

KEYNOTES

The newsletter of the Romance Writers of America New York City Chapter #6

February 2015

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

Saturday, February 7, 12 noon

TRS, 40 Exchange Place, 3rd Floor

LGBT ROMANCE PANEL DISCUSSION

Join three bestselling LGBT romance writers for a panel discussion of this growing niche of the romance genre—which may not be a niche for much longer. We'll talk what we write, why we write it, and why it's gaining in popularity. We'll also answer your questions and get some discussion going.

PANELISTS:



RWANYC VP Kate McMurray is an award-winning author of gay romance and an unabashed romance fan. When she's not writing, she works as a nonfiction editor, dabbles in various crafts, and is maybe a tiny bit obsessed with baseball. She has served as President of Rainbow Romance Writers, the LGBT romance chapter of Romance Writers of America. She lives in Brooklyn, NY. Her tenth novel, *WHEN THE PLANETS ALIGN* was published in December 2014 by Dreamspinner Press. Visit her at www.katemcmurray.com.

Taylor V. Donovan is a compulsive reader and author of gay romance and suspense. She is optimistically cynical about humanity and a lover of history, museums, and all things 80s. She shamelessly indulges in mind-numbing reality television, is crazy about fashion, and passionate about civil rights and equality for all. When she's not making a living in the busiest city in the world, Taylor can be found raising her two daughters and their terribly misbehaved furry baby in their home. Visit her website: <http://taylorvdonovan.com>.



Kade Boehme is a southern boy without the charm, but all the sass. Currently residing in New York City, he lives off of ramen noodles and too much booze. He's been fortunate enough to write full time, which also helps pay off the student loans on his fancy degree he no longer uses. He is the epitome of dorkdom, only watching TV when Rachel Maddow or one of his sports teams is on. Most of his free time is spent dancing, arguing politics or with his nose in a book. He is also a hardcore Britney Spears fangirl and has an addiction to glitter. It was after writing a short story about boys who loved each other for a less than reputable adult website that he found his true calling, and hopefully a bit more class. He hopes to write about all the romance that he personally finds himself allergic to but that others can fall in love with. He maintains that life is real and the stories should be, as well.♥

AUTHOR OF THE MONTH: JULIA TAGAN

Julia Tagan is based in New York City, where she worked as an actress before venturing into writing. A journalist by training, she enjoys weaving actual events and notorious individuals into her historical romances. Her favorite activities include walking her dog in Central Park, scouring farmers' markets for the perfect tomato, and traveling to foreign cities in search of inspiration. Her historical romance, *STAGES OF DESIRE*, was released by Kensington/Lyrical in January 2015. Visit her at www.juliatagan.com.♥



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KEYNOTES DEADLINE: 15th of the Month.
Send articles to keynoteseditor@gmail.com.
All articles must be typed and up to 500 words.

MEETING INFO: RWA/NYC meets the first Saturday of each month. Meetings are held at TRS, 40 Exchange Place, NYC. 12 noon. Membership is at the discretion of the Board. Annual dues are \$40. Make all checks payable to RWA/ NYC. There will be a \$20 fee on returned checks.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2015 CALENDAR

Jan 3	Feb 7	Mar 7	Apr 11
May 2	Jun 6	Jul 11	Aug 1
Sep 12	Oct 3	Nov 7	Dec 5

RWA/NYC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Ursula Renée
Vice President/Events: Kate McMurray
Vice President/Contest: Vanessa Peters
Secretary: Shirley Kelly
Treasurer: Tamara Lynch
Past President: Maria Ferrer

LIAISONS & COMMITTEES

Board Liaison: Lisbeth Eng
PAN & PRO Liaisons: TBA
Blog/Social Media: Maria Ferrer
Critique: Mimi Logsdon
Keynotes Editor: Briana MacPerry (starting March issue)
Publicity: Jeanine McAdam, Jean Joachim
Michael Molloy, Maria Cox
Website: Ursula Renée

ATTENTION: The Board welcomes all comments/suggestions/etc. Please send emails to info@rwanyc.com.

RWA/NYC

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: SHOULD THEY OR SHOULDN'T THEY

BY URSULA RENÉE



In the real world, people are not in the mood to have sex twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Sometimes the situation is not ideal for a tryst. Other times, personal beliefs come into play. Also, a person's mental and physical health can affect a sex drive.

Though we understand conditions need to be right for people to be in the mood, we sometimes expect characters to be ready, willing and able, anytime and anyplace. This expectation may come from the belief that romance novels must have sex.

While sex is enjoyable, it is not a prerequisite for romance novels. There are no rules as to how much sex a novel should have or how spicy it should be. Romances range from inspirational, where only married couples have sex and the action takes place behind closed doors, to erotic, where the reader gets an up close view of each throbbing body part. Even erotic romances have different heat levels.

Whether a novel has sex and how much, depends not only on the author's comfort level, but character's personality, abilities and the situation. Therefore, before writing a novel, an author should get to know the characters. Ask them the five w's – who, what, where, when and why – to get a better sense of the type of sex scene they would enjoy.

Who are the characters? Are they adventurous or cautious? Experienced or a novice? Do they enjoy public displays of affection or prefer if the act is only alluded to?

What are their likes and dislikes? What are their turn-ons and turn-offs? What positions do they prefer? How much foreplay is enough? Do they want pillow talk afterwards?

Where do they prefer to have sex? Where would they never consider having sex? Where did they always want to try?

When do they prefer to have sex? Are they more receptive in the morning, after a good night sleep or in the evening, when they are done with everything for the day? Or, do they simply try to enjoy the few minutes their children are occupied and would not disturb them?

Finally, why do the characters have their preference? Do they have religious or social mores that dictate their decisions?

Once the characters have been interviewed, the author should consider the scene. What is going on at the moment? Would sex move the story forward? Are the characters remaining true to themselves? If not, why are they acting out?

As in the real world, characters do not need to jump into bed to prove their commitment to each other. Sometimes a simple hug at the right moment can create an intimate scene that leaves the reader satisfied.♥

Thanks to the support and encouragement of the members of RWA/NYC, Ursula signed her first publishing contract in 2013 for her historical romance, SWEET JAZZ. As President of RWA/NYC, Ursula wants to offer the same encouragement and guidance to other RWA members. Visit her at www.ursularenée.com.



THANK YOU, LISE!

Many thanks to Lise Horton for gathering the articles and information for this issue.♥

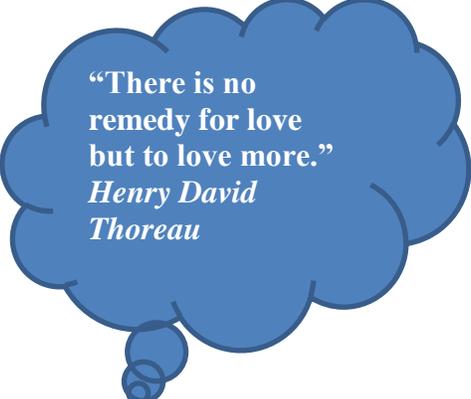
MINUTES: JANUARY 3

Board Members Present:

President Ursula Renée Shand
Vice Presidents Erin O'Brien and Vanessa Peters
Treasurer Tamara Lynch
Secretary Shirley Kelly
Past President Maria Ferrer

Committee Members Present:

Blog/Social Media: Maria Ferrer
Publicity: Jean Joachim, Jeanine McAdam, Maria Cox
Website: Ursula Renée Shand



“There is no
remedy for love
but to love more.”
*Henry David
Thoreau*

Agenda:

President Ursula Renée Shand opened the meeting at 12:10 by first welcoming everyone, then introducing herself and the new Board. Next she outlined the meeting: our Author of the Month is Mingmei Yip, Jean Joachim will be discussing marketing, Racheline Maltese will be discussing how to write a business plan, and we will “Take a Break Yoga” with Suzan Colon.

Ursula asked for someone to accept the November General Meeting Minutes. Vice President Erin O'Brien made a motion to accept the minutes; Treasurer Tamara Lynch seconded the motion.

Tamara said we have approximately \$8,300 in the bank.

Secretary Shirley Kelly said we have 114 members. 36 members took advantage of the Early Bird Special. All other members have until March 7th to renew.

Ursula handed out members' entries in last year's time capsule. She then asked everyone to write down their goals for the 2015 time capsule.

Ursula explained the General Loop and said she'd be sending out an email asking everyone to join. She said we need a new moderator for the Published Loop. The moderator has to be a member of PAN and will also be our PAN liaison. The Published Loop focuses on the business of writing and Industry news is also posted on the loop. We also need a new PRO liaison who will moderate the Craft Loop which focuses on the craft of writing. Mimi Pizarro-Lodgson will continue to run the Critique Loop, and while it's not currently active, critique meetings are held twice a month from 6-8 p.m. at the Citicorp Center.

Erin said the Golden Apple Awards will be held in September and encouraged all members to attend. She said the event is a good networking opportunity and members can plan their pitch for the Agents and Editors who attend.

Ursula said we're still waiting to hear from Cat Clyne regarding the winner of the 2014 Kathryn Hayes “We Need a Hero” contest. Vice President Vanessa Peters said we may be revamping the contest for 2015. Information on the 2015 contest will be announced once the 2014 winner is determined.

Past President Maria Ferrer said the Chapter blog is doing well. She'll be continuing with “Book Cover Fridays”. She plans another “50 Shades of Sexy” blog tour in February to coincide the opening of the movie “50 Shades of Grey”. She's asking for members to submit a sexy excerpt of 150 words or less. Send your excerpts to her at ferrerm@aol.com. She also said she welcomes ideas from the members.

Ursula said anyone should let her know if they want to be on the Critique Loop. She also said we need a Production Manager for Keynotes. The new manager will get all of the content from Lise Horton and assemble it into a newsletter. After Ursula checks the issue, the manager will send it to all of the members via email.

Maria Cox of the Publicity Committee said she's looking for venues to promote the Chapter. She's contacted the Harlem Book Festival to see if could participate in it, but hasn't heard back, yet.

