

Real Writer

Someone asked me the other day if I was a real writer. I said I didn't think so. A real writer in the past would have smoked a pipe and possibly lived in a castle. Or at least in a mountain-top aerie, away in a far off land. In modern times, a real writer might live half way up a concrete canyon in Manhattan. He would wear a presentable cardigan sweater as he sat at his computer. I have a cardigan sweater and I wear it on cold days when my wife allows it, but not if company is coming. It's pretty ratty. But it's always been special to me since a nice older lady on the street put a quarter in my hand while I was wearing it. I tell folks it taught me humility, but what it really said to me was there are lots of different ways to make money.

Of course I don't live in a castle. I live in an old house on a country road. It's not as old as a castle and we have central heat and indoor plumbing. I've always been pretty fond of indoor plumbing and wouldn't want to be without it. It's such a long walk across the back field to the woods that I don't think I'd get very much writing done without at least a half bath. King Arthur could use the castle window, but my wife would be aghast if I tried that.

Real writers begin their task by constructing an outline, often before writing the first sentence of the story. I usually write the last sentence first. Or begin somewhere in the middle. Or just think about it all day. Real writers limit their expository paragraphs, check their facts, use that Thessa thing and a dictionary. Some proceed to write in a straight line. But I never check anything and don't know what I'm talking about most of the time. No one ever corrects me. My facts are either flawless or simply convincing. Or I don't have any readers.

Real writers have an editor to spruce up their prose. I read my stuff to my wife's dog and usually don't get an argument from her. I thought twice before writing the last sentence because I don't want to be accused of animal mental cruelty. I've always had a feeling the damned dog wouldn't testify favorably on my behalf. Tapioca envies any attention I get from my wife and she follows me everywhere, as if her assignment was to watch me like a hawk. She's not much of an editor, however.

For a Golden Retriever, she's barely literate.

Real writers use proper punctuation and don't write run-on sentences. I don't know anything about punctuation but I just love run-on sentences because they're so efficient and I don't need to add extra pronouns or think up synonyms to avoid repeats and I can forget all those silly rules that Sister Clementia taught me back in fifth grade and better known writers than me don't seem to worry about it so why should I.

Real writers are famous. Now, there I come closer to the definition. For I am indeed famous, if only a tiny bit. I take my articles down to the copy shop and have hundreds made. At one time I stuffed them in the mail boxes of unsuspecting residents up and down the road. I stopped the practice after a run-in with the U.S. Postal Service. Last week I decided to hand deliver my masterpieces by knocking on doors. I reckoned each visit would be an opportunity to converse with a neighbor who for reasons unknown no longer spoke to me. Tapioca mulled it over and decided to come along.

Hardly anyone answered their door, even though sounds of life were often evident from within the house. A few did greet me, however, including Mrs. Grant, who opened her door naked and drunk, evidently thinking it was Halloween. She wore only a wizard's hat and carried a tray of Halloween candy. In her inebriated state, she pronounced a sentence or two with one long slurring sound. It reminded me of something else real writers are known for. Typos.

"I believe you've forgotten your Magic Robe, my Ladyship," I said with grace and aplomb.

Her eyes widened and she glanced down. Tapioca huffed a dog laugh. Mrs. Grant raised and lowered the tray as she tried to decide what to cover. I did not know a person could blush from stem to stern. She raised a foot and an orange painted toenail pushed the door closed.

I called out, "Sorry to have disturbed your bath, ma'm." From inside came a tittering, then an exploding laugh. Tapioca and I looked at each other. I thought to ring the doorbell once more, but resisted. That damned dog follows me everywhere.

copyright by David Griffin, 2007, 2013

The Windswept Press

Murrells Inlet, South Carolina

www.windsweptpress.com