

Novelists' Ink

The official newsletter of Novelists, Inc.—a professional organization for writers of popular fiction

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A Soundtrack for Popular Fiction: Using Voice to Score

By
BARBARA SAMUEL

There is no small measure of intimidation in being asked to do an article for this newsletter—and when the topic is something as amorphous as voice, that intimidation factor trebles. But I admit voice is one of my favorite subjects, and the opportunity to explore it deeply was irresistible.

As a subject among general writers, voice can cause the kind of heated discussion only matched by point of view. Among popular fiction writers, it can even cause the kind of hostility ordinarily reserved for literary terms like “post modernism.”

It is also a subject that isn't likely to come up until a writer has a few novels under his belt because the struggle toward mastery in terms of publication is a daunting enough task without tossing something so slippery into the mix. A new writer will often dismiss the concept (and rightly so) in favor of creating crisp dialogue and a plot that moves.

But as the credits pile up and the realities of the business come home, voice becomes more critical. We feel in our guts that it sets a work apart, but we don't always know how, and often our editors are too busy to bother nurturing the stirrings of voice when they see it in our work.

The problem stems from several sources. Part of it is the way the term has been taken over by literary critics to give a wash of respectability to books that a) they don't understand or b) don't have much else to recommend them.

Voice, in those terms, becomes an intellectual excuse for poor construction, a literary sleight of hand that obscures the true importance

of voice in all fiction, popular or literary.

The biggest confusion, however, comes from mistaking voice for style. The terms are not synonymous. Voice is a potato. Style is a French fry.

CORNERSTONES

Each of us has a voice, like it or not, see it or not. Sometimes it is skinny and undernourished, starved for purposes of the market. Often, however, voice in popular fiction, particularly in some of the more standardized markets, such as category contemporary or mystery series, is like a little girl putting on lipstick—it can give a hint of possibilities to come.

In my opinion, voice is the single most important element of a writer's work.

Any writer. Voice gives a work its spirit, its stamp of uniqueness, its heart. Voice forms the soundtrack of a work, and like the soundtrack of a movie, a poor one can undercut even the greatest of stories, while a great one elevates it.

It isn't something one can point to, specifically, and isolate, like style. Voice is shaped by everything the writer has ever seen or thought or heard. It is influenced by the places he's lived and the songs he's sung and the religion he practices. Woven into it are the voices of her grandmother and father and little brother, every story she's ever heard or read, her education and personality and attitude toward life.

Voice comes from the belly and from the mysterious river of the unconscious, not the brain or the mind, and therefore it is hard to control, and probably impossible to change enormously. (Style can be changed, but more on that in a minute.)

So why bother to even examine (continued on page 5)

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Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

Advisory Council

Rebecca Brandewyne† Linda Barlow
Janice Young Brooks† Georgia Bockoven
Jasmine Cresswell† Evan Maxwell
Maggie Osborne† William Bernhardt
Marianne Shock†

† Founder

If you have questions regarding Novelists, Inc., please contact a member of the Board of Directors.

1997 Board of Directors

PRESIDENT Victoria Thompson

563 56th Street
Altoona PA 16602-1233
Ph 814-942-2268 / Fax 814-946-4744
E-mail: VESTinPA@aol.com

VICE PRESIDENT Steven Womack

2525 Forest View Drive
Antioch TN 37013-1333
Ph/Fax 615-367-2674
E-mail: dfblooz@aol.com

SECRETARY Candace Schuler

7 Tenby Chase Drive
Voorhees NJ 08043
Ph/Fax 609-753-3484
E-mail: Schuler 776@aol.com

TREASURER Phyllis DiFrancesco

27 Stonehenge Court
Burr Ridge IL 60521
Ph 630-325-1624/ Fax 630-325-1625
E-mail: phyllisdi francesco@prodigy.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR Anne Holmberg

2372 Vintage Dr.
Colorado Springs CO 80920-3834
Ph 719-592-9460
Fax 719-592-9460
E-mail: anneholmberg@juno.com

ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

Janice Young Brooks
Box 1112
Mission KS 66222-0112
E-mail: cozybooks@aol.com

CENTRAL COORDINATOR Randy Russell

Novelists, Inc.
P.O. Box 1166
Mission KS 66222-0166
Ph/Fax 816-561-4524
(Call before faxing)

NINC/NINK correspondence
can also be sent to the e-mail address:
ninc1989@aol.com

Web site: <http://www.ninc.com>

Send Address Changes to Central Coordinator

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

How would you like a job that would help you:

1. Make new friends!
2. Become fulfilled as a human being!
3. Overcome feelings of guilt and inadequacy!
4. Give you power and influence!

Then have I got a deal for you: volunteer for a job in NINC! But seriously, folks, it's that time of the year again when we start filling the chairmanships of our various committees for next year. The Nominating Committee has, by the time you read this, already prepared the slate of officers for the coming year. Those folks will be appointing people for the really fun jobs, namely, the committee positions. These are the places where you can accomplish something in this organization, something that could possibly help improve the lot of every writer everywhere. Sound impressive? You bet it is! And I'm hardly even exaggerating at all!

I thought about starting out by giving you my own personal testimony of why I chose to serve NINC, but everyone knows you have to be crazy to run for President, so I was afraid my testimony might be a little suspect. With that in mind, I asked some other folks for their input, and they came through like the troopers they are. So here they are, all the reasons why you should consider offering your services to NINC:

"I volunteer for strictly selfish reasons: to fulfill certain non-writing goals in a forum which is respectable and where I'm unlikely to be sued for my mistakes. Chairing the 1997 conference, for example, is helping me fill in a huge gap on my life resumé with impressive phrases like "leadership experience" and "organizational skills." These are qualities which one doesn't acquire sitting alone in a room writing books, but which many people want to be assured you have before they'll let you accompany them on an expedition to the Himalayas, for example."

— **Laura Resnick, Conference Coordinator**

"I volunteer out of guilt and blatant self-interest. Guilt, because I was brought up to believe you're supposed to give something back to the organizations from which you benefit. And self-interest, because I enjoy meeting and working with so many interesting, talented people. As newsletter editor, I can spend NINC money getting someone else to write articles on topics I want to know about! How can you beat that?"

— **Anne Holmberg, NINK editor**

"I volunteered because 1) I was asked (this is a major character flaw, according to my husband) and 2) as a fairly new member I saw it as a good opportunity to get involved in the organization and meet people.

— **Candace Schuler, NINC Secretary**

"Working for your organization is fun. It makes you feel a part of things. It also makes you more knowledgeable about our industry. But the best benefit of all is you almost always forge new friendships. One of my dearest friends is someone I never would have met but for our common volunteer efforts."

— **Pat Kay, Outreach Chair**

"Volunteering is the key to guilt-reduction. No seriously, I enjoyed volunteering this year because I felt as though I was giving something back to

**This Month
from the
President:**

*Have I got a
deal for you
— volunteer!*

an organization that has given so much to me, and I got to speak with and get to know many of our members as well."

— **Diane Chamberlain, Membership Chair**

"You mean aside from the fact that:

- a) you get to know more about the organization
- b) you get to know more about the people
- c) you get to pay back some of the bennies (benefits) you reap
- d) you get POWER :-)
- e) you get to do your share
- f) you get to make more & better friends.

"Well, the best one I can think of is you get to be thought of as the expert :-) I'm amazed how many people "know" me. (Actually, it's kind of scary—but in a nice way.)"