Jeanine McAdam of the Publicity Committee said our 2nd Annual Romance Festival is scheduled for June 20th from 1-4:30 p.m. at the Morris-Jumel Mansion. We're trying to engage the romance

community, book guest speakers, and panels. Jessica Evans suggested inviting publishers, and offered her publisher, Meryton Press. The price of table is TBD. Tanya said we have to work harder to get foot traffic. Shirley suggested putting a sign at the entrance to the street leading to the mansion. Ursula said the legality of putting promotional material on the street needs to be checked. Karen Cino said her son's acoustic band could provide entertainment. Jeanine said Kwana Jackson and Falguni Kothari plan to organize 3 gift baskets to be raffled off. She also said she needs volunteers to help with promoting the event.

Ursula said the spring retreat will be held the weekend of April 17th at the Inn at Ocean Grove in NJ. Rooms will be \$99 per night, which includes breakfast. To encourage participation, Ursula is thinking of scheduling a critique session or a workshop. Anyone interested in attending should contact the inn directly, then let Ursula know they're going.

Ursula said anyone should contact her if they need the link to their website fixed on the Chapter site. She also told members about the calendar on the site which lists Chapter events. She said anyone with upcoming events should contact her.

Ursula had general guidelines for members:

- Members should not be using the Loops to ask other members to buy their books, even if they're being offered for free. Links can be provided to individual websites.
- Members should not send unsolicited emails or information to other members.
- She encouraged everyone to write for Keynotes and the Chapter Blog.
- She stressed that our Chapter promotes the industry, not individual authors.

Vanessa encouraged everyone to participate/volunteer in order to promote the Chapter. She also suggested members find and work with a critique partner.

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 p.m.♥

YOU'RE A WRITER. CLAIM THE TITLE.

WRITERS WRITE, SO MAKE TIME FOR IT EVERY DAY.

SET REALISTIC GOALS. EMBRACE THE ECSTASY OF WRITING.

READ, READ, READ, READ, READ, READ, READ.

FOLLOW YOUR HEART, NOT THE MARKET.

DON'T JUST START STORIES. FINISH THEM. **DREAM BIG.**

LEARN THE RULES. CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM:
FOLLOW THE RULES. SOLICIT, ACCEPT, MANAGE.
BREAK THE RULES.

PUT YOUR EGO IN YOUR BACK POCKET AND SIT ON IT.

WRITING IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION. ENJOY THE SCENERY.

GIVE BACK TO THE WRITING COMMUNITY. **WRITE SCARED.**

REMEMBER YOU ARE THE MASTER OF INSPIRATION, NOT ITS SLAVE.

SET YOUR STORIES FREE. SEND THEM INTO THE WORLD.

DON'T SLACK ON THE HARD STUFF: OUTLINE
RESEARCH
REWRITE

BUILD A LIFESTYLE THAT NURTURES AND SUPPORTS YOUR WRITING.

LOVE WHAT YOU DO.  WRITE WITH JOY.

A WORDPLAYER'S MANIFESTO

WELCOME, EDITOR BRIANA!



Welcome Back, Briana MacPerry!

Briana was our newsletter editor two years ago and now she's back! She is looking for articles for the **March Keynotes**. Please send her your posts, member news, book covers, conference reviews, et al.

Send to: keynoteseditor@gmail.com

Deadline for all articles is February 15. If you need more time, let her know. Thanks.♥

50 SHADES OF SEXY BLOG TOUR

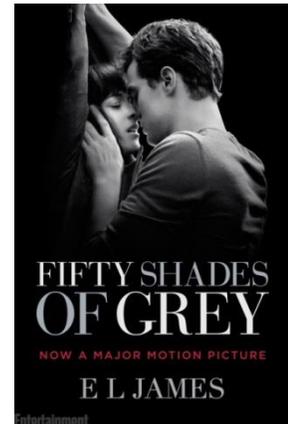


In honor of the release of the “50 Shades of Grey” movie, RWA/NYC will launch its own “50 Shades of Sexy” blog tour on February 1, 2015, and it will continue through March. We even have a sexy badge thanks to Jean Joachim. (Thank you, Jean!)

All Chapter Members are encouraged to participate!

Members can sign up, whether they are pre-published or published; regular, PRO or PAN. This is a great opportunity to show off YOUR writing. Submit a short sexy excerpt (about 150 words) from any book or work in progress, and add a short bio with your website /blog /social network addresses. If you have a photo or cover, please send as

well; otherwise, one will be provided. To participate, email Maria Ferrer, Blog Mistress, at ferrerm@aol.com.♥



MOVIE DEBUTS FEB 14!

MEMBER NEWS



Diversion Books has just re-issued seven of **Sylvia Halliday's** books as e-books. One of the books, *SUMMER DARKNESS*, *WINTER LIGHT*, already had threads for a sequel built in, and Diversion has bought the sequel as well, to come out some time this year. The first three books, a trilogy, which they've subtitled *French Maidens*, were the first three books Sylvia ever wrote.

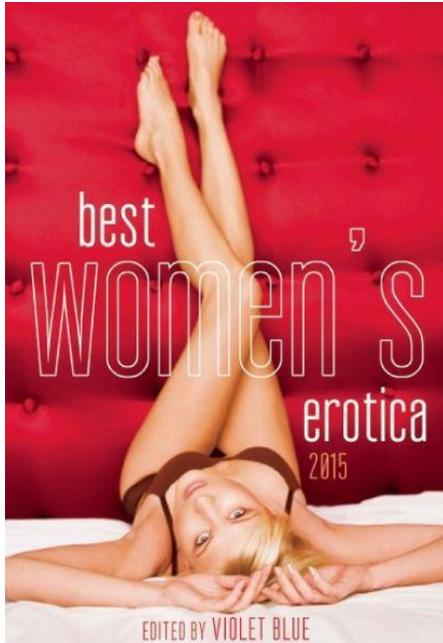
Kwana Jackson has signed with agent Rachel Brooks of the L. Perkins agency. She's really excited and looking forward to how things go in 2015!

Author and yoga instructor **Suzan Colon's** new project is a “Take A Yoga Break” APP. It's great for writers who spend most of the day sitting down. Suzan lead the Chapter through some of the APP exercises at the January Meeting. For more information, visit her at www.suzancolon.net.♥

CHAPTER RETREAT: APRIL 17-19

The Second Annual RWA/NYC Spring Retreat will be held on the weekend of April 17, 2015 at the Inn at Ocean Grove. We are receiving a special rate of \$99/night. The price includes breakfast in the morning. There are plenty of places in the Inn and in town where you will be able to curl up and write. Ocean Grove is also the perfect place to get the small town feel for those who want use that setting for a story. To reserve a room, you can call The Inn at Ocean Grove at 732-775-8847. Also, Please let Ursula know if you plan to attend.♥

THE SPICE OF VARIETY THE IMPORTANCE OF MIXING IT UP IN THE BOUDOIR BY LISE KIM HORTON



My personal oeuvre is gritty, raw, erotic romance. I have Dominant Alpha heroes, and feisty submissive heroines. I love intense love scenes, filled with graphic action hot enough to scald. But there are always occasions where I have to mix it up.

By and large I find, in my writing and in the erotic romances I read, that no matter how intense the story is, no matter how dark or dramatic, there come those moments when you need things less intense and more languid. Filled with less boom-chicka-bow-wow and more with velvet caresses and sensual sighs. Where perhaps, something kinder and gentler is called for. Perhaps one of the characters is wounded, at a black point, and the love scene is, in part, a healing or comforting for that character. Or another alternative that may be a perfect fit, something lighthearted - spiced with wry humor, or giddy joy – the occasion when nothing goes right, but it’s all okay! Where my lovers learn to laugh at themselves and relax . . . just a bit more (which we know will make things even hotter the next time around, right?)

One of the things I therefore focus on is the appropriateness of the tone and action of the scene: Does it fit the mood? The place where the characters are both in their own heads at that moment? In the course of their relationship? All while furthering that relationship, working smoothly with the plot, and advancing it at the same time.

I also survey of my love scene “roster” once I’ve got a rough first draft, to ensure that the mood and intensity does vary, so the reader is not treated to the same old, same old love scene throughout. (That’s a major complaint I’ve seen concerning the love scenes in FSOG, for example.) No one in the real world has sex the same way all the time, or feels the same way every time they are having sex. The intensity varies, the commitment varies, and the emotions vary.

Our moods fuel our lovemaking. Internal and external conflicts of my characters will fuel theirs. As will the seasons, surroundings, the atmosphere (one example is the staple of romantic suspense and romantic thrillers where the lovers are in the thick of danger – gotta love those adrenalin-heightened couplings!).

Likewise, the love scenes will morph as the characters and relationships grow and change. That introductory, somewhat stilted, or perhaps edgy, or eager and unfamiliar first love scene – where everything is being experienced for the first time, and those first sights of one another, those first tastes and touches are so vital.

Then the story grows into those scenes where the lovers have become more comfortable with one another, but are still discovering the depths of their passion; they’re exploring and trying new things – but there are still mysteries to unfold, and discoveries about one another to make.

And we continue to progress, reaching those scenes where the lovers are embroiled in their conflicts and problems as you approach the dark moments of the book. Their differences, fears and uncertainty infiltrate the scene. It might make the love/sex desperate, or yearning – or lousy. It might make one lover selfish and demanding, or another withdrawn and hesitant. And it might be a moment for *coitus interruptus* – the better to ramp up the tension, sexual and otherwise, as the characters deal with it.

Finally, the couple’s emotions are fully mature, and the depth of their love is powerful and strong

and committed. As we approach their HEA, so does their sexual relationship swell in power and importance. Everything has become clear. They've overcome all the crises. They've fallen apart and healed those rifts. They're recommitted, or reunited, with a soul deep connection that is illustrated in their lovemaking. Physical and emotional have become one, and the coupling is a hallowed moment as the sex becomes an affirmation of their romantic journey together.

