

September Meeting:

7 p.m. Thursday, September 13 at the Old Y

September Speaker: Elona Malterre “On Plot and Pacing”

Born in France and raised in Calgary, Elona Malterre is a recipient of the Bliss Carman Award for poetry. She teaches literature and creative writing at Mount Royal College and is the author of two historical novels for adults: *The Celts* and *Mistress of the Eagles*, as well as a Young Adult novel, *The Last Wolf of Ireland*.

Welcome to the 2007-2008 Executive:

President – vacant

Vice President – Bernie Visotto

Treasurer – Marg Brick

Secretary – Anne Rothery

Membership – Peter O’Brien

Director-at-large – Shirlee Smith Matheson

Program Committee

- **Sherry Wilson McEwen**
- **Marilyn Lewis-Steer**
- **Davis Neave**
- **Shirlee Smith Matheson**

Library – Susan Calder Arnold

Website - Jayne Barnard

Reception – Bernie Visotto

Newsletter – vacant

Publicity – vacant

The art of the mystery...resides almost entirely in plot and character.

Plot-wise, a mystery must have a beginning, a middle, and an end; must have a traditional narrative arc, a denouement, must not be open-ended. Indeed, it is vital that the end ravel up threads which some crime has frayed into a tangle of misperceived motives and miscalculated actions

–and the raveling agent must be character; truth must spring inevitably from the who of each member of the cast. If it does not, if the solution to the mystery rests in some plot mechanism rather than the inevitability of character, the writer has cheated, and the reader has a right to be angry.

Betsy Burton, “The King’s English,” p. 86

The INK Library: A “Key” to Success

The INK library used to be small enough to keep at my home. Over the past few years, it has grown to 60 items, divided into four categories: Research, Fiction, Magazines and Audio. Most currently reside in the INK cupboard at our Old Y meeting place. Members can check them out during the meeting and return them the following month.

This summer for fun (seriously) I re-read one of our library research books: “The Key: How to Write Damn Good Fiction Using the Power of Myth” by James N. Frey. The premise of the book is that fundamental mythic storytelling techniques have continued to the present day. The modern hero is simply the mythic hero in new garb. The more “mythic” a story is the more it tends to resonate with readers. A perfect example is the super-successful Harry Potter series, which is almost a textbook application. While all types of novels can fit the mould, I think mystery novels are particularly suited. What is the sleuth, whether professional or amateur, but a hero who struggles against the odds to set the world right?

According to Frey, all stories begin with a call to adventure. In myths, the adventure is often a quest. A mystery may start with a PI being hired to solve a crime or an amateur finding a dead body. Either way, the sleuth leaves a world she’s familiar with to find the truth. Even the police detective solves a crime that is different from the ones he’s dealt with before and, therefore, worthy of a book.

The sleuth enters the mythological woods with its new rules, tests and trials. He may encounter archetypal characters like The Trickster, The Lover (who is also an antagonist), The Rival and, most importantly, The Evil One (the killer). The sleuth may face elemental fears (heights, dark places) or use modern magic (DNA, computers). The story usually culminates in a showdown (climax) with The Evil One. Before or after the showdown, the hero often experiences a symbolic death and rebirth. He returns to the everyday world changed.

These mythic motifs cross cultural boundaries and seem to be ingrained in our subconscious minds. While reading “The Key,” I was struck by how often I had, unknowingly, used these archetypes in my story. The trick is to make them fresh, not cliché. “The Key” also helped me solve a problem with the story climax. The showdown usually (although not always) takes place in The Evil One’s lair (the place the killer hangs out - his home, office etc.). I had set my showdown elsewhere. When I moved it to the killer’s lair, the climax worked.

“The Key” is just one of many valuable items in INK library. We have recordings of past meetings, members’ published fiction and more. For a complete list, check the website www.mysterywritersink.com. To request items or ask questions, you can e-mail me at susan.calder@shaw.ca.

Have a great year writing and reading.

Susan Calder, INK librarian

“Layers don’t come from subplots, but from additional problems in the protagonist’s life.” Donald Maass, editor and agent

Non-Ink Writing Classes and Learning Opportunities

University of Calgary Extension: Creative Writing – Online – with Barb Howard

This online course allows emerging fiction writers to hone their writing and editing skills through online discussion of each other's work and through analysis of published authors. You will develop and review two of your draft short stories or two chapters of your novel-in-progress. Traditional keystones of fiction, as well as current literary trends and issues, will be covered. Through instruction and feedback, you will enhance your skills and understanding of the fiction writer's craft. Prerequisite: Creative Writing I or comparable course, internet connection (high speed preferred). Access to basic information for learning online will be provided. **Course # 082768**

https://dciwasp.admin.ucalgary.ca/webapp/ce_course/?course=082768

Mount Royal College: Creative Writing Level 1 with Elona Malterre runs October 9 to November 27 (Tuesday evenings). For more information see <http://conted.mtroyal.ca/arts/crewrite.shtml>

Alexandra Writers Weekend Seminars of Interest for Ink members: Centre Society

Nov 9 & 10 - Submissions & Markets - Faye Reineberg Holt

Hours: Friday 7 to 9 pm. Saturday 10 am to 4 pm

Fee: \$70 members - \$85 Non-Members

Additional \$5 materials fee payable at registration on Nov 9.

This extended version allows more time for exercises and discussion! Faye will discuss current market trends, useful websites, query letter and submission standards, and networking. Visit her website at www.wordsandhistory.ca

Nov 17 - Back to Basics: Character Boot Camp - Vicki Chatham

For Intermediate or Advanced Writers

Extended Hours: 9:30 am to 4:00 pm

A fast-paced workshop of character development, from choosing an effective name to making that character "ring true" throughout your novel - particularly important if your goal is to develop a series. Resource hand-outs included.

For more on AWCS courses – both continuing and weekend – see their website at <http://www.alexandrawriters.org/>

Blogs by mystery writers and other industry insiders:

Poe's Deadly Daughters : This blog's myriad mystery writer contributors include Ink charter member Sharon Wildwind, whose published novels began with 'Some Welcome Home' in 2005 and continued with 'First Sunday in Advent' in October 2006. Her next novel in the series, 'Soldier on the Porch' is due out in October 2007. <http://www.poesdeadlydaughters.blogspot.com/>

Mysterious Matters: This blog by an anonymous editor at a smaller US mystery publishers' posts periodic essays on topics such as "Bigger [publisher] = Better?" and "Petting Some Peeves" (about, obviously, this editor's pet peeves as seen in submissions). Essential reading for writers ready to submit their precious manuscript to just such an editor. http://mysteriousmatters.typepad.com/mysterious_matters_myster/

Contests and marketing opportunities:

List of links to mostly American contests, mostly in the short-story format. But not always... http://www.crimeandsuspense.com/contests_opportunities.htm

The Writers' Circle of Durham Region (Ontario) has detailed listings for Canadian contests in a variety of formats. Updated frequently. <http://www.wcdr.org/wcdr/?cat=8>

Good News:

Congratulations to Ink Alumnus and Charter Member Sharon Wildwind, whose third mystery novel, *Soldier on the Porch*, is coming out October 17th from Five Star Press (since Five Star is

primarily a library-oriented publisher, this book won't show up on local bookstore shelves until it comes out in paperback in a few years' time; you'll need to order the book online or via your favourite local bookseller to read it sooner).

Ink Librarian Susan Calder Arnold has a poem "Fish Creek" which will appear in the fall issue of The Prairie Journal.