— **Alyse Rasmussen, Internet Chair**

Actually, we're only kidding about the "power" part of it, in case you haven't already figured that out. But the rest is very true. Every year I work for NINC, I make a whole passel of new friends, all of whom also provide me with a

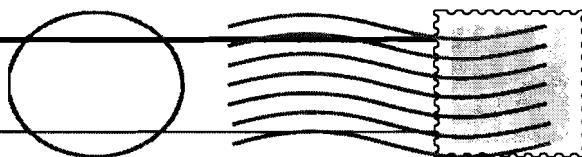
personal network in this very uncertain business. And Laura is even more accurate than she realizes in saying she's filling in holes in her resumé. When I had to go out and get a real job last year—after being out of the work force for 23 years!—I got my current job on the basis of all the years of volunteer work I'd done. Hey, you never know when you'll need something on your resumé!

I must also admit that I'm not being the least bit altruistic when I serve the members of NINC, either, because I *am* NINC. Unlike other organizations where your hard work helps wannabes, here in NINC whatever benefits other NINC members benefits me as well. If we publish a guide to agents, I can consult it when I need an agent. If we do an audit of a publisher, I can learn more about how the business works. If I research an article for the newsletter, I can learn something that will help me in my career.

Everything I give to NINC comes right back to me. So volunteering for NINC is actually the epitome of selfishness. Be selfish: Volunteer!

— **Victoria Thompson**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Letters to the Editor is the most important column in our newsletter, since it is the monthly forum in which we can all share our views and express our opinions. Anonymous letters will never be published in NINK. Upon the author's request, signed letters may be published as "Name Withheld." In the interest of fairness and in the belief that more can be accomplished by writers and publishers talking with one another rather than about each other, when a letter addresses the policies of a particular publisher, the house in question may be invited to respond in the same issue. Letters may be edited for length or NINK style. Letters may be sent to the NINK editor via mail, fax, or e-mail. See masthead for addresses.

I-Publishing: Who Pays?

It looks as if someone has figured out how to make money publishing fiction on the Internet. The question is, who's paying? The readers...or the author?

A friend of mine sent me some info on an Internet publisher she's considering. 1stBooks™, a division of Advanced Marketing Technologies, LLC. (205 North College Avenue, Suite 312, Bloomington IN 47404) The contract seems pretty good. Straightforward, no obvious scamster small print.

The writer must edit and copyright the work. 1stBooks will publish it online, and possibly via CD-ROM or diskette. 40% royalties quarterly. The author provides \$199 set-up fee—returned after 1,000 copies sold—and \$10/month nonrefundable maintenance fee. 1stBooks will publicize,

including free publicity copies.

Cheaper than self-publishing with paper. OTOH, with paper, you at least have the unsold copies, hoping to sell them eventually. My friend, who has had many commercial novels, also has self-published poetry and very local interest volumes.

Decide for yourself if you're interested.

I do know of one successful nonfiction Internet publisher. A golf nut who collected reams of golf statistics for decades, and recently posted them on his Web page. When golf equipment companies noticed he was getting tens of thousands of hits a day, they started bidding to advertise on his page. He's smiling all the way to the bank.

This may be the way Internet publishing will go. The prototype will not be books, or movies, but television. Advertisers will pay.

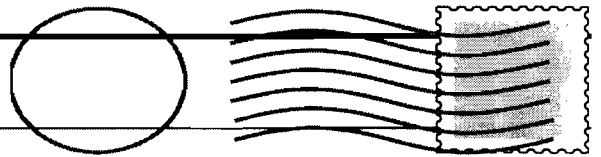
So who would want to advertise with a novel? For romance, say, honeymoon cruise lines? Las Vegas? Singles clubs?

Start thinking. The future may be here before we know it. Possible dreams.

— **Marj Kruger**

Reviews—Do They Really Influence Readers?

Last July a client of mine, Peggy Nicholson, had a charming, totally offbeat romance entitled *You Again* published by Harlequin Superromance. It featured a heroine who temporarily inhabits her cat's body because an > > >



(Continued from page 3)

evil secondary character is trying to kill her. The hero has always disliked cats, but this one works her insistent charm on him in a manner that perplexes him. *You Again* received rave endorsements from Kay Hooper, Karen Robards, Anne McAllister, and Antoinette Stockenberg, all of which were featured on both the front and back covers. *Romantic Times* gave the book a 1 rating. [Ed. note: A "1" rating is the lowest RT gives, and that is rare.]

Needless to say, as Peggy's agent, I was irritated and so called [RT publisher] Carol Stacy. I argued that it was the book's very freshness and originality that should have been noted for RT's readers. I was told that the concept of the book "did not meet and probably would not satisfy readers' expectations of category romance." Carol was gracious and patient with my impatience, but neither of us convinced the other of the rightness of her point of view. Such is life.

Months later I called Peggy and told her I had received her royalty check. "Did I earn out the advance?" she groaned. I told her that she had *doubled* it in royalty earnings, and Peggy was already at the upper tier of the Harlequin pay scale, having been with them for many years. The book has since continued to earn royalties. All of which is to say that despite disappointing reviews, word-of-mouth is a reality when books deliver their story with energy, charm, and originality.

Thank you, Stobie Piel, for your comprehensive overview of this business of reviewing.

— **Damaris Rowland**
Literary Agent

[Ed. Note: Agents and editors who attend the NINC conference receive a free year's subscription to NINK. Ms. Rowland is not a member of NINC, but we appreciate her input!]

Harlequin/Silhouette Double-Racking Question

At the risk of sounding like Chicken Little, I'm directing a cry of alarm at my fellow authors of Harlequin and Silhouette series romances. I need your help in determining whether or not the sky is about to fall on us—or if it's already fallen and I'm just the last to know.

Earlier this year, when my latest Harlequin Superromance failed to put in an appearance at either of my hometown book outlets, I was irritated, to say the least. I wasn't personally offended, though, because there wasn't a copy of *anyone's* Superromances—or *anyone's* Americans, Temptations, or Intrigues, for that matter. When I noticed the same curious deficiency at a book outlet in a town nearby, I took a peek behind the books and discovered that most of the series pockets had *two* labels, clearly indicating that two lines were intended to share one pocket. (Since two parti-

cles of matter can't occupy the same space I figured it had to be a time-share.)

Alarmed, I asked my editor if she had heard of this frightening new policy. She hadn't, nor had her boss.

I asked my agent and he hadn't heard a whisper.

I hadn't read anything about it in *Novelists' Ink* or the *Romance Writers' Report*, either, so I decided this was just a local quirk. My book sales were not going to plummet nationwide. I relaxed.

Then, on a lark, I happened to mention this curious anomaly to a representative of one of this country's big book distributors, and to my horror he knew exactly what I was talking about.

Though he denied that his company was engaging in the practice widely (because it violates their agreement with Harlequin), he stated that some distributors are taking advantage of Harlequin/Silhouette's staggered release schedule and doubling up pockets. In theory, this reduces a book's shelf life from one month to two weeks. (I say "in theory" because books at my little local Wal-Mart are stocked only once a month, so Supers, Americans, Temptations, and Intrigues are never cycled in. There hasn't been a single book from any of those lines in my hometown for over four months.)

The distributor's justification, according to my source, is that "all series sales come in the first two weeks of release," so the authors aren't really losing out on sales.

Right. Pigs fly and monkeys don't carry ebola, either.