So. Each of the moments within my stories have to satisfy many criteria. First and foremost, from a technical perspective, I want to change it up. Keep the sex varied for the readers (and my characters – can you imagine the complaints?!).

Secondly, I want my love scenes to fit smoothly in the moment in the story in which they appear. A humorous love scene in a dark moment probably wouldn't work. And a wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am when they've just acknowledged they're madly in love would be inappropriate, too. And no brand new couple, falling into the sack for the first time is going to be utterly uninhibited. No matter how tough or feisty or Alpha, we all hold back a bit of ourselves in a brand new relationship, right? It's a protective instinct to avoid hurt and rejection.

Thirdly, I must remain true to my characters, which means that even as the love scenes evolve along with the story, and with the relationship, they must reflect the ongoing tone, or mood of the moment. The actions cannot go completely against the characters' grain. But they *can* reflect that changing moods of the character.

My hero may be a crude and rough sadist, but he will find himself in a romantic situation where his emotions, and desires, prompt him to seek a different way to experience that sexual relationship. By doing so, it allows my hero an opportunity for revelation – for growth. As I did with my down and dirty sadist hero, Hud, in *Hold Tight*, when he abandons all of the paddlings and spankings, the erotic humiliation and total command of his lover, Eden, and discovers that the more vanilla experience is just as rich, and enjoyable – and even more naked, emotionally – without the trappings of the lifestyle or kinky touches. The simple act of making love is a breakthrough moment as he realizes she's "the one". It's not just the kink. It's the woman.

Likewise, no matter how freely my submissive Eden gives herself to Hud, there comes that moment when she turns dominant, forcing him to accept her and his own desires, and becomes the driving force of that particular love scene – the climactic one that ends the story.

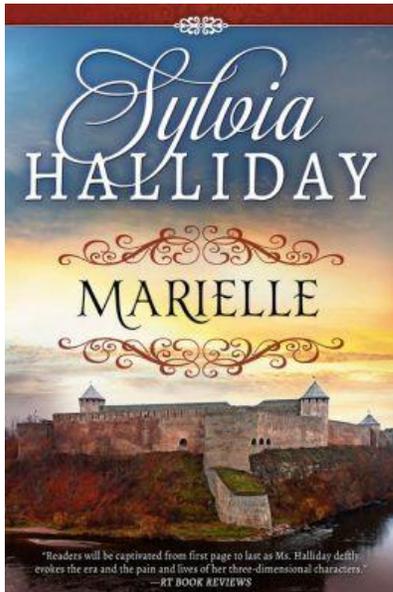
The bottom line is that I want my characters to change it up in the bedroom. It keeps things lively for them – and keeps my readers looking ahead to see how the characters' physical relationship grows along with their emotional relationship.

Because as we all know, variety is the spice of life!♥

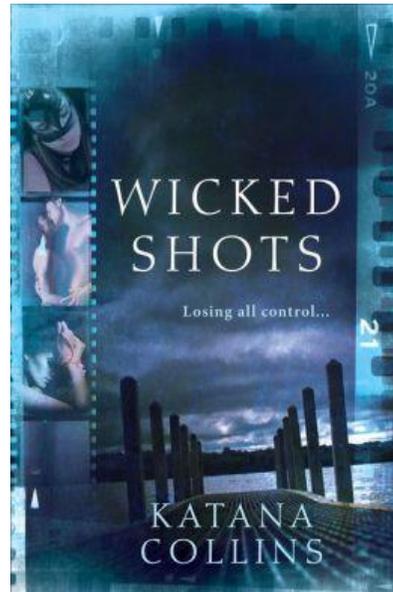
Lise Horton writes super steamy erotic romance and, as Lydia Hill, intense erotica. She's published in full-length fiction by Carina Press, and in short fiction by Ravenous Romance, Riverdale Avenue Press (a recent naughty coupling can be found in RAB's BAD SANTA) and her latest story, "Tryst of Fate", as Lydia Hill, is included in the Cleis Press BEST WOMEN'S EROTICA OF 2015 anthology, edited by the iconic Violet Blue. For more on her thoughts on writing romance and the writing life, you can find her and all her social media links at www.lisehorton.com.



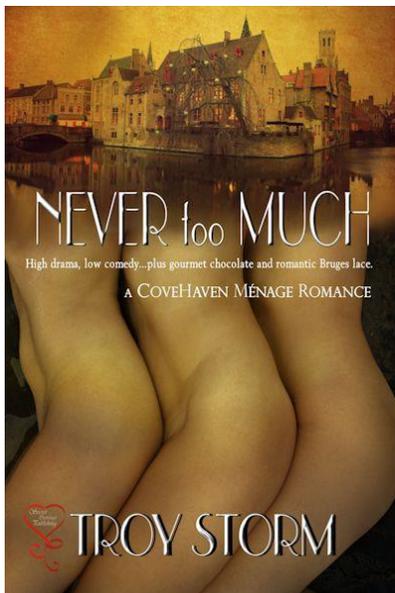
MEMBERS ON THE SHELF



MARIELLE
Sylvia Halliday
Diversion Books
January 2015



WICKED SHOTS
Katana Collins
Kensington Publishing
February 2015



NEVER TOO MUCH
Troy Storm
Secret Cravings Publishing
Fall 2014



BAD SANTA
Lise Horton
Riverdale Avenue Books
January 2015

TURN OFF THE FLUORESCENT LIGHTS! THE POWER OF SAYING LESS BY JESSICA EVANS

I used to write love scenes like fluorescent lighting: I revealed everything. Like a sportscaster giving the play-by-play, I accounted for every breath, every moan, every facial expression, every body part.

Then, I stopped doing that.

Call me a prude, but knowing exactly what was going on in every love scene really turned me off. In Chinese ink painting, the concept of negative space is just as important to the composition as the dark strokes of ink on the paper. The idea is to capture the essence of the thing in as few brushstrokes as possible.

Now, I try to do the same thing with my words that Chinese painters do with their brushes: I try to build emotion and sensuousness by not only carefully choosing words, but by choosing to not use words. I say things simply. I use fewer adjectives and name fewer body parts. I write the essence of the love scene and not the play-by-play.

For example, one love scene that I wrote in my book, *THE MUSE*, was described entirely through the heroine's drunken flashback. She barely remembers her night of passion, so the love scene is fragmented, told only in blurry snapshots. Here's an excerpt:

*She could only recall the night in flashes—like photographs in a slide show:
Banging her knee against an iron bistro chair as they scurried, mid-kiss, back into the bedroom...
The touch of his fingertips as they brushed against the nape of her neck... The feel of his abdomen under
her fingers, ridged yet soft when she'd peeled off his shirt.*

Also, in the climax of my story, when hero and heroine have finally settled their differences, worked out their misunderstandings, confessed their feelings towards each other, and come together for their first real kiss, this is what I write:

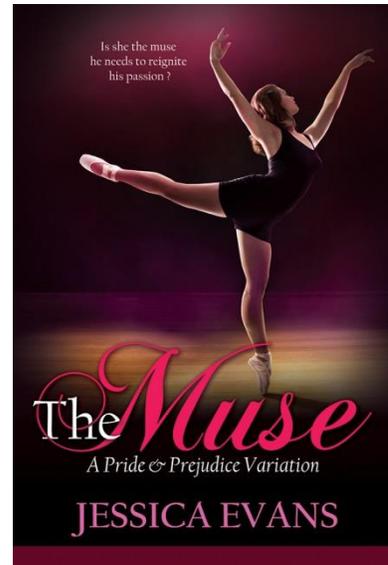
William drew her close and kissed her. They came up for air some time later, wild-eyed and flushed.

By not describing the softness or wetness or slowness or deepness of the kiss, I might be disappointing some readers, who have been waiting the entire book for this moment. But, actually, this kiss leaves room for imagination. It's coy. It continues to entice and titillate, even as it relieves tension.

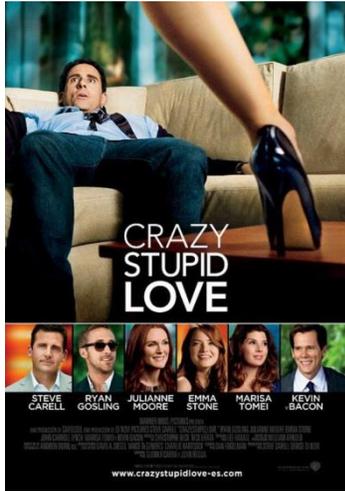
Am I suggesting you cut out entire love scenes? Am I suggesting that we stop describing sex or kisses or longing looks? No. But your writing doesn't need to be weighed down with endless description of who's doing what to whom and where they're doing it. That actually slows the pace and, to me, is less satisfying. Sometimes, writing less makes the reader use her imagination more.

Fluorescent lights show everything. They're unsexy. Now, I write like candlelight, painting my love scenes with a gentler, less revealing light.♥

*Jessica Evans is the author of THE MUSE: A Pride and Prejudice Variation. She teaches sixth grade English in a New York City public school and, in her spare time, she reads a lot of romance and Young Adult literature, enjoys walks in Prospect Park, and cooks and eats as healthily as possible. She lives in Brooklyn, NY. Visit her website: <http://jessicaevans.merytonpress.com>
Face-book: <https://www.face-book.com/jessicaevansbooks>; Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/jevansbooks>;
Goodreads: <https://www.goodreads.com/JessicaEvansBooks>.*



THE TOP 7 ROMANTIC MOVIES YOUR HUSBAND WILL ALSO LOVE! BY KATANA COLLINS



My husband and I share a love of a lot of interests (motorcycles, coffee, food, antiques), but when it comes to movies, music, and TV, we are as different as different can be. Picking a film we can both stand is like yanking a tooth from a rabid dog's mouth. My vote: *The Notebook*. His vote: *The Departed*. My vote: *Pitch Perfect*. His vote: *Pulp Fiction*. And so on, and so forth (Let me do a quick sidebar to say I actually like a lot of his favorite movies, I just find them kind of gross and hard to re-watch over and over. I have to be in the right mood for them.).

