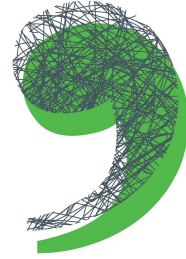


Members Enewsletter

NSW Writers' Centre Weekly Electronic Newsletter

Friday 27 January 2012



Member Story

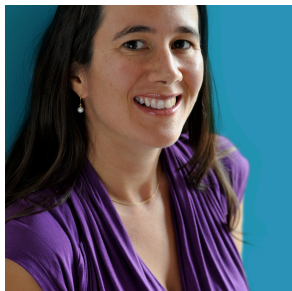
Writing in Isolation

by Zena Shapter

In July 2009, NSWWC's Jacqui Dent read a comment I made on one of the centre's course evaluation forms. Living in Manly Vale, without a car, Rozelle is a good 1½-hour bus journey for me... So I wanted to know if the centre would establish a writers' group on the Northern Beaches. The short answer was 'no'. But Jacqui added that she could help *me* establish one, if I wanted to...

With a two-year-old girl and a three-year-old boy at home with me *full-time* (oh joy!), and a freelance writing/editing business to run, I thought... hell, yeah! Why not?

Crazy though it seems in hindsight, my hard work soon paid off. You see, I didn't want a writers' group to give me support (it won't get you anywhere if your writing's rubbish), or inspiration (I had plenty of my own ideas). What I needed was to learn and improve – and you can't do that by writing in isolation (not easily anyway).



Mine, all mine!

Of course, writers' groups don't always help. I've heard the stories, experienced a few of them myself. Sometimes opinions can be just that – personal viewpoints based on no merit or experience. Sometimes writers can show you the error of your writing ways, but then cut you down emotionally. I once had a writer project their own insecurities and frustrations onto me so vehemently they made me think long and hard about giving up, both my writing and trying to lead other writers towards improvement. But then that was the beauty of establishing the Northern Beaches Writers' Group, or NBWG – I needn't let that happen to anyone else... because NBWG was mine, all mine. Bahahaha!

Publication!

For me, it worked too. Pre-NBWG, my stories were getting commended and shortlisted. But now they get first place and published. This year alone, my story *Trigger* was published in [Winds of Change](#) (Canberra Speculative Fiction Guild Publishing) and my story *Breakthrough* was published in [A Visit From The Duchess](#) (Stringybark Publishing). I also won both the 2011 Oberon Writing Competition and the 2011 Fellowship of Australian Writers Manly & Peninsula Short Story Competition.

What's next?

I don't think there will ever be an end to the learning and improving. There are some fantastic anthologies I'd love to get into, and of course I have a novel or few to publish! But an author once advised me not to rush your publishing journey since it's counterproductive to approach publishers with substandard work. Of course it's also counterproductive to procrastinate. One thing that's certain,



Zena Shapter



ZENA SHAPTER | blog

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... Writing in the p... which were posted about writing. The stuff of dreams - the 2011 MEMORIALS, December 10th 2011 (10:00 AM) - 10:00 AM

What should post-postmodernism mean to you? #ageofwhat
 Posted in [Occasions](#) and [Writing](#) on December 10, 2011 by zenashapter

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We're entering 'The Age of (What)'

After posting my blog "I have been chosen for fiction writing, so here they are" about the timeline struggle authors endure because of genre-conventions, one of my readers posted a very clever discussion point in reply, relating to the rise of urban fantasy.

I love a good urban fantasy story. At the same time, I don't believe I've read enough to know when urban fantasy first became popular, or why, or when might be the most significant urban fantasy authors. So I read myself shorting the rise of urban fantasy as a trend before responding to my reader. It was a very enjoyable experience (I link back to comment track), but it was the concept of it being trends that stuck with me long after I'd responded to my reader, and it occurred to me that multiple (or similarly themed) trends often grow and turn into cultural movements.

A cultural movement is "a change in the way a number of different disciplines approach their work". Famous cultural movements include the Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassical, Romanticism, Realism, Art Decoism, Modernism, Postmodernism and (since 1990) Digital postmodernism.

Now, 'modernism' began for Western society in the late 19th century, and, from what I understand, every cultural movement since has been classified

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though, is that getting critiques on your work is invaluable. When you have a young family, and your hubby's just started his own business, free critiques are even better! Thank you Jacqui ☺

The Northern Beaches Writers' Group meets once a month to exchange free critiques, writing knowledge and experience.

Zena Shapter is an emerging fiction writer and published author. She regularly tweets and posts writing hints, advice and inspiration for writers and readers alike; and blogs about contemporary book culture at zenashapter.com/blog. Read more about Zena and her writing at zenashapter.com.