When I apprised my editor of the context of my conversation with this distributor, she asked if I would make a survey to see just how widespread this practice really is. I'm only too happy to do that, but since my ancient computer isn't up to cruising the Internet, my "widespread" only has a 100 mile radius.

I need the help of anyone who would be willing to spy on their local booksellers and let me know what's happening across the country. Take a quick count to see whether pockets are allocated for all 12 Harlequin/Silhouette lines. If you find a retail outlet engaging in the practice of doubling pockets, just drop me a note with the name and location of the store. (I'm on deadline right now and don't have an answering machine, so I'd appreciate letters, not calls.)

I'll collate the results and send them to my editor. Since this practice violates the distributor's agreement with Harlequin, there may be a way to stop this if we blow the whistle long and loud enough.

I look forward to seeing what you find—I'd be happy to discover that the sky is only falling in my little neck of the backwoods.

— **Connie Bennett**
PO Box 14
Dexter MO 63841

Soundtrack for Popular Fiction: Voice

(Continued from page 1)

it? A lot of small reasons, but one very big one: success. A powerful voice will immediately set a writer apart. A powerful voice, matched to the most powerful form for that particular voice is the stuff of *New York Times* bestsellers and major awards—and that seven figure contract.

We've all, by luck or timing or instinct, managed to find primary markets, but it's a rare writer who doesn't find the need—financial or creative—to head in new directions, or increase his success in the primary market. Understanding the function of our own voice can be an immeasurable help on that journey.

Sometimes, especially when a writer makes practical decisions for the market, the individual voice can be buried, or more often, pushed away by the writer herself. Lyrical doesn't work well in Market A, but Market A pays well, so the natural poet tries to shape the voice to the format, rather than finding a format that fits the voice.

We have all seen writers make a surprising leap from one genre to another—sometimes making a huge turn that startles bystanders—and find enormous success after a middling career in the first genre. Often, the key to that “surprising” success can be attributed to the writer throwing off the shackles of an uncomfortable voice/genre fit and embracing her true voice.

Sometimes, it happens by happy accident. More often, like anything else we do in this business, the reality is a difficult self-examination preceded by disappointing sales or even a series of slammed doors. The writer, orphaned or lost, throws all rules to the wind and writes the book in her heart and hits the *New York Times*.

It doesn't have to come to a slammed door or months of despair. A blessed few writers uncover their

natural voices early and with great aplomb. The rest of us can benefit from taking a look at the elements that form strong voices in other writers and seeing what we make of our own.

“MY WOUND IS GEOGRAPHY”

Pat Conroy is a perfect melding of voice to form. He is admittedly a literary writer, but his books have enormous popular appeal, so he fits our purposes here.

“My wound is geography. It is also my anchorage, my port of call.”

So begins *The Prince of Tides*, one of Conroy's most beloved and successful books. In those sentences, he gives us not only the setting for the story, but a clear direction of his voice as a writer, and why it works the way it does. This is a writer who understands the single most important influence upon his voice is the geography that formed him. It is a very lush, lyrical voice, one perfectly suited to the humid, verdant world about which he writes, the American South. It's redolent with rich, exotic scents perfuming the air and dangerous creatures lurking in the overgrown moistness. It is a perfect backdrop for the stories he writes, all set in the humid, sensual, sometimes dangerous South.

Southern writers are easy to pick out thanks to our training in Faulkner. Another example of great melding of voice and form, particularly a voice rooted in a specific geography, is the wildly successful *Sin* series by Tami Hoag. It's impossible to read *Night Sins* without sometimes taking a sympathy breath inside your shirt to protect the nose hairs from that biting, bitter, terrible cold. The style is quick and sharp. The subject matter is dark and cold and evil. The mix of the bitter cold of Minnesota to a cold and dangerous crime is a very successful combination.

In examining influences that might influence our own voices, geography is a great place to start. Rudolph Hinojosa-Smith, who bases his work in the Texas/Mexico Rio Grande valley, says place is the spine of a writer.

If we've grown up in a particular location, we know it intimately—the way the light breaks at all times of year, and the sound of the people in conversation, and the taste of the weather. It shapes us almost without our notice.

More importantly, each geography has a voice of its own, a speech pattern formed by the native languages, by response to the weather, by what we mean when we say something.

Recently, in one of the author topics on Genie RomEx, the topic of wind fell under discussion. Now, I hate wind. Loathe it. And when this discussion came up, I wrote about my own hatred with particular glee. People from many different regions of the United States chimed in with their feelings about it, and to my amazement, not everyone hated it. Some even loved it. It had never occurred to me that it was possible to love wind.

As we continued to talk, it became evident that >>>

Voice is the single most important element of a writer's work. Voice gives a work its spirit, its stamp of uniqueness, its heart. Voice forms the soundtrack of a work, and, like the soundtrack of a movie, a poor one can undercut even the greatest of stories, while a great one elevates it.

Soundtrack for Popular Fiction: Voice

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those of us in the West or on the plains had a very different idea of what the word “wind” described than those in more protected places. Wind, in my mind, is a force as aggravating as a more powerful older brother who runs up behind you and gives you a wet willie for no reason except pure aggravation. It blasts and burns or freezes. It makes my house and my face and everything else dirty. (And don’t ask me why my pen name is “Wind” because I won’t have a good answer. Maybe I hoped I’d be as pervasive as a western wind.)

Those who lived along the sea, or in forests, or in the East, rhapsodized about their winds...the glory of them blowing in their faces. The sweetness of the sound on a winter night, the inspiration wind lent their creative hearts.

Interestingly enough, this was during the period when *The English Patient* had seized the nation’s imagination, and many of us who cursed the wind were struck by the recitation of winds called by so many names, personalized and demonized, by the peoples of the Sahara.

Certainly we are not bound by a geography that spawned us. I was raised in the desert and I sometimes write about England. (I’m very certain British readers would be able to pick out anomalies in my voice, too. They have.) Many writers migrate to locations, either physically or in their work, that are more authentic “homes” to them than the lands of their births. John Gardner, in his *The Art of Fiction*, repeatedly says the young writer learns most about writing by reading. “The writer...is presenting not so much what he knows about life as what he knows about a particular literary genre...the artist’s primary unit of thought—his primary conscious or unconscious basis for selecting and organizing his work—is genre.” We often fall in love with other places by the same method—through our reading.

Still, geography is a place to begin in terms of voice. The very small detail of wind shows us how powerful environment is. Wind is only one element. There is light, too, the quality of light in low humidity or high. The sound of the birds.

The flora and fauna. And most important, the sound of the people themselves.

Which leads to the single most important formative element of voice: culture.

Culture, of course, is often part of that geographical thread. That includes the larger body of culture that forms us—our country, our times—but also includes family and ethnic influences, and the kind of education and travel we’ve experienced.

By “ethnic influences” I don’t mean ethnic in the way it is defined in America at the moment—ethnic as in “people of color” (nor am I dismissing them). I mean all ethnicities. Witness the success of the movie *Fargo*, which showcased a specific geography and a particular white ethnicity. *Fargo* is a particularly good example, actually, because the rhythm of the language pattern is what gives it its special flavor.

