

**SPECIAL
POINTS
OF INTER-
EST:**

- **Dick and Tom have something to say? About the people of LM? Check it out inside...**

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Pie From the Sky

I'd like to kick off this month's newsletter by officially welcoming Rooze to the position of Administrator.

It was only a few months ago that I encountered Roozie Poo in my Poetry class. I walked in all shy, and there she was sitting in the front row, and I sat down near her but not quite by her, across the aisle. Little did I know that she had already planted the seed of friendship in my heart.

Is that not the sweetest story ever? Anyway, some of you might think Rooze has only been promoted because she's my friend. Not so. Actually, Rooze has an excellent background on the internet designing websites. She also logged more time than me on the forum just from the time she joined. I was like dayum. This girl's hooked. She's way more diplomatic and professional than I am also,

but I think that's why you guys love me more than her.

Another thing about Rooze, is she has an extensive relationship with Mac computers. That will come in very handy when we start putting the print version of LM together. So yah, basically I'm using her. She likes it that way though,

Also, we've had a lot of controversy at the site lately about whether or not we're growing too soft on critique, or perhaps that our critique is not constructive enough. There's even been mention that we're becoming too much like- gasp- WritingForums.

When LiteraryMary was started, the intention was to create a site with a sense of humor which was strong on the workshopping constructive criticism end of things rather than a vanity site where people simply posted cuz thr friend thot

it wuz kewl etc.

To address these concerns, you will now find Critique Rules and Guidelines at the top of each Creativity forum. I would appreciate it if each member would have a look at them and get to know what we prefer as far as critiquing work and receiving critique on your own work goes. We're going to start calling you on that shit and you know we've just been itching to pants someone.

Oh and also one more fun thing. There are some new contest sort of things going on in Poetry and Fiction thanks to J.R. MacLean, strangedaze and ckm. Check it out, yo.

kkthx
vodka

Quotes About Writers and Writing

From *Quotable Quotes*

I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by. - Douglas Adams

You know how it is in the kid's book world; it's just bunny eat bunny.

- Anonymous

Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret.

- Matthew Arnold

No one suggests that writing about science will turn the entire world into a model of judgment and creative thought. It will be enough if they spread the knowledge as widely as possible.

- Isaac Asimov

It took me fifteen years to discover I had no talent for writing, but I couldn't give it up because by that time I was too famous.

- Robert Benchley

Why do writers write? Because it isn't there.

- Thomas Berger

He was such a bad writer, they revoked his poetic license.

- Milton Berle

PROOF-READER, n. A malefactor who atones for making your writing nonsense by permitting the compositor to make it unintelligible.

- Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

And as to experience--well, think how little some good poets have had, or how much some bad ones have.

- Elizabeth Bishop

Being a poet is one of the unhealthier jobs--no regular hours, so many temptations!

- Elizabeth Bishop

A best seller was a book which somehow sold well simply because it was selling well.

- S. Boorstein

In science there is a dictum: don't add an experiment to an experiment. Don't make things unnecessarily complicated. In writing fiction, the more fantastic the tale, the plainer the prose should be. Don't ask your readers to admire your words when you want them to believe your story.

- Ben Bova

First, find out what your hero wants, then just follow him!

- Ray Bradbury

Beware of self-indulgence. The romance surrounding the writing profession carries several myths: that one must suffer in order to be creative; that one must be cantankerous and objectionable in order to be bright; that ego is paramount over skill; that one can rise to a level from which one can tell the reader to go to hell. These myths, if believed, can ruin you.

If you believe you can make a living as a writer, you already have enough ego.

- David Brin

Either a writer doesn't want to talk about his work, or he talks about it more than you want.

- Anatole Broyard

Don't explain why it works; explain how you use it.

- Steven Brust

Literature is all, or mostly, about sex.

- Anthony Burgess

I have been successful probably because I have always realized that I knew nothing about writing and have merely tried to tell an interesting story entertainingly.

- Edgar Rice Burroughs

If you write one story, it may be bad; if you write a hundred, you have the odds in your favor.

Edgar Rice Burroughs

The reason 99% of all stories written are not bought by editors is very simple. Editors **never** buy manuscripts that are left on the closet shelf at home. - John Campbell

I believe more in the scissors than I do in the pencil.

- Truman Capote

Everybody walks past a thousand story ideas every day. The good writers are the ones who see five or six of them. Most people don't see any.

- Orson Scott Card

My own experience is that once a story has been written, one has to cross out the beginning and the end. It is there that we authors do most of our lying.

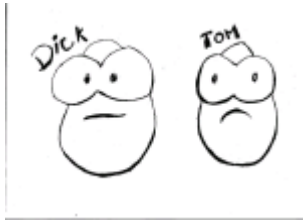
- Anton Chekhov

It is perfectly okay to write garbage--as long as you edit brilliantly.

