

STORIES IN OVERDRIVE

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BACKGROUND: CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT

Retiring screenwriting professor Charles Deemer created “Stories In Overdrive” in June, 2013, when two strands of obsessive brooding came together to suggest a new form of storytelling narrative.

Both a novelist and screenwriter, Deemer had become fascinated by the different storytelling strategies in the two forms, in particular in what in screenwriting is called “vertical writing,” a crisp and economical style without rhetorical clutter, in which story trumps everything.

He also noticed how more and more of his students were doing their reading on smart phones and tablets, on which small screens made verbosity harder to read than a more open and concise writing style – in other words, than vertical writing.

Moreover, he had concluded that screenwriters were the major storytellers of the era but their stories were going unheard because so few films got made. What if there was another way to communicate their stories?

These questions led Deemer to try an experiment, which began in June, 2013. Using his own unproduced screenplays from twenty years earlier, many with stories he still loved, Deemer retold the stories in vertical prose, retaining most of the language of the screenplay but removing the film jargon and special format of the form.

These were not novelizations. These were transformations, retaining vertical writing and great economy, in which story always trumped rhetoric, in which no rhetorical embellishments were added. A stark, clean, vertical writing style, rather like some of the avant-garde minimalists who were experimenting with the novel early in the 20th century.

Thus Stories In Overdrive was born. As of August, 2013, five novellas in the series have been published. Many early reviewers realized that a new form of storytelling was at work:

- “this hybrid between novella and screenwriting is fantastic ... a groundbreaking new form of narrative”
- “a different kind of reading experience”
- “I’m fascinated by the no fluff writing style”

More information and book info are available at the website: <http://storiesinoverdrive.blogspot.com>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHARLES DEEMER was raised in Virginia, Texas and Southern California. He began his undergraduate studies at the California Institute of Technology, where he was quarterback of the 0-4 Freshman football team, and finished them at UCLA, where he received his BA (Phi Beta Kappa, Honors English). He has an MFA in Playwriting from the University of Oregon.

Deemer's play *Famililly* won the 1997 "Crossing Borders" international new play competition. The public television version of his play *Christmas at the Juniper Tavern* won an ACE award. Three of his short stories were selected to the "Roll of Honor" in *Best American Short Stories*. His novel *Dead Body In A Small Room* was a finalist for ForeWord Magazine's Mystery of the Year award. His book *Seven Plays* was a finalist for the Oregon Book Award. His other books include *Sodom, Gomorrah & Jones*, a novel; *Kerouac's Scroll*, a novel; *In My Old Age*, poems; and *A Charles Deemer Reader*.

Deemer is a pioneer in hyperdrama, a term he is credited with coining. His short memoir *Hyperdrama: My Obsession With A New Theater Form* shares his enthusiasm for the new dramaturgy.

Deemer is the former editor of *Sweet Reason: a journal of ideas, history and culture*, former managing editor of *Oregon Business* magazine, former editor of *Oregon Literary Review* and former artistic director of Small Screen Video.

Deemer recently began making digital films. His DVDs include *Three Short Digital Films*, *Deconstructing Sally* and *The Farewell Wake*.

Deemer teaches screenwriting at Portland State University and will retire after the 2013-4 academic year. A complete bio is available at <http://www.ibiblio.org/cdeemer/bio.htm>



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