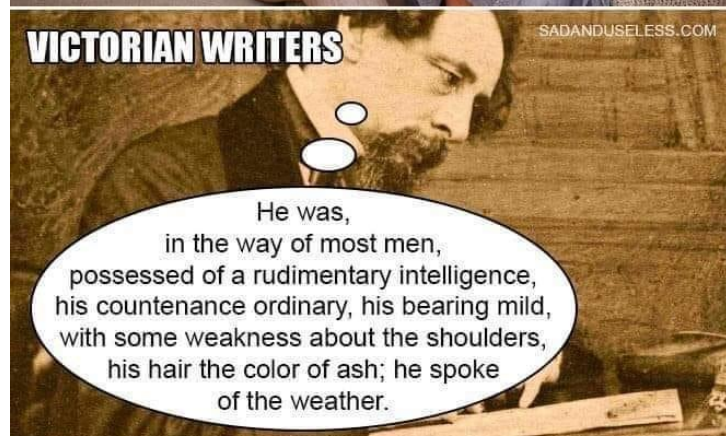
Suddenly a siren is screaming, drone spotlights are frightening and bright. A loud hailer "Security has located your position. We will save you!"

My husband of 50 years stands up, baring all and yells "Piss off you bloody drongos."

Maxine was politely asked to explain "foot shagging". No, it has nothing to do with a certain fetish. Sometimes it's also called 'playing footsie' (under the table).

The other authors were (not in order of beauty):

1, Grahame Moore, 2. John Griffiths, 3. Lynne Lloyd, 4. Franz Huber, 5. Livia York, 6. Peter Loveday, 7. Maxine Chaseling, 8. Stacey King.



August 100 Word competition: Murder.

Genre: Murder

The story must contain three words: **Statistic**, **Awesome** and **Chubby**. Derivations and plurals such as ‘statistically, statistics’, ‘chubbiness’ etc are permitted, but the story must be **exactly 100 words, including the title** (if any). Hyphenated words, such as ‘gray-green’ count as one. All entries must be submitted no later than 16th August (the day before our next meeting).

[Click on this link](#) to upload it, or simply reply to the email this newsletter was sent to you, type it in and I’ll upload it for you. If you don’t have access to a computer, take a photo of your (neatly) handwritten story and send it to me, either email or as a message – see phone number below.

This month’s meeting

The August meeting will be on 17th August 2023. Usual place and time: ground floor meeting room at the Helensvale Library, 10:00 am. Put it in your diary now.

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I asked the librarian if they had any books on Paranoia.

“They are right behind you” she whispered...