But, in our 13 years of knowing each other, I now and then find a hidden gem—some romantic movie that he loves and we cling to those movies like valuable artifacts that belong in our fire-proof safe. So, with the upcoming romantic holiday, below you'll find our list of the Top Seven Romantic Movies Your Husband Will Also Love (or in Sean's words: ...Your Husband Won't Hate).

1) *Crazy, Stupid Love*

This movie really does have a bit of everything for all audiences. It's got humor (we laughed out loud many times throughout). Love. Sex (hello, shirtless Ryan Gosling!). But at the heart of this movie is the story of an unlikely friendship. The true romance (in my opinion) is between Steve Carrell and Ryan Gosling. Yes, it's also about a woman who captures the heart of a playboy. And about a separated husband and wife entering the dating world once more. But the meat of the story is about two dudes who become friends. And that's a theme most men can get on board with. Also....Emma Stone.

2) *Ten Things I Hate About You*

Men and women alike have one love in common: Heath Ledger. To men, he played an iconic version of the Joker. To women, he'll always be that rough around the edges Australian who won our hearts in the Shakespeare retelling of *Taming of the Shrew*, *10 Things I Hate About You*.

3) *Shaun of the Dead*

I'm not a zombie lover. They scare the bejeezus out of me. BUT, there are a few zom-rom-coms I can get on board with (*Zombieland*, *Warm Bodies*). But of all of them, I think *Shaun of the Dead* is likely the best. Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright can almost do no wrong. Basically, it's got romance for me (slacker tries to win back his love) set against a zombie apocalypse (for him). For my husband and I? It's the very definition of compromise.

4) *Romancing the Stone*

Sean *specifically* requested that I put this one in here. And he got zero objections from me. For both of us, it's one of our favorite movies. Ever. Of all time. And if you haven't seen it yet? I highly suggest you find your favorite pair of acid wash jeans, tease your hair, and venture back into the 80s for this classic. Basically, Robert Zemeckis took a schlocky romance tale and turned it into an action/adventure romance with quite a bit of comedy. If you can get beyond Michael Douglas's lame dance moves, then this is a movie to watch and re-watch over and over.

5) *The Princess Bride*

Look, guys....Peter Falk specifically tells you to like this movie *within the movie*. Basically, Columbo is vowing that you will not lose any of your manbits by watching this romance. Plus—sword fights, torture, Andre the Giant, revenge, rodents of an unusual size, poison, Robin Wright...with all of that, why is it that we women are even watching? Ohhhhh, that's right. Cary Elwes (yum). So, guys....if your girlfriend or wife asks to watch *The Princess Bride*? You should have one answer and one answer only: *As you wish*.

6) *Groundhog Day*

For many guys, Bill Murray would be reason enough. But if you need more than that to convince him, in 2006, the United States National Film Registry added it to its 'best of' list and cited it as a “culturally, historically, and aesthetically significant” film. It's philosophical while still being funny (much like Bill Murray) and all about a selfish man who learns to love someone outside himself.

7) *Last of the Mohicans*

I mean, come on. Do I really even need to explain this one? If anything, I was the person who needed convincing to watch this one. But after a little nudging, Sean and Daniel Day Lewis won me over. This is a truly beautiful movie. And if you can stomach the sad reality of it and the violent battle scenes, it will surely be a classic in your house as well!

So that's it! That should be enough to get you through to Valentine's Day, right? And just in case you watch a lot of movies, here were the runner's ups, as well!:

Love Actually
Bridges of Madison County
Ghost
Casablanca
While You Were Sleeping
Up (the first 9 minutes, at least)♥



Katana Collins splits her time evenly between photographing boudoir portraits and writing steam-your-glasses romances. In addition to navigating life as a small business owner, a first-time homeowner, and a newlywed, she is the author of the best-selling paranormal *Soul Stripper* trilogy. Her most recent projects include the contemporary romance, *CAPTURING YOU* (the first in the *Maple Grove* series) and the erotic suspense series, *Wicked Exposure*. In the summer of 2014, she wrote her first ever graphic novel, *CAFÉ RACER*, with her husband Sean Murphy. She and Sean commute back and forth as they please between Brooklyn, New York and Portland, Maine, with their ever-growing family of rescue animals (two dogs, a cat, and counting!). She can usually be found hunched over her laptop in a cafe, guzzling gallons of coffee, and wearing fabulous (albeit sometimes impractical) shoes. Visit her on the web at www.katanacollins.com.

THREE BASICS OF A PERFECT LOVE SCENE

BY BRIANA MACPERRY



We've all read them: love scenes that drag on and on, using words that would work better atop a Ritz cracker than on the page of what's supposed to be a scintillating novel. And we've all done it: slammed the book closed and tossed it across the room, when the most respectable character magically turns into a porn star at the sight of an erect penis. But don't be too hard on the author. Writing a sex scene that is *also* a love scene is a precarious dance, one involving a three-step tempo. So how can you become the next *Dancing with the Stars* champion? Learn the basics.

1. The pacing must be perfect. In a love scene, you should slow the pace *way* down. Focus on the five senses and how they are being stimulated. Does the lace of your heroine's bra cup itch, thus keeping her nipples stimulated throughout dinner? Has the smell of the hero's cologne driven her mad all night? What does it feel like when the hero unzips her dress and her flesh is exposed to the chilly room? What is the difference between those goosebumps, and the goosebumps she gets when he licks her navel with an ice cube in his mouth? What images does this conjure for her, and how does it make her feel? Slowing down the pacing allows us to understand the relationship between what is happening externally, and how it affects our protagonist internally.

But please note, slowing down the pace is *not* an excuse for focusing on boring, meaningless prose. We don't need to know the hero passed three doors on the left, then took a right, then climbed five stairs, then turned left, then nudged a squeaky door open with his foot and took seven paces to the bed where he finally raised a knee and dropped her ever-so gently on top of it. "He carried her to the bedroom," would cover that part of the journey most succinctly.

2. The actions and reactions of the participants must be organized and believable. There is a sequence in which human beings receive and experience sensorial stimulation, and there is a uniform manner in which to write about it. Dwight Swain asserts using Motivation-Reaction Units (MRUs) is the "magic key" to compelling fiction.

Motivation is external and objectively observable. For example, "Dylan stared deep into Mary's eyes and touched her face." The Reaction is internal, subjective, and has three parts: a feeling and a reflex, followed by rational action and/or speech. For example:

Feeling: "Mary's cheeks warmed. A tingling sensation burgeoned between her hips." (You show this first because it happens instantly.)

Reflex: "Her hand shot up and cupped his fingers, removing them from her sensitive skin." (You show this second as an instinctive result requiring little conscious thought.)

Rational Action and/or Speech: "You know I can't. You're married." (You show this last, when Mary has had time to consider her emotional reactions and act in accordance with her ultimate goals.)

3. Character conflicts must be addressed and transformed. Remember, this is a love scene, not a "just sex" scene. And in order for it to be a love scene, it must be intimate. And in order for intimacy to occur, it must tap into the characters' internal conflicts, and transform them. Practically speaking, the sex must be a metaphor.

We all know the image of The Sexy Librarian: stiff and strict on the outside, but a disinhibited wild cat on the inside. Native Americans use the term, "Big good, big bad," to describe this pendulum swing. Freud used the term "Repression." But the important thing to remember when writing a love scene for a strict librarian, is to ask yourself, why is she rigid? How did she become that way? And how can she learn to loosen up?

If your rigid librarian is about to have sex, it is unrealistic to assume she'll suddenly flip like a switch and fulfill a man's every fantasy. And if you make her do that, you will lose credibility with your readers. She might have a sensual kitten buried inside, but she's more likely to claw a man's eyes out than let him get within an inch of her tail, unless he can challenge her emotional defenses in a real way (i.e. produce a feeling of safety and intimacy, first). There are a number of ways you can have the hero demonstrate he is trustworthy leading up to this scene, but in the heat of the moment, try to think of these things in terms of sex acts.

A strict librarian appreciates consistency and practicality, and would need a slower approach with increasing stimulation—aka, foreplay, and lots of it. A man should demonstrate control over his own desire long enough bring her to the point of climax, and then abandon it, so she is forced to break through her rigid shell and express her deeply buried desires. She needs to know he has enough control over himself before she can relinquish complete control to him (i.e. allow her to let go of her Daddy issues). No swinging from the ceiling or ten different positions for this gal.

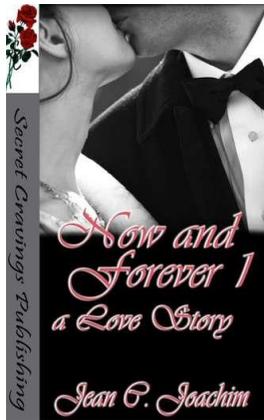
In contrast, let's say you have a Bohemian type heroine who is an unbridled spit fire. Taking it slow and trying to lull her into a state of complacency might make her feel bored, trapped, or manipulated. In this case, a man would need to make a big impression and come on strong in order to get her attention. While novelty might scare the librarian off, it could bait your artist, hook-line and sinker.

In sum, keep the pacing slow and to the point, your protagonist's actions and reactions believable, and make sure the sex is both intimate and transformative.

Follow these three basic steps and you'll not only have the perfect love scene, but also successfully move your plot forward with a significant turning point.♥



For several years, Briana MacPerry has practiced as a Licensed and Board Certified Creative Arts Therapist in New York City, working predominantly with traumatized women and addiction. Currently, she teaches graduate level thesis writing and works for a brain research and diagnostic facility. When she is not corralling her four-year old son, she is slaving away at her passion's pursuit. To learn more, please visit her blog at www.brianamacperry.wordpress.com, or follow her on twitter @macperrytweets.