- C. J. Cherryh

Put down everything that comes into your head and then you're a writer. But an author is one who can judge his own stuff's worth, without pity, and destroy most of it.

- Colette



Dick and Tom

The LM News Channel

TOM - DUM DE DUM DUM DUM DUM

DICK - What the fuck are you doing?

TOM - We're doing the news. Like they do on the telly.

DICK - They usually have a sophisticated chap, that's gonna have to be me, and a tarty lady.

TOM - Why you looking at me?

DICK - Just go and get that dress on you wore when you was Mrs Thatcher. - My, that was quick.

TOM - I wore this outfit yesterday when I went shopping. Still not sure the handbag matches.

DICK - No one will see the handbag. Let me look, do a twirl. Mmm, you need make-up. Use some tomato relish from last week's burger for lipstick. Still lacking something Tom.

THUMP! THUMP!

TOM - What you punched me for?

DICK - Eye make-up.

TOM - I could have used mascara.

DICK - My way's quicker. We've gotta get this gig done before the pub shuts. Anyway last time you used a mascara pencil it was stuck in yer eye for a week.

TOM - Only 'cos you jabbed it in there.

DICK - Yeah, it had to be done. I can never resist a little joke, you know that. You look ... um ... um ... how can I put this?

TOM - Sexy

DICK - A fucking state Tom. Never mind it will have to do. Let's do this.

TOM - DUM DE DUM DUM
DUM DUM

DICK - DUM DE DUM DUM
DUM DUM

DICK - Here's the LM news brought to you by me; Dashing Dick and Tart Face Tomasina.

TOM - Our cat Mankie's been sick.

DICK - That's hardly news Tom.

TOM - No, he has been sick, look. He's done the little backwards dance and blurg blurg blurg thing.

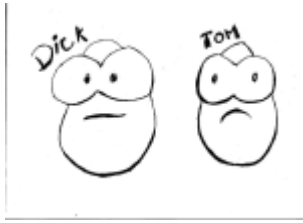
DICK - It's only a fur ball. We'll dry it out

and send it off to Mr Jaunty he collects them, I think he's saving up for a poet's beard.

TOM - In the news this month Miss Rooze has been made a big boss and shares big knickers with Miss V. A LM spokesperson called Hodge, who wanted to remain a-nony-mouse, said that the official version of cash strapped LM needing to gusset share was rubbish and the staff just wanted some tacky pics to sell on the internet.

DICK - Also in the news this month; Miss Hawke had cause for celebration although I'm still waiting for my birthday snogs. She vigorously denies that she has started stealing used tea bags, wearing purple, and keeping cats in her handbags claiming her youthful prettiness will shine for many years to come yet and so the men-o'-paws ain't nowhere in sight; however, in my investigative manner I've sneaked into Miss Hawke's dressing room and she has got purple knickers. I've got them in my pocket for proof! There was other birthdays, no doubt, but we've got no interest in them 'cos Miss Hawke is lovely and there's no way I want a birthday snog from Hodge.

TOM - Dannyboy is wanted by LM police in connection with a puppet kidnapping. Pinnocchio was last seen making a macramé pet grasshopper when he dis-



Dick and Tom

The LM News Channel

appeared. Mr Galivanting, or Chief Inspector (I got a badge from me Christmas cracker) Galivanting, as he likes to be known, said dannyboy is believed to be the last person to have seen Pinnochio and is wanted for questioning to eliminate him from the inquiries. Dannyboy was last seen round the barby with loads of tinnies - what ever that means.

DICK - Mr Strangedaze went to Paris. That's in France.

TOM - What he do that for?

DICK - I don't know. They talk weird there. They make it all up as they go along so no one can understand them. And get this; it's la table, like it's a lady table, or you get lady chairs and stuff.

TOM - What do chaps sit on?

DICK - Le arse. French ladies have mens' bums. And they eat frogs legs and snails so they can hop, le hop, in slow motion. I'm telling yer Tom it's odd there. Like it's another country of something.

TOM - How do you know all this?

DICK - I bumped into that stinker Pepe le

Phew down the pub and he was off his face snorting garlic bragging about le cock and le balls. He told me stuff that would make you la gulp and la swallow.

TOM - Lots of new faces joined the ranks of LM this month.

DICK - Yeah, but Chief Inspector (I got a badge from me Christmas cracker) Galivanting suspects they maybe illegal immigrant poets looking for somewhere to lie low until the heat is off. He thinks there maybe a link to the growing trend of black-market poems being sold on the quiet boards like the stage play and lyric forums. He also thinks that doughnuts count as one of your five-a-day vegetables.

TOM - In sport this month Ruben will face a disciplinary committee on charges of match fixing. The tiddly winks championship match between Ruben and Hodge had to be abandoned after Hodge couldn't find his tiddly and was unable to wink. Tests showed that Hodge had been doped with large amounts of Belgian chocolate.