A Dutch-American in Kansas has particular foods and experiences and family structures formed as surely by culture as any barrio youth in El Paso, Texas. The language structures of English influenced by Atlanta drawls or taxicab Bronx or New Mexico Spanish or mid-western Scandinavian lilts are critically important to the development of the inner ear of the writer. As we learn to speak, according to cultural and regional accents or rhythms, the embryo writer is also being formed. Those early sounds and rhythms cannot help but form a very powerful part of whatever our voice is later in life. Natalie Goldberg, in *Writing Down the Bones*, talks about discovering a powerful thread in her own voice when she attended a synagogue and heard the sound of the prayers for the first time in years.

A writer I know moaned about her background in suburbia, amid malls and comfort and the “homogenized” world of southern California. How could that possibly form anything interesting in her voice?

It does. She’s writing fabulous, funny, light romances that have gone over in a big way with readers. Her voice is formed of sunlight and good things and comfort, and a genuine optimism about the honor of love, and the joy of families and peace. Her voice is powerful. It is distinct. It is hers alone.

STYLE VS VOICE

The elements of geography, culture, and family are internal, and largely fixed. Style and tone are not, and these are the tools we use to fit ourselves to a particular genre or period in history. The shifting of style and tone are what make it possible for the same writer to believably handle work in several time periods or genres. As long as the writer is true to her voice, the style can be manipulated.

The only way to illustrate this concept is by example. I’ve chosen Susan Wiggs because I’m very familiar with her work, and she does write quite a lot of different things well. In the following three passages, she writes in a

The single most important formative element of voice [is] culture...our country, our times...family and ethnic influences, and the kind of education and travel we’ve experienced.

contemporary mode, a fantasy mode, and a straight historical mode.

Historical:

Dona Elvira screamed for order among the queen's ladies and the Spanish contingent, but her voice drowned in a sea of song and chatter. Gabriella found the excitement wildly intoxicating. After years of confinement at Durham House, the prospect of viewing the king's first public tournament held the allure of a siren song. She responded to the jostling with merry laughter, earning herself a glare from Dona Elvira. (From *Jewel of the Sea*, Tor Books, 1993)

Contemporary:

The next day, Jack took the subway in to the paper. The mindless clack and sway of the train, the blank looks on the commuters' faces and the bovine flow of foot traffic in the underground passageways suited his mood.

Now and then, he encountered the annoyance of carolers and shoppers reminding him it was Christmas Eve, but he managed to ignore them. (From "Cinderfella," *Merry Christmas Baby* anthology, Harlequin, 1996)

Fantasy:

Below, not far from the dun, a grove of hawthorn trees swayed like dancers. The cool green scent of summer filled the air. Shadows moved, live things in the grove. Aideen shivered and hugged herself.

Soon, her husband would come.

Then, high above the sighing of the wind and the noise and laughter from the hall, came the glistening plaint of a harp. (From "The Trysting Hour," *Irish Magic*, Kensington, 1995).

In all three passages, the author's voice is plainly evident. There is a crisp, clean intelligence about her diction, a clarity of prose style that never shifts. Her word choices are surprising and acute: "drowned in a sea of song and chatter," "bovine" flow of humanity, "glistening plaint of a harp." Across the board there is a lyric strand, balanced by simple phrases, like the rests between notes. This is voice.

The style, however, changes. Straight historical novels require the author to step back one pace to give us a cinematic view of the action, and that is reflected in the paragraph from *Jewel*. Contemporary romance requires a much deeper personal involvement of the author and reader in the intimate thoughts of the characters, and although this is a transition scene, it's plain we do have that with Jack. Finally, fantasy requires a transportive voice, a bridge to the otherworld, and we're keyed to make that transition in "Trysting" with a particular rhythm of poetic mood.

There is not room here to quote entire pages, but in each instance, it's obvious by even looking at the page of the printed book how the author has shifted stylistically to match the genre. The shape of paragraphs, the balance of dialogue to narrative, the overall length and rhythm of sentences are different in each form.

These three passages also illustrate the reasons to ex-

amine voice for fit to a particular genre. I have no doubt that Susan Wiggs could write a hard-boiled mystery if she chose, and make me like it. She would, however, have to write against her natural voice to do it. Hard-boiled detectives are not prone to discoveries of wonder, or surrounded with music, or bathed in light, which are all ear-marks of her voice. (Oddly, as I thought about this, I could see her voice working well for a particular sort of horror novel. The poetics of darkness would mesh well—but I selfishly hope she sticks with romance.)

HEARING THE MUSIC WITHIN

The last element is passion, and its role in the creation and development of our voices. Our passions as writers, but also as simple humans, locked in the flow of life along with all the other humans on the planet. There are the obvious passions, like a love of history, or Regency customs, or the particulars of a specific hobby—gardening or guns or art. We draw from these naturally, in most cases, as we draw from former professions or training in various fields.

The more interesting, and often more telling, passions are those we either don't notice or have not realized form enormous parts of ourselves. To discover these, there are two places to look: in our own work to date, and in the work of other writers.

We all have beloved books, books we've read so often the pages are grimy and the covers are ragged. These often offer clues to those themes or times we'd find most compelling; in fact, these are the books that often lead us to work in whatever genre we've chosen.

There is another kind of reading, however. There are certain writers who make me want to rush to the keyboard. I can barely read three pages of Clarissa Pinkola Estés without feeling the restlessness of my own words stirring, whispering. It isn't any better when I listen to her on tape. I have yet to finish reading *Women Who Run With the Wolves* because of this, though I'm sure I've read all of it in a three page stint somewhere along the line.

I also can't read the Cavalier poets without the same rushing need (no pun intend!) to get to the computer. But in each case, it's a different sort of writing I feel the need to explore. Estés's voice is powerfully female (and she seems to cause the same response in a lot of writers), and the seductiveness of her lyrical style makes me swoon.

The sound she awakens in me, however, is the voices of the old grandmothers who were a fixture in all the houses of my neighborhood. She sounds like my grandmother telling tales of sin and redemption in her Texas drawl, mixed up with the Spanish inflections of the grandmothers next door. Her voice rings a bell of recognition and wakens one aspect of my voice, which, in the earliest stages of speech, was shaped by the triad of cultures in the Southwest.

I haven't figured out the Cavalier poets, to be honest. I'm not sure what music they're rousing. I do know that their voices awakened a lush, wild book that is one of my very favorites to date, a Georgian historical romance that was a genuine joy to write.

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Soundtrack for Popular Fiction: Voice

(Continued from page 7)

There are writers who affect each of us in this way, and it's worth it to seek them out for the reinforcement they give to elements of our voices we haven't considered. When a writer causes a swell of joy or recognition, it's worth taking a few minutes (or hours or days) to see if there might be some clue to voice in the response.

Finally, the best place to look for clues to voice is in our own work. It might be worth a look at books that have done particularly well—not necessarily in terms of money or list position, but also in terms of a flurry of extra letters, or particularly excellent reviews, or award nominations. Anything that seems to make a book stand out. Also, which books were most enjoyable to write? What subjects, themes, times, places, characters crop up over and over? What loves shine through the words? What sort of images appear?

There is a small, ironic note to all this in terms of my own quiet, usually unnoticed passion. Writing or speaking on a subject requires the author to consider her thoughts and analyze the material, and as I put this article together, I gave a great deal of thought to my voice. I remembered reading a passage from Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine* to my children a few years ago, and realizing with an almost physical shock how much he had influenced me. I'd read the novel for the first time in my early teens, about the time I was discovering that my most passionate wish was to write, and had often read it aloud to myself, absorbing the sound of the words, the play of them, the mood they created. It enchanted me. So the influence is not surprising, but it was startling.

