



Sunday, May 2, 2010

### Talking With: Novelist Claire Applewhite



Like the photo? Read on. Claire Applewhite's second novel, just out, is [Crazy for You](#), about obsessive love among St. Louis's wealthy elites; the first was murder mystery [The Wrong Side of Memphis](#) (2009), both published by L&L Dreamspell. She is also the new President of the Missouri Writers Guild, potentially a very powerful organization. She wrote novels for a decade before getting published, and has an MBA.

*Your novels are fun to read. And they have a satirical edge. Did you have fun writing them? Whom do you picture as your readership?* I hope that my novels take my readers to another world, and that there is a message waiting for them there. The challenge is to deliver the message couched in fun. I don't believe a writer's job is to judge, lecture or preach. I think it is to suggest, question and/or present--and allow the reader to form a conclusion based on individual experience and imagination. I hope that the "fun" in my novels encourages readers to read them. As far as my readership, anyone who enjoys a story with quirky characters, multiple dilemmas, and a Midwestern and/or Southern setting.

*I know some people very much like Bunny, the spoiled St. Louis heiress in [Crazy For You](#), and her parents and friends. Do you?* I think everyone knows a "Bunny," don't you? For this reason, a lot of physical description almost wasn't necessary--again, the suggestion of her appearance and mannerisms are left to the readers to form their own conclusions based on individual experience. The challenge as a writer was to expose the part of the characters that was not stereotypical.

*How were sales of your first book?* Sales of [The Wrong Side of Memphis](#) were very competitive for a first book from a small press. However, I actively and



aggressively promoted it, assisted by a publicist. I lectured at luncheons and book clubs, made multiple public appearances, scheduled many book signings and distributed complimentary copies. I asked for blurbs from other authors and journalists, and obtained reviews from book reviewers and Kirkus Reviews. Promotion was as integral as writing in launching the book.

*You once said you got up at 5 a.m. to write. Do you still do that?* Actually, I have become a night owl. I find that the writing is best between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. The world is quiet, and the characters' voices are clear.

*What is your ultimate career goal?* To become the best writer that I can be. I would like to pick up one of my own books someday and say to myself, "I couldn't have done any better," or, "Hey, I'm impressed."

*Where'd you get those extra-foxy photos of yourself in evening wear? And why did you have them taken?* Ah, the photos! I got those photos taken in response to my "readership" regarding the professional photos I had been using. To quote one younger reader, "You look like Meryl Streep in the Manchurian Candidate," or another well-meaning friend, "You look like a banker." I concluded that I did not look like a writer. I asked people in journalism for the name of a good photographer. We did a ten-hour photo shoot, with six outfits, and, well, these were the best ones.

*As the new president of the Missouri Writers Guild, what is your vision for its future?* I am excited to promote literary talent in Missouri--and there is a wealth of it. My vision is to encourage new writers with the accomplishments of those Missourians who have achieved success.

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