DICK - And finally the fluffy story.

TOM - Eh?

DICK - You always have to end on a fluffy story, like little puppy dog rescued

from a cracked house, or kitten untangled from ball of wool.

TOM - Have we got one?

DICK - No. We can just say that Miss V. is lovely and can we have our beer money now please.

TOM - What if she says no.

DICK - We've got the gussetgate pictures Tom.

TOM - La gusset gate.

DICK - Abso-bloody-lutely.

So it's goodbye from me, Dick. And it's goodbye from him, er, her, Tomasina.

TOM - Goodbye.



India: Home of the Broken Computer —By Pete

I spent five hours on the phone over the past two weeks talking to people from India about computer problems. They said their names are Bob or Carol or Edwin, but I'm not really that gullible.

I'll admit, sometimes I'll fuck with them and ask them what they had for lunch. They'll usually answer they haven't eaten yet (it's two o'clock in the morning there). I might even mention that I ate a particular animal they consider sacred, but I'm sure Bob or Carol or Edwin would understand.

Not that there is anything wrong with India. I'm sure it's a nice country (even though you can't get a good steak) and the people seem OK, it's just not here and let's face reality. Americans are very self righteous and intolerant of other societies. It may be that we make so many exceptions to welcome all the different people of the world to our society, that one more change makes us go nuts or something.

So India is fine with me, I just don't want to talk to its inhabitants every time my computer breaks. They have this bizarre, barely understandable accent (I do too) that runs together in a lyrical mush of words. But they answer the phone, so; what happened was my laptop screen went dark. The screen went blank and I couldn't see anything.

I called them up and the woman "Betty" (wink) asks me to take a "torch" and hold it up to the computer screen. WTF! I asked her if she wanted me to go find some angry villagers and ask to borrow a "torch"?

Or I could get my oxy-acetylene and burn

a big hole in it if she wanted. She then explains that she is from India and "torch" means flashlight.

No shit! I can just see some asshole in the Ozarks burning up his PC while the smell of burning plastic fills the house.

"Well, You said so."

So we figure out the backlight is burned out and even though I only have 47 days left on my warranty, it's still covered. She then starts on the spiel to sell me an extended warranty for \$349.00.

She goes on to tell me it will cover me if I drop my laptop or if I spill a drink on it.

I asked her if it covers some asshole from the Ozarks burning a hole in my screen with a blowtorch. (Later they admitted there was an extension available for \$99.00 that covered the hardware, which I purchased.)

I also tell her if I bought a piece of crap like this to begin with, then I deserve to lose my shirt.

They are sending a box for me to package up my laptop. God knows what the address will be.

So that's where the old story left off and then,

My laptop would turn off at odd times for no reason. Just power down like someone turned off a switch usually in the middle of a story.

So after reseating the ram, reseating the hard drive, replacing the power source, checking the hard drive for errors, running a battery check, performing multiple virus scans and reloading my operating system, they said they think it's the motherboard.

Wow, there's a news flash. There's nothing left in there you friggin' idiots.

So they send me another box for my PC. I ended up buying the extended warranty for \$99.00. Included in the box was a nice little instruction sheet with pictures that show you how to send your pc back. The third picture down on this sheet (which was revised in 05 / 2007) showed a bodiless hand putting a power supply into the box. I was pretty sure that they didn't want my power supply unit and so I called them to be sure.

After five minutes on the phone and one guy telling me, "We did not take your power unit, sir!" I finally got through to the service department.

I asked the guy if he wanted the power supply. He said no. I asked him why they (I understand he is as far removed from "they" as a Jovian moon, but it's the principle) would send out a picture of someone's hand putting in the box.

He told me, "That there would be no problem if I wanted to return the power supply and if the company had lost it they would replace it."

"Wouldn't it be easier if you sent out a picture without the power supply in it?" I asked.

"I don't think you need this picture now sir, I would happy to help you in sending this unit back."

After the bleeding stopped from banging my head against the wall, I told him that wouldn't be necessary.

I wonder if I still have that guy with the blowtorch from the Ozark's phone number.

Ping Pong!

October 2007

Trent: Yea sure whenever ya want.

G.K: Ok, I just had to lose a game real quick.

So, I see your name is Trent. I think that's a really cool name. It's nice to know you Trent.

Trent: Meh I dont like my name but its cool that you think its cool, nice to know ya too Glenda.

G.K: Haha, now that we have all the name calling out of the way, how about a chat?

Trent: Sure... I think that's the whole point of this ping pong thing but I'm not sure ^^

G.K: I see you like to write mostly poetry, and I went to your photos too. You do have a nice face, even in a rear view mirror.