Naturally, writing about geography and culture and family, I thought of how those elements influenced my work.

But as I considered how to express the terms and definitions, I kept imagining music—voice as rap, voice as

Beethoven, voice as Spanish guitar—and wondered how I could convey that image to the reader. The leap to “voice as soundtrack” is easy to follow.

Music, you see, is my quiet flame. I am not a musician, in spite of combined years of training in voice and cello and clarinet and guitar. I have, sadly, no talent for it.

What I do have is a passion for music, a passion born in my mother's singing arms. One of my earliest memories is donning my grandmother's blue gauze robe and spinning, dancing, growing delirious on The waltzes of Hungary and the music of the Ukraine. Spinning inside the music, I was anywhere, everywhere—a princess or a soldier or a leaf, falling to a stream that ran away to the ocean. My parents sang, and taught us to sing while we did chores, or to pass time in the car. They played their record albums, and we all received training in choir or the orchestra. Music was so omnipresent it was like breathing—not really something one ever thinks about. There. Present. Part of everything.

This shows up in my work in strong ways: the heroine of the first book I was able to sell was a classical guitarist and composer. My first RITA finalist was centered around the blues. A second RITA finalist was about a composer. There are bards and singers and dancers and musicians of all sorts in my books. Music makes me happy, but in words, I can have what I do not in real life: the power of a musician. The joy of creating a symphony, not with notes, but with words. It's as close as I can get.

That doesn't mean everything I write will have music, or even that I'll change anything. But it's a good thing to know, something that does form part of my voice, something I can use. Perhaps it is a clue that will eventually lead to an epiphany of voice for me, down the line somewhere.

LETTING GO

It can pay—literally—to uncover the true nature of the individual writer's voice. By feeding and tending those elements that make a voice unique, we're rewarded not just by soaring royalty figures, or an auction, or vanloads of fan letters. By learning to feed and tend that uniqueness, then embracing it with a whole heart, the writer offers the one thing no one else can. Himself. His own vision of the world. What it should be, what it isn't, what it must be. And in doing so, find the readers who share that view.

But after thinking and analyzing and considering and feeding that voice, let it go. Because voice is the river of everything we are, the only way to truly let it go is by plunging deep and swimming in the darkest depths.

Dive in. *NINK*

Barbara Samuel is the author of more than 18 novels and novellas, under both her own name and her pseudonym Ruth Wind. Her current works are a trilogy from Silhouette, The Last Roundup, and a medieval romance from HarperPaperbacks, Heart of a Knight.

The more interesting, and often more telling, passions are those we either don't notice or have not realized form enormous parts of ourselves. To discover these, there are two places to look: in our own work to date and in the work of other writers.

Authors and Electronic Rights: CD-ROMs

CD—ROM stands for
“Compact Disk
—Read-Only
Memory.” A standard CD-ROM

is a plastic disk about 4½" in diameter containing roughly 650 megabytes of digital information that can be read by a laser. CD-ROMs are durable, cheap to manufacture, easy to carry and use. They're one of the most efficient and convenient forms of data storage available.

Up until the twentieth century, the most efficient and convenient form of data storage available was the book. In many ways, CD-ROMs outdo books by a wide margin. Will CD-ROMs, or something like them, replace books, then?

Not any time soon.

It's easy to put a story on a computer screen. Take the text of a book, put it in a file, and anyone with a computer can read it. The average novel can fit on a standard 3.5" diskette, so it would seem obvious and natural that someone would try selling novels that way.

It's been tried, but it hasn't worked, mostly for two reasons:

First, diskettes can be copied very, very easily. Authors and publishers are not happy with the idea of selling novels that can be copied exactly in five minutes at a cost of just 39¢ (or less!) for a blank diskette.

Second, and more importantly, readers don't want to read plain text from a computer screen. It's not much fun. It's not convenient. You can't read a computer screen easily while lying in bed, or on the beach. Books don't need batteries or power cords. A printed page is easier on the eyes than most computer displays. If you ruin a book by dropping it while reading in the bathtub, or lose it by leaving it on the bus, you're out five or six bucks; do that with a laptop and it's a couple of grand.

Computer developers have been looking for ways to get past these problems. So far, they haven't been entirely successful, but they're making progress.

On the second problem, one approach is to make computerized books more convenient, more like traditional books. Sony has tried this, creating the Sony Bookman, a pocket-sized device that reads CD-type disks and displays text on a little screen. This has been moderately successful in crowded, gadget-happy Japan, where readers may not have room for a lot of bookshelves and may want to

By
LAWRENCE WATT-EVANS

show off their cutting-edge technology on the subway, but it remains virtually unknown in the U.S.

Another approach, one favored by American companies, has been the “value added” product, where the computerized version contains more than the basic text. This is usually done on CD-ROM rather than on diskette not because of copying concerns, but simply because there's so much more room—roughly 400 times as much information as a standard diskette. Furthermore, CD-ROMs can't be erased, are much harder to damage, and because of their capacity are much harder to copy (though it can still be done).

CD-ROMs have been successful as computerized books in two niches, and so far, only in two niches: reference works and children's books.

Reference works have done well because a single CD-ROM can replace an entire shelf of dictionaries, thesauruses, and books of quotations, or hold an entire encyclopedia, and provide easy cross-references as well as full-color illustrations, audio clips, and video clips. Instead of paging through heavy volumes, the reader can have the computer do the searching—type in a word, and choose from a list of entries provided by the computer. If it's done right, as “hypertext,” cross-references and in-depth sidebars can be checked with a click of a mouse. A reference book on movies can provide actual clips from the films described, an art encyclopedia can show hundreds or thousands of paintings in full color, etc.

Children's books have succeeded by adding animation to the illustrations. The usual approach is to have dozens of surprises hidden on each page, to be found by the reader—click the mouse on any picture element, and something might happen. Click the black space beneath a bed, for example, and a monster's face might appear, glance quickly back and forth, then vanish again.

Generally children's books will also read themselves—sometimes in more than one language.

Neither of these “value-added” methods will work with a traditional novel. Readers don't want cross-references in *Gone with the Wind* that let them click to find out more about sawmills or blockade runners, nor do they want animated illustrations of Tara where a click of the mouse will bring

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The single biggest stumbling block [for computerized fiction] is readers' prejudice against reading from a screen... partly the result of inept work by providers who don't pay enough attention to making the text easy to read.

Authors and Electronic Rights

(Continued from page 9)

Scarlett's father galloping across the screen. What does that leave?

Well, sheer quantity in a small space—one of the virtues of the reference works—might be a possibility. It's been tried, anyway.

Of the 20 disks available for the Sony Bookman, 19 are reference works; the 20th is *Library of the Future*, released by World Library Inc., which included several hundred complete works, both fiction and non-fiction—all of them in the public domain.

It hasn't been a major hit.

Another attempt was Brad Templeton's collection of all the nominees and winners in the professional categories of science fiction's Hugo Awards for 1993. This included authors' notes, related articles, and whatever other materials Templeton (who is the proprietor of ClariNet, one of the most successful on-line news services) thought would be appropriate. It sold, in his words, "a couple of thousand," and he did not repeat the experiment in subsequent years.

Templeton is knowledgeable about science fiction, and about electronic publishing; perhaps he lacked the marketing resources of a major corporation, but his failure would seem to indicate that the market for fiction on CD-ROM isn't as rich as it might appear.