IMPERFECT HEROES, MY KIND OF MEN BY JEAN JOACHIM

I write contemporary romantic fiction from sweet to sizzling. A friend, a writer, said, “Your heroes are so imperfect.” Did I detect a note of awe in her voice? Yes, my heroes are imperfect and I’m in love with each and every one.

Why write imperfect heroes? To me, it’s easier to love an imperfect man. They get caught doing things they are not supposed to be doing, they sometimes disappoint but they always beg for forgiveness. The reader watches them struggle over the course of the book to become better men and enjoys their triumphs when they succeed. Here are two:

Mac Caldwell, Hero of “Now and Forever 1, a Love Story” – my first hero and still very dear to my heart. He’s sexy, handsome, strong, intelligent, dependable, affectionate, sweet, generous and caring and also: demanding, jealous, overly protective, obsessively private and not always truthful or forthright or forthcoming. . .he hides stuff! I would go anywhere with him on any day at any time with no question and gladly spend the night!

Danny Maine, Hero of “Now and Forever 2, The Book of Danny” is my second hero, one I love deeply for all his accomplishments against overwhelming odds. While I think Danny is hot – he’s handsome as all my heroes are – he’s also: incredibly strong. Danny is sexy, protective, intelligent, warm, affectionate, sweet and funny as well as: hot-headed, deadly, damaged (perhaps irreparably) by his war experiences, slightly depressive, drinks too much (though not an alcoholic), was a womanizer (not anymore) and jealous. I would trust Danny with my life and consider any trip with him a very sexy adventure I’d never forget.

Meet them on amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, Secret Cravings Publishing, All Romance e-books and Bookstrand. [Below are the book summaries:]

Now and Forever 1, a Love Story:

Callie Richards was no stranger to heartache. Her parents were killed when she was sixteen. Left with her older sister, she fell into a romance with good-looking, Kyle Maine. They became engaged and Callie’s future was set until he was killed in Iraq. Two years later, she pulls herself together to get her Master’s degree and restart her life on her own. Working and studying at Kensington State University, Callie meets Mac Caldwell, the handsome dean. Together they fall in love, then fight a deadly campus drug ring with heart-breaking results. This is an emotional story, not a cookie-cutter romance, that will make you laugh and cry as Callie struggles to make a new life, find love and her happy ending

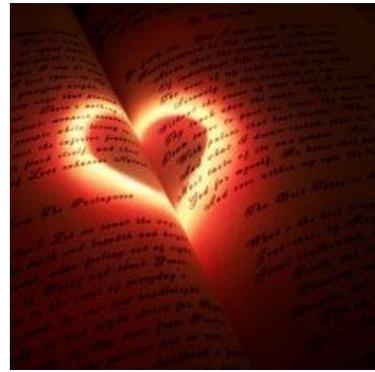
Now and Forever 2, the Book of Danny:

Can the newest professor at Kensington State escape his previous life as a killer? Leaving the Army didn’t mean the war left him so Capt. Danny Maine, now teaching English, must find a way to lead a normal life. Finding love and rekindling an old friendship are not enough to defeat old demons. Danny Maine fights to free himself from war memories and dangerous men, hoping that a new love and a new Glock will bring him peace. Now and Forever 2, the Book of Danny is a heartfelt story of love, loss and ultimate triumph that will touch your heart.♥

Jean Joachim is a best-selling romance fiction author, with books hitting the Amazon Top 100 list since 2012. THE RENOVATED HEART won Best Novel of the Year from Love Romances Café. LOVERS & LIARS was a RomCon finalist in 2013. And THE MARRIAGE LIST tied for third place as Best Contemporary Romance from the Gulf Coast RWA. She was chosen Author of the Year in 2012 by the New York City Chapter of Romance Writers of America. Married and the mother of two sons, Jean lives in New York City. Early in the morning, you’ll find her at her computer, writing, with a cup of tea, her rescued put, Homer, by her side and a secret stash of black licorice. Visit her at <http://www.jeanjoachimbooks.com>.

PUBLISHING IN THE NEWS

BY LISE HORTON



From BUSTLE, January 12, 2015:
The E-Books vs. Print Books Debate Arises Again, and This Time, There's Talk of Digital "Dying Out."

And from Galleycat, Jan. 15, 2015:
"According to the latest metrics from Nielsen BookScan unit sales of print books rose 2.4 percent in 2014. This accounts for more than 635 million units sold."

From PW Daily, January 13, 2015
"Four months after taking over as president of the Penguin Publishing Group, Madeline McIntosh has implemented a wide-ranging restructuring of the division that houses all of Penguin's adult imprints."
Romance Editor News: Tessa Woodward is being promoted to senior editor at HarperCollins Publishers.

From Publisher's Lunch, January 13, 2015:
Macmillan Signs Up For Subscription Test With Scribd, Oyster
"Macmillan has made good on CEO John Sargent's reluctant promise in his end-of-2014 letter to "test subscription" program. The company will make available 1,000 titles -- including science fiction & fantasy novels by Elizabeth Bear, Orson Scott Card, and Ursula K. LeGuin, to novels and nonfiction by Michel Foucault, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Louis Menand -- on both Scribd and Oyster's e-book subscription services. In his December letter to authors and agents, Sargent had written that they would focus on "backlist books, and mostly ... titles that are not well represented at bricks and mortar retail stores."

Macmillan has already making e-books available for sale on Scribd; the new subscription test is limited to e-books, and does not include audiobooks version (which Scribd recently incorporated into their subscription offer). "We've had a great relationship with Macmillan for more than a year," Scribd CEO Trip Adler said in a statement, "and we're really excited to welcome them to our subscription service." Macmillan is the third of the largest trade publishers to participate in the e-book subscription services -- though Simon & Schuster offers it entire backlist, and HarperCollins offers substantial Harper backlist, and last October put the full 15,000-title Harlequin backlist into Scribd's program on a one-year exclusive."

- And -

"The start-up mystery/thriller publisher **Crooked Lane Books**, the "partner" of Bookspan we wrote about in October, has signed with **Legato** for distribution. They will launch to the trade in fall 2015, with a list of 20 titles that includes a new book by Wendy Corsi Staub."

From PW Daily, January 8, 2015-- Authors Guild Drops Hathi Trust Case:
"After suffering two major defeats in its legal battle with the HathiTrust (a consortium of Google's library scanning partners) the Authors Guild this week finally did what many expected them to do long ago: they declared victory, and ended the litigation.

In a stipulation filed with the court this week, the *Authors Guild v. HathiTrust* was officially dismissed, by agreement of the parties. In a concession, HathiTrust officials agreed that the organization would, for a five-year period, notify the Authors Guild if it decides to change its practices."

PROMOTION: Genre Fiction Editor News (Fantasy/Sci-Fi): Kristin Sevick is being promoted to senior editor at Tor/Forge.♥

HOW TO WRITE A SEQUEL BY SYLVIA HALLIDAY

Or maybe how not to!

Diversion Books has just released several of my backlist titles on e-books. They have titled the trilogy I wrote as the French Maiden Series. They are MARIELLE, LYSETTE and DELPHINE, the first three books I ever wrote.

Now, when you write a sequel, there are several things you must keep in mind. First, you must leave enough threads in the previous book to hang a new plot on. That means enough characters, as well. And enough unresolved issues, without “cheating” the book you’re working on, or leaving the reader with a sense that there’s still a major problem left hanging.

As an example: my book, *PROMISE OF SUMMER*, by Louisa Rawlings. It’s set in France, though the hero has a plantation in Martinique. He had been a pirate in his past, and had run afoul of his captain, who had vowed to kill him some day. In the book, he’s uneasy when he’s in a seaport, still concerned that the captain is searching for him, though he’s not obsessed with a sense of danger. His heightened fearfulness and awareness is what reveals to the heroine his dark past. It’s a small point, and doesn’t hang over his head later on in the book. But I knew, when I wrote the book, that I had planted a thread I could use if I ever wrote a sequel, particularly since the book ends with the lovers boarding a ship for America and the islands. (And a pirate ship assaulting them on the voyage?)

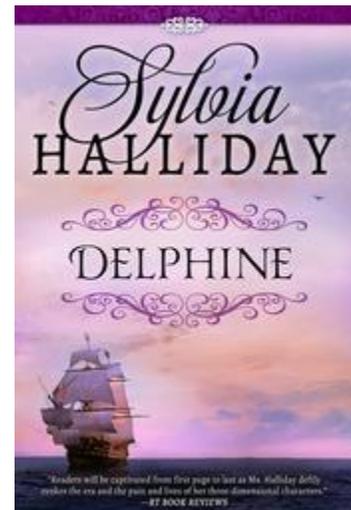
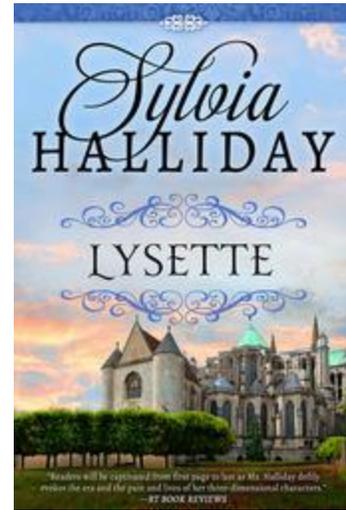
Another thing you must keep in mind is that the reader may not have read the first book. You’ve got to approach the second book as though it were a “first”, and the first book is merely the backstory. You fill in the details bit by bit, as you would do with a “first” book, and resist the urge to put TOO much backstory in. The readers who have read the first book can fill in the gaps themselves; the readers who haven’t might become bored with too much detail.

Okay. Got it? Now, back to my first trilogy. I wrote MARIELLE, then got encouragement from editors I contacted to keep writing, though no one was buying historicals at that moment, since Judith Krantz and “Glitz and Glamor” had become fashionable. LYSETTE was easy to set up, since the hero in Book One had a best friend, who made a perfect hero for the sequel. And since Marielle herself didn’t appear in Book Two for quite some time, it was easy to introduce her without the tedious backstory that might be necessary in the beginning of a book. She simply appeared as the wife of hero #1 and became friends with Lysette.