Ah, I don't think anyone is really sure exactly how it works, but since it is supposed to be an interview format, I sent you those eight questions and I just printed a copy here. You can ask me anything except how much I weigh.

Trent: Haha, ok. well I read those questions but they felt like home work so i decided id just try to wing it, hope ya don't mind.

I'll go pull them up and answer for ya so we can make this nice and easy.

G.K: Ok, but do you mind if I ask a form of the questions. I feel you on the homework. I just got my Bachelors degree about two years ago, or has it been one. One I think. I'm not sure I even know my own name half the time.

Trent: Yea trading questions is proolly

the best way to go bout this.

G.K: They are loaded questions you know. Put the buckshot in myself.

You want to ask first or answer first?

Trent: Answer first. So I can ask off your question.. I'm much better at that ^^

G.K: Ah, see its not homework at all, you can even look off my paper for your own stuff. Pass this test easy, we will. Says master Yoda.

Trent: Haha I did that with homework anyway

G.K: Ok, the first question was: If we go by the rule of being as honest as possible in our answers, do you feel that what we say here will be of value to other writers now and in the future?

Trent: Well... that would be nice wouldn't it. Knowing me there will be some small bits of wisdom in this conversation filled with lots of random stupidity. But we do have you, so that ups our chances a bit of being of value. That's the best non answer I can give you. ^^

As for a real answer... no not really the internet is filled with so much stuff this will be lost along side it but it doesn't mean we cant make the best of it.

G.K: Cop out. He he, If your depending on me for a lot of wisdom and knowledge, disappointment is in the air. But, I do hope that we can help at least one person feel more comfortable anyway.

It only takes one doesn't it

Trent: Yes only one, but how can we make that one person feel more comfortable ^^

G.K: By letting them see how we stumble through and still get it done. LOL

No, I think what I wanted to discuss tonight with you is a topic that hits everyone on the forum.

Trent: Which is?

G.K: Critiquing and how variables of age, gender culture, and so forth affect the outcome of critiques for people on the forum.

Loaded with buckshot, I warned you. Are you ready?

Trent: Yea gonna take a sec to type the response ^^

G.K: Ok, that's fine.

Trent: No idea what happened there

Somehow closed the whole thing down

G.K: looks like you got disconnected for a sec. I waited.

Trent: ok gotta retype lol

G.K: Ok, I'll wait more, dumm, humm, dee, dummm,

Trent: I think age isn't so much the issue with critiquing as experience is, with writing its a constantly developing skill so the longer you have been writing the more you know. of course i totally could be wrong there. as for gender, and culture... i think the variance in the kinds of people critiquing helps you get a better idea of which

Trent vs. GK

ways you can go to improve and for who

Trent: what do you think about the same question?

G.K.: Well, I think you're mostly right about experience. Writing is about what we experience and how we process it and communicate it isn't it? So whatever our age, gender and culture, we are going to color what we write with that.

When I took writing courses in college, there were two words that always applied: sender and receiver.

I think that the most important question is do you feel that critique and sharing between writers has a lot of value, if so what?

Trent: Yes I think it has a great deal of value. Without it I probably wouldn't be writing right now and certainly not progressing with my skills as a writer. so I think it gets people writing more than they might if they were just writing for themselves and close friends and improving their skills

G.K.: That's probably a feeling shared by nearly every writer on the forum. I sometimes learn more from critiquing others on how to improve my own that I do from just blindly writing and never looking at what anyone has to say about what I write. And I love getting critiques.

G.K: Did that make any sense? It looks a little weird now that I typed it. I forgot my punctuation again.

Trent: I seem to forget mine... all the time ^^

Trent: but yes that made sense

G.K.: Ok, good. I guess your getting used to the way I write.

Well, you somewhat answered the age question, but can you think of any times when you felt you identified more with writers from your own age group?

Trent: well actually I have never felt like I identified with anyone my own age group.. But if I do with anyone it would be the writers. I'm an odd case when it comes to that though, I think.

Can i think of a time specifically? no. sorry for the non answers.. I'm a master of them ^^

G.K.: You're not the first person to say that. I know when I was younger, there were times that I felt my own age group didn't understand me. I think we all tend to gravitate to people with similar thought processes and interests.

My daughter and sis just came in to raid my back porch. They just left. I have a revolving door almost. LOL

Trent: I think the whole writing game for a lot of people is needing to communicate to people what is going on in their head. so that like you said they can find people with similar thoughts processes and interests

G.K.: So, do you think your family is as goofy as mine. No that's not the question. So you don't think age has much of anything to do with reception, but more ideas and experience. I'd have to agree for the most part, except that there are differences in what each generation experiences. Sometimes, what an old lady like me would write about is outdated to some of your generation. Style is always changing, and keeping up with that is a tough one for me.