However, he believes there's a future for computerized fiction. He thinks the single biggest stumbling block is readers' prejudice against reading from a screen, and that this prejudice is partly the result of inept work by providers who don't pay enough attention to making the text easy to read. Computer text generally has inadequate margins, and often ugly or hard-to-read typefaces; the centuries of experience accumulated by typesetters and book designers has not yet percolated through to software designers. Templeton thinks that eventually this will change.

If fiction on CD-ROM ever *does* catch on, it could be a huge market, one authors can't afford to ignore—but it may never happen. Ken Jenks, the proprietor of Mind's Eye Fiction, believes that CD-ROMs are already on their way to obsolescence, going the way of the 8-track tape. Why?

Because the Internet will do the same job better.

With a diskette or CD, you still need to go to the store, pick it out, buy it, bring it home, and load it into your computer. With a story on the Internet, you never need to leave your chair—you can tell your computer to fetch it over the phone line. That beats either books or CD-ROMs for convenience. Furthermore, you can store the story on hard disk, out of sight in the depths of your computer—or simply erase it, and download it again if you want to re-read it. CD-ROMs take less shelf space than books, but downloads take none at all.

A few years ago, publishers thought CD-ROMs were the wave of the future, and many companies got into producing

them. Most have now gotten back out. Of the major traditional publishers who entered the field, only Time-Life and Random House made money; most publishers who attempted to market CD-ROMs lost their shirts.

This may mean that CD-ROMs are a publishing technology whose time has not yet come, that not enough readers have CD-ROM drives in their computers yet, that the marketing and distribution systems aren't yet ready—or it may mean that Ken Jenks is right, and CD-ROMs are the digital equivalent of eight-tracks, a technology whose time has already passed.

In either case, it's not one that's currently booming. Were I offered a chance to sell CD-ROM rights to my work, I would bargain for the largest advance possible, even if it meant taking a somewhat lower royalty.

But I wouldn't settle for *no* royalty, because as with any other new technology, we can't know what the future may bring. Someone may yet find a way to sell fiction on CD-ROM in quantity.

But I'm not holding my breath. **NINK**

Lawrence Watt-Evans is the Hugo-winning author of some two dozen novels, 100 short stories, and assorted articles, poems, etc., almost all in the fields of science fiction, fantasy, and horror. His epic fantasy Touched by the Gods will be published by Tor in November.

INTRODUCING...

The following authors have applied for membership in NINC and are now presented by the Membership Committee to the members. If no legitimate objections are lodged with the Membership Committee within 30 days of this NINK issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of NINC:

New Applicants

Lois Greiman, Dayton MN
Stephanie Bond Hauck
(Stephanie Bond, Stephanie Bancroft), Alpharetta GA
Sandra Hill, State College PA
Kathleen Klemm (Kate Hathaway), Baltimore MD
Julie Pottinger (Julia Quinn), New Haven CT
Patricia Ryan, Rochester NY
Haywood Smith, Buford GA

New Members

JoAnne Cassity (Jessie Gray), Boardman OH
Jan Freed, Richmond TX
Karen Harbaugh (Kathleen

Elliott), Federal Way WA
Eileen Hehl, New Milford CT
Angela Elwell Hunt, Seminole FL
Mary Pat Kanaley (Patricia Williams), Spokane WA
Jolie Kramer (Jo Leigh), Houston TX
Elizabeth Manz, Sterling Heights MI
Florence Moyer (Hayley Gardner), Bossier City LA
Cynthia Richey, Dunwoody GA
Christie Ridgway, La Mesa CA
Sonia Simone-Rossney (Sonia Simone), Berkeley CA
Laura A. Shoffner (Laura Abbot), Eureka Springs AR
Patricia Werner, Englewood CO

Vision Quest

By
MARY JO PUTNEY

Perhaps writers don't actually have worse eyesight than the general population, but it often seems as if we do. All those years spent reading under the blankets with flashlights, no doubt. I'm what the trade genially calls a "high myope," (extremely near-sighted), but didn't mind wearing glasses as long as they corrected my vision adequately. Then I hit 40, and presbyopia (the decreasing flexibility of the lens which leads to reading glasses or bifocals) kicked in, creating ever worsening problems with getting a satisfactory prescription. I was not a happy camper.

Then a couple of years ago I visited an old college roommate who is now a Chicago ophthalmologist. When I whined about the problems I was having, she suggested laser surgery. What really caught my attention was her statement that it was so effective that many ophthalmologists were having it done on their own eyes. If it was good enough for an eye doctor, it was worth investigating.

To briefly explain the theory, people are near or far sighted when the cornea is the wrong thickness to project images correctly on the retina. With near-sightedness (myopia), the cornea is too thick. Ergo, changing the curve of the cornea can correct the refraction of light, thereby giving a person normal vision. The first form of refractive surgery was RK, radial keratotomy. In RK, radial slits are cut in the cornea in a spoke-like pattern so the cornea will flatten and correct the patient's myopia.

In the interests of fairness, I'll say that RK has been FDA approved for over 20 years and many people have been very satisfied with the results. Nonetheless, I wouldn't recommend it to anyone, and not just because it means someone sticks a diamond knife into your eyes. Over time, the correction frequently shifts, causing far-sightedness. Really unlucky people might end up with fluctuating vision and the need for several pairs of glasses to be used at different times of the day, since the necessary prescription varies with eye fatigue. It is also apt to be rather painful, takes weeks or months to heal, and is not effective for higher degrees of myopia. And to top it off, the scar tissue formed usually prevents the wearing of contact lenses if needed later in life.

Even for satisfied customers, the structure of the eye is weakened by being cut in half a dozen places. Imagine what might happen if an automotive air bag goes off in your face. Better yet, don't imagine it.

Laser surgery is altogether a more gentle affair. In the most common form of refractive surgery, PRK (*photorefractive keratotomy*), a thin layer of cells is planed off the surface of the cornea by a computer-controlled excimer laser so precise that it can carve a human hair like a sugar twist chair leg. It takes only seconds, heals quickly, and involves minimal pain. Many patients are back to work

and driving the next day, though complete stabilization might take three to six months.

After surgery, a clear "bandage" contact lens is worn for several days and various medications are used to prevent infection. "Discomfort" or "a gritty feeling" are the most common descriptions. A few people—under 10%—feel more significant pain that requires stronger medication. Occasionally an additional procedure, called an "enhancement," is required to get optimal vision. The greater the correction being done, the greater the likelihood that an enhancement will be needed. Most clinics will do these free of charge within a year of the original surgery.

About a year and a half ago, PRK was approved in the U.S. for myopia up to -6.00 diopters (low to moderate myopia). It is now widely available and has largely replaced RK. For a first-hand description of what is involved, see Stobie Piel's account which follows this article. She chose to have the procedure done one eye at a time, waiting several months between. This is a good choice for anyone who is nervous about having both eyes zapped at the same time, though having both eyes done at once is increasingly common.

Of course, no medical procedure is totally effective and risk-free. Complications include light-sensitivity, hazing, glare, and "haloing" around images. Most of these are minor nuisances that will clear up in several months. The most likely practical problem is some glare when driving at night. Infection is very rare, and I've heard that no one has ever been blinded (the ultimate fear) by laser eye surgery.

Many eye clinics advertise PRK with phrases such as "95% of patients achieve 20/40 vision or better!" While technically true and sufficient to get you a driver's license in most states, this does not mean that vision is necessarily good enough to dispense with glasses entirely. Some people will need to wear glasses for driving. If you needed reading glasses before laser surgery, you will probably need them after.