Now comes the problem. I was still in touch with several editors after I wrote LYSETTE. One of them steered me to an agent. (In those days, it was easy to contact editors--difficult to get an agent.) The agent asked me to write an outline of a third book, so she could sell it as a trilogy. I was stuck. The books were set in time of Louis XIII. If the third book dealt with the children of Marielle and Lysette, I would be in the era of Louis XIV, a very complicated time, which would involve heavy research---very intimidating for a novice like me.

What to do?

I had left no interesting characters to carry on the story. I looked over my four principals, and decided that, all things considered, Marielle could safely die, and her husband would sooner or later find another woman. And so, DELPHINE begins with the hero still mourning the loss of his wife the year



before. I never realized it was a No-No until I was at a conference and a reader came up to me and said accusingly, "You killed off Marielle! How could you?"

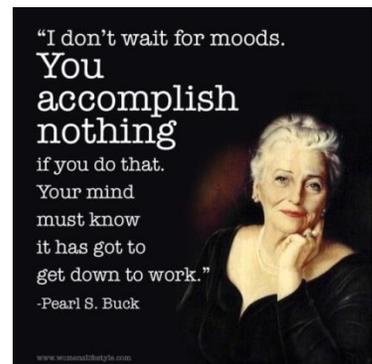
At any rate, the trilogy was sold to Pocket Books. MARIELLE launched their Tapestry line and had a print run of 300,000. And I learned, belatedly, how NOT to write a sequel!♥

Award-winning author Sylvia Halliday's first historical novel, written as Ena Halliday, was chosen by Pocket Books to launch their Tapestry line. She subsequently wrote for Popular Library/Warner and Harlequin Historicals under the pen name of Louisa Rawlings, the name of her maternal great-grandmother. She has written for Kensington/Zebra under the pseudonym of Sylvia Halliday. She has published 14 historical romances. Her FOREVER WILD earned 5 stars from Romantic Times and Affaire de Coeur, and was a RITA finalist for the Romance Writers of America. Her latest offerings, published by Diversion Books, are MARIELLE (The French Maiden Series, #1), LYSETTE (The French Maiden Series, #2), DELPHINE (The French Maiden Series, #3), DREAMS SO FLEETING, GOLD AS THE MORNING SUN, THE RING, AND SUMMER DARKNESS, WINTER LIGHT. FOREVER WILD, STOLEN SPRING, and PROMISE OF SUMMER, written by her as Louisa Rawlings, are available from Samhain Publishing. Visit her blog, Life Lessons From An Old Bitch, at www.sylviahalliday.blogspot.com and follow her on Face-book @SylviaHalliday.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM RWA

RWA is publishing a second anthology. The theme will be Second Chances. All members of RWA are welcome to submit a story for consideration. For more information, you can go to <http://www.rwa.org/page/call-for-submissions>.

RWA's first anthology will be released on February 9, 2015. The collection of stories from members of the RWA community was edited by Sylvia Day. For more information, you can go to <http://www.rwa.org/rwapremiere>.♥



WRITERS' QUOTES ON LOVE:

"I have learned not to worry about love; but to honor its coming with all my heart."--*Alice Walker*

"The one thing we can never get enough of is love. And the one thing we never give enough is love."--*Henry Miller*

"Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle, love is a war; love is a growing up."-- *James Baldwin*

"When Love speaks, the voice of all the gods Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony."
William Shakespeare, Love's Labour's Lost♥

FREE PROMOTION!

**Have a new book out?
Interesting topic, research, tips to share?
An event, book, conference
you'd like to review?**

**Keynotes is a FREE promotion opportunity.
Send in your articles, news, book covers,
reviews, etc., to keynoteseditor@gmail.com.**

THE GIDDY GRAMMARIAN: ACRONYM FAQs... OR IS THAT FAQ'S? BY LISBETH ENG



Love them or hate them, acronyms are nearly as ubiquitous as death and taxes, to borrow from Ben Franklin's old saw. There are even acronyms *about* death and taxes: DOA (dead on arrival) and IRS (Internal Revenue Service) to name two. Acronyms are so common that we sometimes forget what the letters actually stand for. Until I researched this subject, I didn't know that "laser" stands for Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation. Nor did I know that the longest American acronym is ADCOMSUBORDCOMP HIBSPAC, a United States Navy term that stands for Administrative Command, Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet Subordinate Command.

One controversy about acronyms is how to indicate plurals. For example, does one write FAQs or FAQ's as the plural of Frequently Asked Question? Though there are differing opinions among grammarians, IMHO (I trust you can identify *that* acronym) it is preferable to omit the apostrophe. Thus, multiple Chief Executive Officers would be referred to as CEOs and a plethora of digital versatile discs as DVDs. However, if you insist on including the apostrophe, please be consistent.

Now, one mustn't get carried away and end up with a case of the dreaded RAS syndrome or "Redundant Acronym Syndrome Syndrome." Examples include:

- IRA account (Individual Retirement Account Account)
- ATM machine (Automated Teller Machine Machine)
- PIN number (Personal Identification Number Number)
- SALT talks (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Talks)

When you say that Saudi Arabia is an OPEC country, you are actually saying that it is an Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries country. You can avoid this by simply saying it is a member of OPEC.

Contrived acronyms have been invented to either exploit or avoid taboo words. The clothing company French Connection sold t-shirts emblazoned with FCUK (allegedly denoting the nonsensical "French Connection United Kingdom") to take advantage of the provocative similarity to a naughty word for copulation. Conversely, some organizations have taken the high road – or at least the less embarrassing one – and contorted their acronyms to avoid such vulgarity. The internationally recognized qualification for Computer Literacy and Internet Technology is known as CLaIT, rather than CLIT, for reasons you may be able to surmise. Likewise, the political group formerly known as the Canadian Conservative Reform Alliance Party was purportedly renamed the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance when they realized the original initials spelled CCRAP.

With the proliferation of texting and tweeting, acronyms and other abbreviations are encroaching further and further into our language. However, one should take care to avoid overuse in formal writing, and feel confident enough that the reader is familiar with the acronym. You are probably safe to use LOL, OMG or BTW in a text message or tweet, as the users of those media are likely hip enough to recognize them. Even the decidedly un-hip Giddy Grammarian would recognize those.♥

Lisbeth Eng works as a Compliance Officer in the financial industry by day and writes historical romance by night. She holds a bachelor's degree in English, and speaks a smattering of German, Italian and French. Please visit her at www.lisbetheng.com.



HELLO AND WELCOME TO MY WRITING DEN!© ROMANCE IN A FLASH BY MARIA COX

Romance writers, here's an oft overlooked genre you may want investigate. Flash fiction.

Flash fiction is a short form of storytelling defined by the number of words and/or sentences, which of course vary from writer to writer. In a nutshell, flash fiction is any writing material more than 50 words and less than 1,500 words—some flash fiction writers stretch the limit to 2,000 words.

Note: Other names for flash fiction are micro fiction, pocket-size story, and minute-long story.

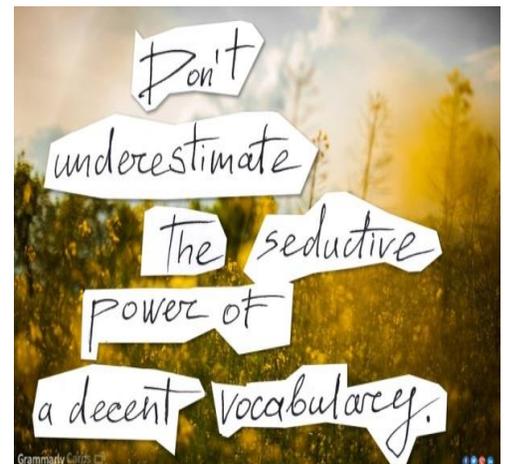
Flash fiction has been around for many years—reportedly since the early 1990's—but has become increasingly prevalent in the literary community over the last five to seven years. Once regarded as “lazy” work, flash fiction is now considered quite the opposite: intellectually challenging storytelling. So even though by definition the context of flash fiction is to remain extremely short, it is not a medium that tolerates fragmented writing. The challenge of flash fiction is to tell a complete story in which every word is absolutely essential.

It stands to reason that in a society where people expect information at lightning speed that the instant gratification that flash fiction provides would grow in popularity. Due to its wide spread appeal today, many mainstream publications have shifted their focus to include flash fiction. For example Women's Day Magazine has a romantic stories section that calls for <800 words and Cosmopolitan has a steamy romantic section that calls for >800 words. Also, there are many publications that exclusively feature works in flash fiction format, Vestal Review, Brevity Magazine, and FLASH Fiction Online just to name a few.

As it pertains to the romance genre itself numerous romance publishers such as Decadent, Secret Cravings, Etopia, and Evernight have in recent years added Anthologies to their categories; Anthologies are compilation of flash fiction and/or short stories.

Don't forget that Romance Writers of America is organizing its second romance anthology. Want to learn more about this exciting opportunity? Here's the link: <http://www.rwa.org/page/call-for-submissions>. Good luck!♥

Maria Cox has a degree in Business Administration with a Minor in Computer Applications. She also has an accreditation from the Project Management Institute. Maria has been writing stories since she was a young girl. She picked up her first romance novel when she was just eleven years old and has loved the genre ever since. Her first published novel, WICKED LUSTFUL TALES, was released through Melange Books in October 2013. Maria writes sensual romance, stories that showcase strong, sassy, and sexy characters. When she's not writing, Maria works a technical writer. She lives in Queens, New York. Please visit her site www.mywritingden.net and/or follow her on Twitter. Maria is a member of Romance Writers of America (RWA) and a member of RWA/NYC & RWA Desert Rose. She is also is the past President of the Phoenix Writers Club.



AFTER THE FIRST BOOK: FIND YOUR PEOPLE

BY KATE MCMURRAY

It seems to have become conventional wisdom that success in the twenty-first century is measured in Twitter followers and Face-book likes. Obviously a large social media following grants you wide exposure, but does it translate into sales? And what about other, more intangible help for an author?