How about culture. For instance someone from the U.K. reads your poetry, which does happen. Do you ever find that what you write is a way to help them learn about your culture and visa versa?

Trent: I do not see it from what i write but with others, yea most certainly. a few times I've written about the south and i felt as though I was letting people into the feelings the south can bring but i tend to slap those lofty thoughts down pretty quick

G.K.: Why lofty. I'm sure that we all have things about our own cultures that we feel are sharable. Don't you think you're able to put some kind of image in their mind of your way of life?

Trent: well I think I'm able to, but I don't think I have ever done it in the correct way. In fact I think you have made me want to write a poem focusing on just this.

G.K.: Well good for me. I hope you do, you come from a beautiful state. I know one example I can think of is J.R.'s "The Cairn". There was something about that piece that just drew me right there into those coastal areas, even when I had to look up some of the words to see what they meant.

Have you ever felt from a critique that someone was just not getting what you were communicating? The old language barrier thing?

Trent: of course... I think we all have. of course sometimes you get the guy that over thinks your metaphor and makes it better than it was in your mind. I always just smile and nod when that happens ^^

Ping Pong!

October 2007

G.K.: Oh, lord, I have run into those a lot of times. I tend to write some controversial pieces sometimes. Sometimes I use a bit too much metaphor. That's when someone can really tear my work up and make me rewrite, and edit and rewrite. But, it's all worth it in the end.

Do you have a favorite piece that you have written?

Trent: I tend to say my most recent is my favorite (which is "a lifetime for a night" currently) just to make things easy but I don't tend to pick favorites because when I see them they are all so imperfect to me.

Do you have a favorite of your work?

G.K.: Our own worse critics. I love your work.

I think, wow, if I had to pick a very favorite, it would probably be an older one called "Afternoon by the Lake". At least that one comes to mind today. It's a very restful piece for me to meditate on. I get to go back to the lake.

So, are you a city person or country?

Trent: I have always lived in the middle... but I tend to enjoy myself more in the country than I do in the city.

G.K.: I'm so country I stink of cows and pigs.

Flip side, is there anything in particular you'd like to discuss or ask me about?

Trent: Well one thing I'm always curious to hear from writers is what in particular got you started writing... if anything

G.K.: Sorry same daughter just called.

Trent: No problem

G.K.: Well, I used to hate to read when I was little, but I memorized a lot of scripture for church. I always loved the sound of verse, and we used King James. But, anyway, I finally got to where I was a voracious reader, and in sixth grade we were supposed to write a poem. The poem I wrote caught the teacher's eye and she called my mom saying they had finally found my talent. Believe me that was hard back then. I was so damn shy and stuff. Anyway, I just started writing stuff and people kept telling me I had a way with words. Since then, I just write. I love it. And I love to read and learn and study. I even love research. Weird huh. From a dumb bell to a compulsive college course taker.

What about you?

Trent: Well for me I had always liked poetry in school and would read the poems in the English books until I memorized them, then in my 11th year I was failing English so bad that I quit taking tests, I had more pressing issues on my mind at the time, so when I sat in class I called myself writing songs. one time I wrote one of these songs on the back of a test and the teacher took it up and read it and was just completely in awe that I would even consider writing I think and told me she liked it and all that as any good teacher does, all about the encouragement, but it was enough to make me actually enjoy writing so I just kept writing from then on. It helped me deal with all the stuff going through my head at the time so I just stuck with it.

G.K.: Boy, I hear you there. Writing helps keep the demons quiet doesn't it?

Trent: Yea, pretty much the best way I know

G.K.: Well, do you feel we've killed this subject, for tonight anyway? I don't know how much we got, but I sure have enjoyed it.

Trent: Yea I'm pretty sure we got a lot. I lost the window half way through so can you compile it for jen?

G.K.: Yeah, I've been saving it, so I'll just send the file, or copy it to PM on the LM.

Trent, I really have felt comfortable talking to you. The generation gap closes pretty quickly with a common interest. I'm so amazed at just how mature some of the younger ones are on here. Have a good night.

Trent: It's been nice talking to you as well... All my nerves went away in no time, I thank ya for that ^^
Trent: Hope ya have a good night too

G.K.: thanks.



*“If a guy hits .300 every year, what does he have to look forward to? I always tried to stay around .190, with three or four RBI. And I tried to get them all in **September**. That way I always had something to talk about during the winter.”*

~Bob Uecker

Ah, Fall. The mere mention of the word signals the beginning of the end of most of the things I'd mentioned in my “Spring” entry (green grass, fresh air through open windows, BBQ's, hot apple pie cooling on the windowsill (which I've never done) and walking the dog without bundling up to the eyes). It also means the neighbors will still be out in their backyard on their lawn chairs smoking pot while their comedian cum jailbird teenage son puts hotdogs in everyone's mailboxes and bananas in everyone's tailpipes, only now, they'll be wearing sweaters. On the bright side, the wasps and creepy crawlies will also be no more, the flyswatters and bug killers neatly stored away until next Spring. Oh bliss!

