

WEST HARTFORD SCREENWRITERS GROUP / MINUTES

Meeting of: 9/26/07

Moderator: Geoff Saunders

Snacks: Steve Olechna (in absentia)

Scribe: Denning Powell

ATTENDEES:

Geoff Saunders

Denning Powell

Joe Cadieux

Liz Cipollina

Bob Toomey

Rich Tesler

Doug Johnson

Tom Murphy

Val Utton

Jacque Devlin

Darryl Johnson

INTROS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(1) Of the screenwriter interview DVDs, Geoff recommended Sheldon Turner and Liz recommended Callie Khouri. (2) Liz handed out a "Writing Backwards" article suggesting use of a cause-effect analysis to pick out key points in a story and make structuring it easier. (3) Patrice Hamilton (faculty at member at Tunxis) will be showing her new short movie "Exposure" in the near future.

OPEN DISCUSSION: Alternate date for October meeting to avoid Halloween discussed (subsequently resolved, see below). Set date for November meeting agreed to be okay as is (falls in the week after Thanksgiving). General consensus for Christmas party (as usual) in lieu of December meeting, tabled for further discussion next month.

REVIEW: *Jacque's Birds of Killingworth.*

Logline: Young schoolmaster struggles to overcome a repressive deacon and convince his village that putting a bounty on birds will bring ecological disaster.

Why writing it: Inspired by a Longfellow poem on the same subject, paralleling present-day bird attrition -- an ecological cautionary tale.

Theme: All of nature is one.

Genre: Historical drama.

Wants from review: Story and structure evaluation. Help with the logline. Does Ephraim work as a narrator/voiceover?

Synopsis of group review:

General agreement on: (1) setting and dialog ring true for that historical period; (2) good characterizations of personality type; (3) scenes well structured -- short and visual; (4) Ephraim voice-over works as a narrative device; (5) character struggles and conflicts could usefully be deepened to provide more drama; (6) it takes too long for Branshaw to get started in his conflict.

Mixed opinions on: (1) the Deacon is a little one-dimensional, could be made a better villain; (2) Almira may reflect the (relatively) passive role of women in that culture, but her character would be made more interesting by overcoming conflict; (3) although some of the scenes evoke the historical period or give insight into characters, they don't serve enough of a dramatic purpose or move the story forward.

Versus STC beats: not evaluated vs full structure.

Versus TWJ hero-stages: Branshaw tracks well through the first 7 stages of the story, then largely disappears in stages 8 through 10 (supplanted mostly by Almira's story), then reappears and tracks well with final stages 11 and 12.

NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday October 24, 2007, 7:00 PM, West Hartford Senior Center (*switched from 10/31/07 to avoid Halloween*). Bob Toomey will submit *Personal Day*, a comedy.

Moderator: Tessa O'Sullivan

Snacks: Doug Johnson + Steve Olechna

~DSP 9/29/07 :-)