When I first got involved with the Rainbow Romance Writers chapter of RWA, I helped conduct a survey of romance readers. As a chapter, we were curious about romance buying habits for both romance generally and LGBT romance specifically. According to what we found regarding discoverability, social media is not actually the be all, end all. Most readers find new books through their friends or through recommendation engines on Amazon and Goodreads. Certainly some recommendations come through social media, but it's more word-of-mouth sharing from readers—"I just read this awesome book and I want to tell you all about it" or "Can anyone rec me a unicorn shifter book?" etc.—than from authors directly. Social media is a great way to reach your existing fans, definitely, but it's probably not exposing you to a lot of new readers.

"But everyone says—" I know. "By my publisher made me—" Mmmhmm. I hear you. But think about it from a participant's perspective. When was the last time you bought a book because of something somebody said on Twitter? And was it a book by someone you were already a fan of?

I think the better way to think about social media is a tool for interacting with likeminded people—your people—and less as a marketing tool. The marketing is almost a side effect. Everyone hates the social media accounts that are all promo all the time, right? Maybe you get some retweets or shares when you post promo stuff, but you're probably not making a lot of meaningful connections. It's more effective to post stuff that your fans can relate to and to cultivate online relationships. Participate in the experience rather than just yelling into the void to hope someone hears you. Then when you do have a new book out, a fan can think, "Hey, that Kate sure is a cool chick. I'll share this info about her new book with my followers." And, hey, maybe you connect with some new readers that way.

Example: I went on a blog tour for my latest book in December. I threw all the posts up on Face-book. They got some likes and clicks but not a ton. You know what did get a ton of likes and comments? A throwaway post about a poofy sequin dress I bought.

That's not entirely an accident, though. I've made some decisions about branding and social media, so I have some interests that are "on-brand" that I post about regularly. They're the sorts of things my readers might be interested in, also. Fashion is one of my interests. That is, it is generally, but also, I've applied it to my writer life. I try to look stylish at conferences. I tweet about shoes and fashion trends sometimes. So when I binge bought a poofy sequin dress—for reasons—I shared it on social media and got a lot of interaction. Same goes for tweeting about my cats—everyone on the Internet loves cats, right?—or about baseball or New York City or opera or pop culture or things relevant to the themes and characters in the books I've written. Making these kinds of posts makes you seem like a real person and not a book-writing robot. Having a silly conversation with a fan about your new hot pink kitten heels (true story!) over Twitter is a way to enforce a relationship. And, since we live in an age where even teenagers are branding themselves, talking about stuff beyond your release dates can help flesh out and shore up your brand.

It's important to think about social media not as a burden but as a means to have fun. If you really dread it? Don't bother. Spend your time writing your next book. You won't gain enough exposure from going through the motions for it to be worth it, and readers will pick up on your don't-want-to-be-here vibe. There are plenty of other ways to market your book.

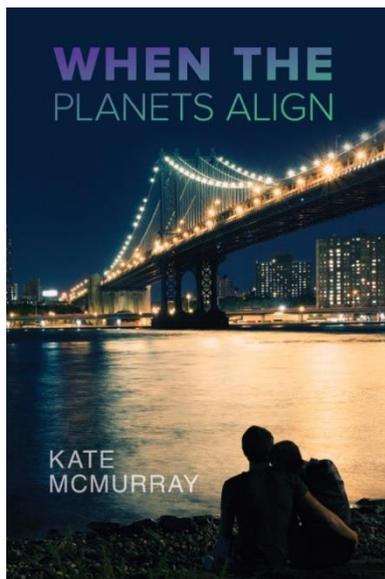


I personally love Twitter. I've honed the list of people I follow to be people who appeal to my interests. I follow a ton of romance writers, many of whose books I adore, but also baseball writers, comedians, fashionistas, other New Yorkers. I find Twitter entertaining and a fun distraction. I'm less enamored of Face-book, which I find frustrating and harder to curate. So I spend less time there. I check in once or twice a day to see what my friends are up to and I post periodically to remind everyone I'm alive, but to me, it's not worth the time to fret about how many friends I have so much as I want to continue to reinforce the relationships I've built. (I'm not on Tumblr or Instagram or Pinterest. I just don't have time at present, and I'd rather not do a thing than half-ass it. But your mileage may vary. Find the social media that works for you, that you enjoy, and run with it.)

You can take it a step further by cultivating relationships with colleagues who will both support you through tough artistic times and help you promote when your book is published. These relationships, to me anyway, are more valuable than strangers on social media.

I once saw Sarah MacLean give a talk on advice for writers, and one piece of advice that stuck with me was that, when you attend your first conference, find the people who are at approximately the same level in their career as you are. You can do this locally at RWA meetings as well. Finding those people and befriending them can both set you up with a support network—people to commiserate with when things get tough, potential critique partners, someone to bounce ideas off of—and a potential network of people to help you out when your book comes out. Someone you have a real relationship with is more likely to retweet your new book announcement, for example. They might also host your blog tour or talk up your book to their fans. You should do the same for them. That's support you can't buy.

But don't limit yourself to just other writers, especially not on social media. Writers are awesome and many of us are avid readers as well, but we aren't the core of your audience. Build relationships with bloggers, reviewers, romance fans. Be open to readers asking you questions. Interact with people, don't just post. You'll build a following by following others and proving you're real and not just a promo machine. The key is to find your people. ♥



RWA/NYC VP Kate McMurray is an award-winning author of gay romance and an unabashed romance fan. When she's not writing, she works as a nonfiction editor, dabbles in various crafts, and is maybe a tiny bit obsessed with baseball. She has served as President of Rainbow Romance Writers, the LGBT romance chapter of Romance Writers of America. She lives in Brooklyn, NY. Her tenth novel, WHEN THE PLANETS ALIGN was published in December 2014 by Dreamspinner Press. Visit her at www.katemcmurray.com.

FIT & WORDY: DO YOU HAVE THE LOTTERY LAZIES?

BY LISA SIEFERT

You know the phrase: “Hey, you never know.” Somebody has to win. And it’s true. But have you also heard the phrase: “You have a better chance of being struck by lightning than winning the lottery.”

The Lottery Lazies isn’t an official ailment, as defined by the medical profession but it’s more of a mindset and philosophy on achieving greatness in life. It’s a false belief that you can get something for nothing. The popular Lottery Lazy belief is that there are tons of rich, old men waiting to marry you and pay off all your credit card debt. If you have the Lottery Lazies, I’m here to tell you to get rid of it. Like the plague. It will only hold you back from reaching your full potential and cultivating the skills and habits you need in life.

How do you know if you have the Lottery Lazies? If you get excited by this ad below, then you have it.

Anyone remember the disastrous results of the last “wonder herb”: Fen-phen.

If you want to hit the bestseller list, lose weight, get in shape or run a marathon, then drop the



Lottery Lazies. The belief that you will suddenly become \$600MM richer from a \$1 ticket is a little silly. And even worse, a gateway drug to more unrealistic expectations based on half-hearted efforts, like thinking a juice cleanse will have any long lasting effects.

If you want to lose weight and keep it off, forget anything that advocates more than 1-2 pounds of weight-loss per week.

Successful and long-lasting weight-loss involves adopting healthier and more active lifestyle habits, not single, isolated get-thin quick schemes. I promise that if you will take the time and really try to change your habits, then you’ll find you don’t need to try anymore. Being fit and eating healthy will just be a part of who you are.

We first make our habits and then our habits make us. – Stephen Covey

Three healthy habits to start today:

1. Sleep at least 8 hours/night
2. Walk at least 10,000 steps/day
3. Eat a healthy breakfast

I may never win the lottery (actually, I know this for certain since I’ve never purchased a ticket in my life) or make the NYT Bestseller list but every day while someone else is wasting time reading about yet another life hack shortcut, I’m adding another 10 pages to my latest draft or another 10 minutes to my cardio session. And saving at least a \$1/day by not buying a lottery ticket.

For more fitness based tips for writers, go to www.fitandwordygirl.com.♥

Lisa Siefert is an aspiring NA/Mystery author who lives on the UWS with her dog: Hoppy, a fit and barky 10# miniature pincher. Please visit her at www.fitandwordygirl.com.

SOCIAL NETWORKING FOR AUTHORS: BLOGGING BY MARIA C. FERRER



To blog or not to blog?

I say, YES!

As I mentioned last month, editors and agents are looking and buying authors who are on the social networks. Authors need to be seen and heard. A blog is a perfect vehicle for both. A blog is like a public journal that is always active and available. A website is too, but I consider a website more of a PR kit, where readers can visit and check out your photo, bio; read some excerpts; browse your bibliography and ooh-and-ah over the book covers. Websites are “book marks” for your public face.

A blog, on the other hand, is a living, breathing journal. A blog is where you write about yet another NYC snowstorm and how your slip in the middle of the Food Market inspired a short romance between a TV celebrity chef and “the milkmaid” selling her family’s dairy products.

(NOTE: For those who don’t know much about blogging, think of a blog post as an article for the newsletter. Only instead of writing for Keynotes, you are writing for your own personal newsletter aka blog.)

On your blog you can be as brief or as verbose as you want to be. Or you can write nothing at all and just post pictures of frozen fountains, hanging icicles and red-cheeked boy-toys. You can blog about anything and everything. And then you can link those blog posts to your website, Face-book and Twitter pages, etc.

Now the big question is – What do I blog about?!

Here’s a short list of blogging topics:

- 1) Write about writing – the process, conferences, fantasy worlds you enjoy.
- 2) Interview interesting people you meet – other writers, the dog walker or President Clinton (I met him last year and got the photo to prove it!)
- 3) Write about things you love – dogs, knitting, water towers, Indian captives, etc.
- 4) Share quotes that inspire you or enrage you.
- 5) Share a playlist or your TBR pile list.

The secret to a successful blog is to make it a fun and a provocative place for readers to visit.