It was so wondrous to see the Canada Geese training their young for the big trip south.

Hawke's Sweet Slice

Fall Flowersicles

Far less wondrous will be the sure knowledge of the return of Winter. Leaves of every make, model and color will soon decorate the trees... including the giant heritage oak tree in my back yard that dwarfs literally everything within a three-mile radius, and who's annual leaf dump literally and absolutely buries every living (and nonliving) thing not only in my back yard, but in at least three other back yards on either side. But that's okay. We'll be ready for it. We'll go to Home Depot and corner the market again, this time on every new fangled rake, blower and gas-powered picker-upper imaginable, right? Yep, we certainly will. We're still outdoorsy types who know we're gonna be shut-ins again, and nothing—*nothing*—is gonna turn our Summer Utopias into Fall nightmares one moment sooner than they have to be, including Fall.

Speaking of Fall, there is nothing more depressing to a cold-weather hater like myself than to hear the furnace kick on in the morning. Almost as bad is knowing that the idiot-proof flowers you spent a small fortune on in the Spring and then cursed and grudgingly coaxed into living throughout the Summer are at that very moment being turned into frosty flowersicles. But so it goes, right?



Seasons change and we have to change with them. So it's into the closet to dig out the coats we'd happily stuffed away during our Spring cleaning days that seem like... oh, I dunno—last week, maybe? And while we're in there, we may as well get out boots and hats and scarves, and our flannel sheets and comforters as well. Oh, and let's not forget the leftover window Saran Wrap-like stuff—the stuff that takes us an hour to put up and our cats a second to shred down. And the ice picks—don't forget the ice picks. After all, we'll need something that'll chip assorted frozen foodstuffs out of the bottoms of our mailboxes, left courtesy of that knee-slappingly funny teenager who unfortunately still lives next door.

But most importantly, Fall brings thoughts of renewed ambition. Specifically, writing! We may as well, yes? I mean, what else will we have to do? So enjoy it. Clean that thing you call a writing desk and then stock up on paper, pens, stamps and sticky-notes. And while you're at it, don't forget a warm throw blanket and a bag of hotdog buns. After all, it's Fall!



I'm calling this a 'book review', for simplicity's sake, instead of a rant, which is probably more appropriate.

First, here are informal reviews I've done over at writingforums.com for two of his works, *Diary* and the infamous *Fight Club*.

Diary by Chuck Palahniuk

Ah, finally got around to it - the obligatory Chuck P. read. Before anyone asks, the local library in this miniscule drop of semi-rural excrement only had two of his books, this and *Haunted*, and both were checked out. *Haunted* had a couple holds on it already, so I put a hold on *Diary*. Long story short, buddy returned it and I read it over the weekend. The end. Oh, right, the review.

No matter what I say, one of Chucky's fans are going to track me down and beat me with a stick, so I might as well let it all spill out. Gutslike, even, and don't tell me aren't hip on the reference.

To be fair, I should probably say what I was expecting coming in. I was well aware that *Diary* isn't his best work, so I didn't set my sights too high. What I really wanted was some really fucked up grit, something with edge that goes beyond simple paper cuts. He's touted as a minimalist genius, which right off the bat made me assume he's a bad writer using

Drewcicle Pie—

Diary by Chuck Palahniuk

a stylistic label to justify his, er, lack of aesthetic talent, so I didn't expect miracles in that department either. Sooooo...

Basically *Diary* is a journal written by Misty, a woman on a weird coked out tourist-ridden island as her husband, one of the island's native freakos, sits in a coma. Little by little, we begin to discover some pretty fucked up things, like psychotic writing in walls, rooms going missing, and some giant paranormal conspiracy. Wacky.

So what's the catch?

The catch was that the whole thing came off as an amateur take on a Stephen King novel, not a piece of gritty social commentary, or even a nihilistic romp, which was what I expected. While I wasn't blown away by Palahniuk's writing style, he definitely surprised me, pleasantly. He makes really interesting connections with his descriptions, tying two seemingly unrelated things with snazzy metaphors and smilies, though on the whole his technical skills sometimes felt really undisciplined.

Another thing I was particularly ambivalent about were his semi-useless fact interjections. I've read that he does a lot of research, which is cool but at times it seemed as though he opened *Encyclopedia Britannica* to a random page and tried to figure out a way to use the info

as filler. At times, this tactic was brilliant, like his commentary on facial anatomy, but in other places, like his focus on graphology, the study of handwriting, he came off sounding really tedious.