For high myopes, a good outcome might mean still wearing glasses, but they will be much thinner and it will be possible to see a lot more when not wearing them. (To a high myope, the thought of being able to see the bedside clock at night tends to produce orgasmic rapture.)

Because laser refractive surgery is relatively new, conservative medical opinion cautions that the long-term effects have not yet determined. This is true, but visual stability seems very good based on current data. Also, people whose eyes were damaged and repaired in similar ways decades ago have not had long-term problems, so there is no reason to suppose that PRK patients will develop terrible complications in the future.

Another laser technique called LASIK (*laser in* >>>

Vision Quest

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situ keratomileusis) is often recommended for high myopes like me. (My vision is in the -9.5 range.) With LASIK, sometimes called “flap and zap,” the tip of the cornea is cut partially through, leaving a hinge, and tissue is planed away below. Then the tip is reattached.

Because the epithelial cells on the surface of the cornea have not been removed, healing is even faster than with PRK, and no bandage contact lens is required. However, since LASIK is generally done for larger corrections, enhancements are more likely to be needed, and perfect 20/20 vision is somewhat less likely to be achieved.

LASIK has not yet been approved for use in the US, but selected clinics are now doing the procedure on an “investigational” basis. This is several stages more respectable than “experimental,” but means that patients must sign a waiver and their progress will be tracked to add to the data base on the technique.

Refractive surgery is not usually covered by medical insurance. The cost of PRK is generally in the range of \$1500–\$2000 per eye, with LASIK a couple of hundred dollars an eye more.

The Canadian Option

NINC members in Britain and the Commonwealth have a real advantage because laser eye surgery has been available for much longer than in the US. PRK was first done in Canada in 1990, about five years earlier than its approval in the US, so Canadian refractive surgeons have much more experience. Also, they have available a broader range of laser machines. Ironically, some of the state of the art machines are made in the US but not yet approved for use here; Americans must go to Canada to get the best technology. For example, it has been found that a larger laser “zone” tends to produce a better outcome. A zone of 6 mm or higher is desirable.

For years, Americans who wanted laser eye surgery had to go to Canada to get it. For high myopes or people with hyperopia, Canada may still be the destination of choice. Knowing this, several Canadian clinics have special packages aimed at the US market that include air fare and several nights in a hotel as well as eye surgery. Follow-up can be done by the patient’s doctor back home, all for a price comparable to having the procedure done in the US.

Potpourri:

- *Far-sightedness:* Hyperopia is now being laser treated in Canada, so the technique should soon come to the United States. NINC member Linda Lael Miller was one of the very first to benefit by the procedure, making two trips to the Beacon Clinic in Toronto since the surgery was so new that they refused to do both eyes at once. She said after her first surgery, “It was amazing. I was able to read small type immediately.”

She has since had the second eye done, and is completely delighted with the results. She was back at the computer the next day. Though she sometimes wears reading glasses because it’s more comfortable, she is capable of reading the fine print on a medicine bottle with the naked eye. The procedure cost \$2000 Canadian (about \$1600 American) per eye, not including travel costs.

- Laser surgery for astigmatism (corneal irregularities which can cause blurry vision) has just been FDA approved. Astigmatism is also routinely corrected at the same time refractive surgery is done.

- People over the age of 60 who are interested in refractive surgery are often told to “wait until you have your cataract surgery.” Refraction can be corrected at the same time cataracts are removed, and that surgery is usually covered by insurance. I know a retired lawyer who had this. Once a person who grabbed for his glasses the minute he woke up, he says now that his vision has never been better in his life.

- A different but common problem is sagging eyelids that diminish the field of vision. (Severe sagging seems to be largely genetic.) I know several writers who’ve had eyelid tucks, and all say the procedure improved their vision. Eyelid tucks are done by both cosmetic and eye surgeons, and are sometimes covered by insurance if the sagging is severe enough. Price varies, but is probably in the range of \$3000–\$5000.

As always, check credentials and make sure the surgeon is experienced in this procedure. If too much skin is removed, the lid might not close fully, resulting in dry eye problems.

- For those who are averse to reading glasses, consider monovision, a technique used in contact lens or refractive surgery. One eye is corrected for near vision and the other for far vision. Many people are comfortable with this, but it’s not for everyone.

- For those who are totally grossed out by the thought of eye surgery, but who are having problems with reading or computer use, consider glasses designed for near and mid-range viewing. It is described as providing a “nose to toes” zone of visual clarity. The optician who suggested these to me (under the trade name “Readables,”) said that her computer-using customers love them.

Conclusions:

- The best candidate for completely successful laser surgery is someone under 40 with low to moderate myopia. For such people, PRK can be a magical way to acquire normal vision.

- If your problem is newly acquired reading glasses because of presbyopia, refractive surgery is not likely to be of much value, but stay tuned. New techniques may be on the way.

- For high myopes and people who have problems getting acceptable corrections with glasses, laser surgery may not give perfect vision, but it can produce substantial improvements. I’ve heard that people who used to wear

coke-bottle lenses tend to be the happiest with laser surgery results.

- If you're interested in having laser eye surgery, find an experienced doctor who has done the procedure numerous times and has good outcomes. Ask lots of questions. Talk to patients who have had it done. If you're a low to moderate myope, you can probably get good results with just about any competent, experienced surgeon.

- If you're in a hurry and have more challenging eyes, consider going to Canada, where refractive surgery is several years further advanced. More effort is involved, but the cost is very similar to having it done in the US.

- If you're in no hurry, wait and watch. This field is evolving with lightning speed, so there are other techniques and pieces of equipment under development.

Members with Web access can easily find more information. A good place to start is <http://www.gimbel.com>, the site for the Gimbel Eye Centers. Dr. Howard Gimbel, the director, was the first Canadian to perform PRK. His site is extensive and contains detailed descriptions, tables of outcomes, and realistic discussions of pros and cons of different types of surgery. Gimbel is based in Calgary, with three centers in Western Canada and a new one in Toronto.

Non-Web crawlers could call the Beacon Clinic in Toronto. (800/265-4777) They sent me a very nice video that described PRK very clearly.

As for me, I've decided I definitely want laser eye surgery done, but I've been moving slowly while the state of the art improves. My ophthalmologist friend says that when the time comes, I should tell the surgeon to undercorrect my eyes so I'm still a little near-sighted, because a life-long myope like me would hate not being able to see close up. (She's right—others among you may want to consider this, too.)

I may well have it done this fall. I may go to Canada. We'll see.

Pun intended. *MNK*

Mary Jo Putney spent her childhood with her nose in a book and ruined her eyes, just like her mother warned. Her July release, One Perfect Rose, is the first petite hardcover from Ballantine.



Results 2 be Seen:

A Good Experience

NINC member Stobie Piel, author of *Molly in the Middle* and *A Brighter Dream*, has had her eyes laser corrected for myopia. Her near-sightedness was in the moderate range, about -4.50, and she is in her 30s, so presbyopia is not yet an issue. Here is her account of her experience:

"The actual experience is... Twilight Zone. I was in the office a total of 45 minutes each time, most of it having the prep eye drops. The actual process takes only a few seconds. You lie down under the laser and they fiddle with

you, put a cap on your hair, cover your good eye, and put a clamp on the operative eye to keep it open. This was creepy, but painless.