For example, I have always loved Kwana’s blog (www.kwana.com) because she always includes a note about Jack, her dog. I enjoy reading Nalini Singh’s blog and newsletter (www.nalinisingh.com) because she always adds a new excerpt or a free short story. I am having fun reading Sylvia Baumgarten’s new blog (<http://sylviahalliday.blogspot.com>) because of its title, Life Lessons From An Old Bitch. And, let’s not forget Elizabeth Mahon’s Scandalous Women blog (scandalouswoman.blogspot.com), which became a book! I love reading about daring, fearless women who are not afraid to live life to the fullest. I want to be just like them!

Visit some of these blogs. Check out other blogs by your favorite authors /editors /agents /celebrities. And, of course, visit our Chapter Blog (www.rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com), with hundreds of posts from numerous romance writers; plus, sexy book covers every Friday! Visit the blogs. Study them. Ask yourself, what you like about them? What can you steal from them? And, also see what does NOT appeal to you and make sure you don’t do that.

Big question #2 – Do I have to blog every day, every week? I say, NO!

Study your personal and writing schedules. Take a day, and write two, three or more articles on different topics, and then schedule them throughout the month. And since you will have linked your blog to your social media pages, you are all set. Viola!

Are you ready to start blogging?! Blogger (www.blogger.com) and WordPress (www.wordpress.com) are two free sites. I use Blogger. I find it simple to post and schedule my articles. Start blogging today! Remember, You are a romance writer and you want to be seen and heard.♥

Maria Ferrer has three personal blogs and runs the chapter's blog, as well. She is determined to make them all a success. Fingers crossed. Visit her blogs at www.latinabookclub.com; www.marializaferrer.blogspot.com; and www.mydelcarmen.com.

CONFERENCES

Digital Book World, Jan. 13-15 (NYC)
 Sleuthfest (Mystery Writers of America), Feb26 – Mar 1
 (Deerfield Beach, FL)
 Unicorn Writers Conference Saturday, March 14
 (Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY)
 Liberty States, March 21 – 22 (NJ)
 The Write Stuff, Mar 26 – 28 (Bethlehem, PA)
 Romantic Times Conference, May 12 – 17 (Dallas)
 Book Expo America, May 27 – 29 (NYC)
 Thrillerfest, Jul 7 – 11 (NYC)
 Southampton Writers Conference, Jul 8 – 19
 (Southampton, Long Island, NY)
RWA National, Jul 22 – 25 (NYC)
 Writer's Digest Conference, Jul 31 – Aug 3 (NYC)
 Authors After Dark, Aug 12 – 16 (Atlanta)
 NJRW, Oct - TBD (NJ)
 Moonlight & Magnolias, Oct 1 – 4 (Georgia)
 ComicCon NY, Oct 8 – 11 (NYC)

Have you got another conference or convention on YOUR calendar? Let us know so we can spread the good word!

RESOURCES FOR MEMBERS

www.fictionfactor.com – Massive repository of articles on every conceivable aspect of writing fiction.

www.nytimes.com/column/bookends - List of prior dual-author “Bookends” pieces on myriad aspects of writing, reading, literature, fiction.

www.mediabistro.com/galleycat - Media Bistro covers entertainment and media business, and GalleyCat is the publishing “imprint” of the site. All things writing, publishing and books.♥

RWANYC #6

YOGA for WRITERS

Writer's block giving you a bad back? Plot twists leaving you with an aching neck? Do you suffer from enjambment of the joints? If so, stretch your body *and* mind with these yoga poses for writers.

POSE before PROSE 



COFFEE SHOP OUTLET STRETCH



EXTENDED METAPHOR



PLOT TWIST



STARVING ARTIST
(AKA “REACHING FOR CHEESE CUBE AT BOOK LAUNCH PARTY”)



NAVEL-GAZING POET



BLURB-BEGGING NOVELIST



LOOKING FOR AN AGENT POSE



HIDING FROM STUDENT EMAILS
(AKA “THE ADJUNCT POSE”)



POST-SUBMISSION POSE
(AKA “TRYING TO NOT REFRESH EMAIL POSE”)



FORM REJECTION POSE



PERSONALIZED REJECTION POSE



ACCEPTED STORY POSE

WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM THE EDITING PROCESS BY JEAN JOACHIM



I hate the words “that”, “just” and “really”. These are words I have over-used in my fiction to the point where I get furious now when I see them. Microsoft Word throws an honest eye on your writing when you use the “find” command, only to discover you have used the word “was” 936 times in a 70,000 word manuscript!

Discovering the words I over-use, learning where my writing weaknesses are is all part of the editing process. There are two phases to the editing process, the first is the one you do at home on your own where you hope to catch all the things that should be fixed. The second part is getting your “edits” back from your publisher when you’ve made a sale. I lost my editing “virginity” five books ago.

Grit your teeth, steel your stomach, the edits are not pretty. But they are most often sent to you by someone who wants to make your book better. So stomp around for a while, holler, scream and curse, if you must. Then sit your fanny down in that chair and get to work.

As hard as the edits may be to take in the beginning, by following along faithfully and making as many of the changes as you can without wrecking your story, you will learn a tremendous amount about yourself and your writing. I have. My problem was that although I’ve been writing for 20 years, I’ve been writing non-fiction, advertising copy and columns, like my movie reviews. This is a completely different type of writing from fiction, especially romance fiction.

So what have I learned? I learned that I often write quickly, my stories fairly fly but I am sometimes missing transitions. One scene may begin abruptly instead of having an appropriate transition to move you easily from scene to scene. That is easy to fix.

My main nemesis, now that I have eliminated those repeating words, is POV or point-of-view. Head hopping, as it is affectionately known, is something I’m guilty of. I have studied the problem and am becoming more and more aware when it’s happening. My goal is to submit a manuscript without one single head-hop. I’m determined to do it and getting closer every day.

These two weaknesses have come to my attention through editing. Use of passive voice has also dogged me. I am conquering that one more easily as it has become more recognizable to me as I work through my edits.

Has my writing improved after living through this process five times? You bet it has. I’m now in my sixth novel, and getting better at re-writing and editing on my own. Yes, it is hard to see these mistakes in yourself. But don’t give up. Keep editing on your own, listen to your editor and try to be open to suggestions. It isn’t easy for us writers as our book is our baby. But every baby has to go to school. Your editor is your teacher. Let her guide you through the rocky waters of editing and bring your book out on the other side the very best book it can be.♥

Jean Joachim is a best-selling romance fiction author, with books hitting the Amazon Top 100 list since 2012. THE RENOVATED HEART won Best Novel of the Year from Love Romances Café. LOVERS & LIARS was a RomCon finalist in 2013. And THE MARRIAGE LIST tied for third place as Best Contemporary Romance from the Gulf Coast RWA. She was chosen Author of the Year in 2012 by the New York City Chapter of Romance Writers of America. Married and the mother of two sons, Jean lives in New York City. Early in the morning, you’ll find her at her computer, writing, with a cup of tea, her rescued put, Homer, by her side and a secret stash of black licorice. Visit her at <http://www.jeanjoachimbooks.com>.

DIVERSE BOOKS: SHE SAID WHAT?

By Ursula Renée



One of the best ways to convey a character's personality is through his own words. His language, dialect, and slang can give readers a clue about his heritage, education, and social standing. It also makes him stand out, enabling the readers to identify when he speaks without the use of dialogue tags.

An author, however, needs to be careful with speech. She does not want to use so much slang, regional dialect or foreign words that a reader would need to refer to a dictionary when reading the novel. She also needs to make certain that words and dialects fit the characters so readers do not become offended (you would not assume everyone from England speaks Cockney therefore all African-American characters should not speak Ebonics).

Before an author decides a character's speech, she needs to know the character's biography as well as the setting and time period of the novel. A person's culture, age, household, education, and job can affect how she speaks. It would be out of place for a gangbanger to say, "Would you do me the honor of partaking in a bit of nourishment with me?" when speaking with his homeboys. At the same time, a college educated man in 1945 would most likely not say, "It ain' gonna doya no good ta tawk wid 'em" when addressing his boss.

Once you have decided how a character would speak, try to be consistent throughout the novel. You should not switch the speech pattern unless you have a good reason. For example, a Harvard educated African-American man raised in an upper middle class family would not start using street-slang if another African-American walks into the room unless he was undercover.

Also, pay close attention to the time period and setting so you do not have your characters using words not common for that era or location. The use of modern words in an historical can pull a reader out the story. Once jolted out, it may be hard for her to return to a work that has a cowboy on an 1883 cattle drive declaring, "That cat is so square even his name is corny."

To research various slangs and dialectics try traveling to the area where the story is set and listen to locals. If the trip cannot be made, various websites, including the International Dialects of English Archive (<http://www.dialectsarchive.com/>) and The Speech Accent Archive (<http://accent.gmu.edu/>) can help authors get a sense of how people from various areas sound.

If the novel is an historical, read popular works that were written during that time period to get a sense of how people talked. Try to read a variety of works from various authors to get a board understanding of the language. Also, a search on the Online Etymological Dictionary (<http://www.etymonline.com/>) can help determine if a word is appropriate for a particular time period.

When using slang, an author may want to consult with someone familiar to the lingo. This can include people who speak the language (teenagers or someone who lives in an area where the language is spoken). People who work around those who use the slang (i.e. teachers, police, social workers, etc.) can also be consulted.

Words can have different meanings depending on the region a person is from, who is speaking, and who is being spoken to. Therefore, if an author uses foreign words in a novel she should ask someone who is fluent to verify that the words convey the meaning that was intended.

Dialects, slang and various words can help with character development. However, the improper use can cause readers to roll their eyes and abandon novels that insult their intelligence. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct some research when creating dialogue.♥

Ursula Renée is the President of RWA/NYC. Her first historical romance, SWEET JAZZ, was released in September 2014 by The Wild Rose Press. When she is not writing, she enjoys photography, drawing and stone carving. Visit her at www.ursularenee.com.

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