As far as characterization, I'm not going to lie - I barely cared two fucks about Misty or her plight. At times she seemed multifaceted, and I'd get excited, but then...blah. I don't know why, but I had trouble really getting into her story. Maybe it was the narrative style? Kind of her using a third person description of herself during the story, the repeating things like, 'and Misty's husband did this. You did this.' - addressing her husband in a coma.

Anyway, maybe I'm being overly harsh because I expected so much and he didn't deliver. Content-wise, the book came across as an amateur horror novel. The letter at the end was cute to the point of corn, too. Sigh. Without grit, this piece is fluff.

This shouldn't come as a surprise:

Two and a half, maybe two and three quarters. Even his unique descriptions couldn't push this higher than that.

Fight Club by Chuck Palahniuk

So there are a few problems already

Diary by Chuck Palahniuk

creeping up in this review. The first, and undeniable, is the fact that I've already decided that Chuck Palahniuk is not a very good writer and that his strengths, namely his knowledge of sketchy underground things and his darkly comedic imagination, often get lost in the shuffle. For the former, while I like learning about new things, especially things that make me feel like a unibomber, too much reliance on fact-dropping and anarchistic tidbits can be nauseating; for the latter, I saw the movie first and so everything just seemed so...done by the time I got through the book. Keeping this in mind, let's see if Chuck could overcome the eightball...

Like a support group for men, *Fight Club* starts as semi-senseless violence, a spiritual way to get in touch with the masculine beast within that society has castrated. Watch as our loving narrator transcends the subject position of the social eunuch, with the help of the charismatic soap-making Tyler Durden, who takes him in when his house (and all the Ikea-special-order furniture) suddenly explodes.

For those who don't know the story, I'll keep it short and sweet. Tyler and the narrator become cultural terrorists, for lack of a better term, committing acts of vandalism that are at first juvenile but soon scream out of control. When *Fight Club* catches on and starts attracting more and more disillusioned men, our trusty narrator and Tyler begin a cult-like

revolutionary movement, Project Mayhem, whose sole purpose seems to be reducing the world to utter anarchy in hopes of freeing its enslaved citizens. Toss into the mix Marla, a chain smoking almost-basketcase, and an army of 'space monkeys' dedicated to the annihilation of social order, and you have the makings of some darkly comedic satire.

So, do I think that Chuck pulled it off? Yes and no. Even though I found that his 'minimalist' writing style made me gag (and I love that he's adored so much that people have decided to justify his spastic and, dare I say poor writing style by calling it minimalist), the ideas and the storyline were so unique, right up my alley, that I'm willing to let it slide. When I think of minimalist writing, I think of George Orwell, someone who can still churn out magnificent sentences without being superfluous. Chuck's writing has no rhythm, it's jerky stop and go the whole way through. And the way he kept milking the same rhetorical devices, like constantly returning to the *Fight Club* rulebook or babbling on about facts that enlighten at first glance but then become tedious after the same tactic is recycled in every chapter. Yes, Chuck, we know you have access to the internet, but while you may impress the kids with your knowledge of the *Anarchist's Cookbook*, from a writing standpoint such knowledge can't keep your story afloat on its own.

And there it is. With all my whining about his writing and blah, I still think he does it

in the end. There's something here that makes me turn to goo inside. Maybe I'm just being overly critical because so many others have already deified him. I mean, the shit's good brain food and I'm not going to embarrass myself by saying I could do better, but stylistically I find his stuff a notch lower than most of the authors I've read. And you know what? It's my right as a reader to say that, so I'm fucking saying it.

So now I'm going to pass my final judgment. Did I have a good time reading it? Yes. Did the story appeal to me? Yes. Could the writing have been better? Yes. Did it *really* detract from my reading? Only somewhat.

I'm giving *Fight Club* a 7/10, meaning I had fun with it but it fell short of my possibly lofty expectations. Well, maybe it's closer to 6.5, but it's the type of book I'd give the benefit of the doubt.

Anyway, those are pretty self-explanatory, but for fun I'll just sum up the things that bother me about his fiction.

1) **Research:** Most of his novels are thinly veiled research pursuits disguised as actual stories. While I enjoy learning from the novels I read, I don't like being bombarded by data that

Diary by Chuck Palahniuk

does little to strengthen the characters or the story. Take *Diary*, for example. Sure, it's interesting to learn about the kinds of wacky superstitions carpenters use to, and often do, still have. It's also interesting to know from what herbs and organic matter certain kinds of paint are made. Or in *Fight Club*. It's interesting having a paraphrased version of the Anarchist's Cookbook, but really, Chuck, I'm not reading your novels to learn about how to blow shit up - otherwise I'd go and do the research myself. More than one person I've hit up on the situation have said that it seems like all of his novels are just rough notes for that *real* piece of prose - crib notes or something. Seems to fit the bill to me.

