

Sheila Bender Talk Sept 6 2014

Willamette Writer's Association meeting, Central Point.

<http://writingitreal.com/>

Here are the slides from Sheila's talk: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0Bxep-TsBtrYOamUwN0tHb0xFZ28/edit?pli=1>

Writing is a superb way of being alone with yourself

In reading, people and authors are searching for the experience of living

Joseph Campbell – if you give the reader the experience of the story through their five senses they will think they are you. We say searching for meaning of life but we really mean the experience of living.

In writing, you relive what you lived but on the page.

3 PHASES of writing a novel (the three multiple personalities of the writer):

Inventor, mad scientist creating mesh of details – you must spit the story OUT to see it and be able to shape it

Shaper takes the pile of words and applies form to it

Editor loves to be in charge, went to school and got an A. The only externally recognized one of the three personalities. (No degrees in mad scientist and shaper.)

You must talk kindly to the editor so they it won't take over too soon. Your mastery of editing keeps you from the inventing and shaping stage... want to feel you are good at something yet when you write you don't know what you are doing because you're inventing a completely new world. Inventing is HARD and disorienting, you won't feel good because it's not a skill you have yet mastered.

There are two questions a piece must deal with, outer and inner.

OUTER QUESTION to which time can bring an answer – purpose not to relate details

INNER QUESTION – timeless, for which seeking an answer is imperative. Question the writer is grappling with, reader will need to know answer before she feels book is complete.

Write toward answers you don't know

Engage with reader thru senses

Specifics – want to read the experience of living something

Don't worry stick to the 5 senses

OUTER QUESTIONS

What is future of world society?

Why don't humans work together?

RELYING ON SPECIFICS

Play the LIKE game with your similes.

Abantu – African tribe using this verbal tradition game.

Sound of elephant tusk cracking is LIKE voice of my angry mom

Slow down psychological time

Images => meanings => you are transformed

If you create images via the senses, it leads to meaning for the reader. If they can empathize with your character's experience, they will follow her transformation.

Feelings vs. discourse: People are more alike in their feelings than in their thinking. Argument and persuasion lets you show that what you know is different. This can put you at odds with your reader, they try to out-think you, or your character. Non-empathetic.

Expressing your character's feelings provides common ground. Your reader cannot 'out-feel' you, there is no mechanism for that. They allow their senses to inform them about the content of your character. Then you can invite them to go with you.