2) **Choruses:** I think this might piss me off more than his habitual research regurgitation. Nothing is more annoying than the useless repetition of certain words or phrases, especially in a work (like all of Chuck's) that rely heavily on short, terse paragraphs. How many times do I have to read about the airports Jack visits under his sleepless binges? You know, I'm pretty sure you're readership can grasp the idea that he's going from place to place and that they are all blurred and the same without you constantly referncing them. This in some ways ties to the aforementioned 'research' point. Now in small dosages, this chorus thing can and is effective, especially in chapter 6 of *Fight Club*, where the rules of *Fight Club* are beaten home. It's a great effect. Then he does

the same fucking thing over and over and over and over and over, milking the same device until it becomes absolutely useless.

3) **'Minimalism:** Okay, this might just be the straw that broke the camel's back. Who the fuck decided to bestow this charming title on Chuck's writing style? To me, I read such stylistic labels as COPOUT. There are exceptions. Orwell, or even Chuck's literary idol, Amy Hempel, both used sparse sentences beautifully to convey something deeper. Chuck's jerky, stop and go prose makes me want to gag. No attention paid to rhythm or pace, and his use of tense, especially in *Fight Club*, is ambiguous. Nothing there to digest.

Okay, so that's the size of my problems with his writing. As an aside, there's quite a bit that I enjoy about Palahniuk's work.

- Really great, dark imagination.
- He touches on a lot of issues in fun new ways, making sensationalism a genre of its own.
- As much as critics dislike shock fiction, I think there's a bit more depth to Chuck's work than a lot of people give him credit for.
- His works are easy reads and appeal to a masculine audience, whose interest in literature is kind of waning.

Some writers who I think are more worth my time:

Bret Easton Ellis: Nihilism your thing? Senseless violence with a poignant touch: Try *American Psycho*, *Less than Zero*, or *Lunar Park*.

Amy Hempel: Want REALLY minimalist writing from a writer Chuck admires? Try *At the Gates of the Animal Kingdom*.

Douglas Coupland: Interested in seeing the forerunner of the Gen X movement? Try *Generation X*, *Hey Nostradamus!*

Irvine Welsh: Where the underground world of narcotic despair floats to the surface. Try *Trainspotting*, *Porno*, *The Acid House*.

Kurt Vonnegut: Another writer I might consider minamist, with a satirical twist. Try *Cat's Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse Five*, *Breakfast of Champions*.

Hunter S. Thompson: Drug-induced insanity. Try *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *The Rum Diary*.



The First Ever Mackenzie King Nooberama Poetry Contest

It is rosy hued, with the gothic crown of the Peace Tower lurking in the background, bells tolling 11 AM. At the forefront beetle browed, bulldog jawed Mackenzie King, longest serving Prime Minister of Canada. It is an crisp and authentic Great White North \$50 bill. This is the prize that will be sent to the winner of The First Ever Mackenzie King Nooberama Poetry Contest.

Here is how it will work: Registered members of LM, those with the slightest trace, the tiniest iota of gumption, co-jones, spunk, and hopefully, ability, will PM me, the Senior Poetry Specialist and Contest Convener, briefly indicating your intention to compete in the contest. CONTESTANTS HAVE UNTIL 11 AM OCT. 1/07 TO SIGN UP. I NEED AT LEAST 8 PEOPLE TO SIGN UP TO RUN THE CONTEST.

If there are seven or less I'm going to take the \$50 to the local Belgian Beer Temple and gleefully spend it while writing (more) bad poetry about what a

bunch of weenies you all are. The first person to sign up will be given a number, ie. 001, the second 002 etc. Once the contest starts, all entries will be PM'd to me and they will be posted, with only your number to identify you. Therefore, no one will know who anyone is.

Poets will be paired off thusly: First person to sign up versus the last person to sign up. Second person vs. the second last person to sign up and so on. Each pairing will be given an image or phrase from which to work, and a period of time (a week or so) to PM me their poems inspired by that image or phrase. Poems can be of any form or length. I will post the competing entries and the forum can then vote on each contest. Voters are encouraged to critique the poems and give reasons for their votes. ie. It was very tough to decide, but my vote goes to Poet 006 because of the superb metaphors used in s4

The Supreme Contest Convener will award an honorary mention

to the member who consistently provides the best (imo) critique throughout the contest. Yes, you can vote for yourself, but please don't gush on endlessly in critiquing your own work and so give your identity away. Anonymity is crucial to keep this from becoming a popularity contest. The winners of each contest will move on to the next round and be re-paired on the same basis as before. This shall continue until a winner is determined. I will send the winner the prize, which will be suitably notarized and dated with an authentic Canadian ball point pen. It is hoped, though not expected, that the winner would then convene the Second Ever Mackenzie King Nooberama Poetry Contest and offer the same bill as a prize.

I, as Convener, will not compete, and will only vote to break any ties at the deadlines.

cheers all
J.R.