"When the lights go out, you see a rim of white lights, a circle of red light with a green dot inside, which you're supposed to stare at, at all costs. This, of course, made me sure I would look away. The sound surprised me. I expected a Star Trek noise. Instead, it was more like firecrackers. You see lights like firecrackers and a red haze, too. The first time I was startled, positive I would have a laser streak across my face, but I guess they're prepared for involuntary jumping.

"When they did the second eye, I didn't jump or twitch. I stared at the green blob, which reminded me of Independence Day's alien up close, and it was fine. They put a clear contact on as a bandage (which comes off in about three days), while your epithelial cells grow back. Then you get up, take your bag of eye drops, and someone drives you home. They give you sleeping pills so you can go right to sleep and keep your eyes closed.

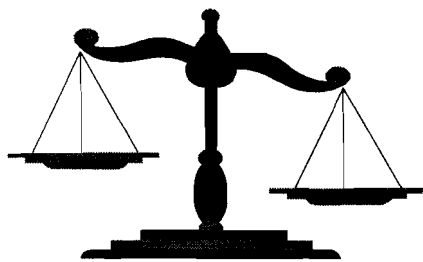
"The only potential pain is if your bandage contact comes out before your epithelial layer is healed. Mine ripped the first time and that was the equivalent of getting something annoying in your eye. It hurts, but nothing hideous. They gave me numbing drops in case that happens, so you can use those until you get to the doctor for a new contact. The first time, they were trying a really light contact bandage. They'd switched brands by my second eye.

"As long as you get a doctor who has a lot of experience, there are no reservations I can think of to having the procedure. It doesn't hurt to have it done. It doesn't hurt afterwards, either. At worst, for me, it felt like when you've worn your contacts too long. When I had the second eye done, I was on my computer that night, and the only thing I noticed was slightly fragmented vision from the newly done eye. It's so magically neat to wake up and see things, to see stars, the clock. Your husband.

"Mostly, I find it unbelievable that I can have lived so long with glasses and contacts and all that hassle and weary eyes, then in a few seconds, I have normal eyes. It's amazing. I keep thinking they'll pop out all of a sudden, or I'll wake up dim-sighted again. So far, everything is fine, though."

A Less Good Experience

I spoke with one woman who had an unsatisfactory outcome. A high myope (-8), she did careful research before choosing a respected doctor in the Washington, DC, area to perform PRK in one eye last fall. She ended up with a "central island" in the eye and severe glare and blurring problems. A second operation brought about substantial improvement. Shortly before this article went to press, she had another enhancement. The jury is still out on the final result. She's philosophical about being in the minority that have complications, but admits that if she'd known the outcome, she would have waited for techniques for high myopes to improve.



Advocacy Committee: *The Fine Art of Agenting*

The purpose of this column is to give you the information you need to make sound, informed choices during the course of your career. This month, we received several questions concerning agents from our membership. To answer these questions, we contacted Aaron Priest, Aaron Priest Literary Agency; Donald Maass, Donald Maass Literary Agency; and Natasha Kern, Natasha Kern Literary Agency, for their views and insight. We deeply appreciate their candor.

Question 1: With this contract, I've run well over my deadline due to health and personal issues. How should such a breach of contract be handled? When does it become legally necessary to redraft or renegotiate the contract? I heard one publisher say there was a writer who hadn't delivered after ten years.

Aaron Priest: Each case has to be looked at individually. Some publishers are more sympathetic than others. They can have the Contracts Department draw up an amendment if it is a writer whom the publisher thinks enough of and there isn't a fortune tied up in a signing payment. However, the average author should deliver the book on time. More importantly, if the book is going to be late, notify your agent in plenty of time.

Donald Maass: A contract is a binding agreement that should not be breached lightly. If you will be delivering your manuscript late, I strongly recommend amending your contract in writing. Your publisher is likely to accommodate you. For me, a bigger concern is this one: If your books come out on an irregular basis, will your readers be as forgiving? I suspect not.

Natasha Kern: It is a good idea to get in touch with your editor as soon as you suspect that you will probably go over your deadline. This will allow the publisher to make adjustments and, if necessary, move your book to a later season. The book will then not appear in catalogs or sales materials if it will not be published on time. Publishers almost always work with authors on due dates precisely because problems of health and circumstance intervene. Sometimes, the problem is simply one of the book taking far longer in the research, writing, or illustrating phases than anyone would have anticipated. In general, every publisher would prefer to have a well-written book that takes a bit longer to finish to one that is rushed to completion and into print. Your contract does not have to be redrafted. You simply need to request a rider to the contract or a letter of agreement for a new due date, depending on how long a delay is involved.

Question 2: An author is in the middle of contract negotiations. The author and agent have a falling out. Can the

author fire the agent and sell the book to the publisher himself since the author was a party in the negotiations?

Aaron Priest: This one is dicey. I don't know if it can be answered as the question is written. It is important to know how the falling out came about and what it entails. For example, if the agent acted in an irresponsible manner, the author can very well fire him. If the author is being mercurial, the agent has a very good case, and it is hard to get rid of an agent at that point. One reason to fire an agent is if the author catches the agent lying about something in the contract. But in this case (the "falling out" in the question), you can't fire an agent over a personality conflict.

Donald Maass: The law on verbal agreements is complex, but generally speaking, if your appointed representative has settled the principal terms of a deal, then that's that. A verbal agreement is usually a binding commitment. You can refuse to sign the contract, and that will probably work, but that also means killing the deal. If, on the other hand, terms have not been discussed, then no real negotiation has taken place. You are free to go (if your author-agency agreement permits). The only remaining issue is commission. Most agents will want at least a partial commission, and I think that is fair. Now, what about in-between cases? Say your agent discussed terms with your publisher but nothing was settled...what then? Here again, there is no binding commitment. You can walk. As before, though, it is certainly fair for the agent to expect a commission for work done. If there is a dispute, the AAR (Association of Author Representatives) can probably help settle it if your agent is a member. (Ed. note: The AAR can be reached at 10 Astor Place, 3rd Floor, New York NY 10003 212-353-3709)

Natasha Kern: If the agent has found a publisher for a property, the agent is entitled to a commission on that deal in the same way a real estate agent would be entitled to a commission on a house for which she found a buyer if the deal went through. On the other hand, an author can fire an agent if she feels her interests are not being well represented. In part, the solution will be determined by the circumstances. If this is a contract based on an option clause, the unhappiness between author and agent may have come to a head because negotiation has been initiated and the author does not want this agent's name on future contracts. In this case, a parting of the ways and finding a new agent is probably the best solution (which the author should have ethically done sooner). If the agent developed a proposal or fiction manuscript with this author and put time and effort into sending out many submissions and getting a good publisher, it would seem more appropriate for the deal to go through and the author to then seek changes in the relationship. Withdrawing the book at this stage might

well create problems for a new author, and giving the commission to another agent who did not work on the book does not seem ethical either. This question is so generic about the nature of the “falling out,” and in what way the agent might have been remiss, it makes it difficult to answer.

Question 3: It seems unfair that an agent quickly and easily sells a book by an established author, but when times get tough (like now), the agent can toss the author aside, but still keep collecting royalties ad infinitum—or is that true? When a book's rights legally revert back to the author, can the author discharge the first agent and resell the book with a new agent? If not, how can an author get a book back from an ineffective agent?

Aaron Priest: When a book's rights revert legally to the author, the first agent is out unless the author says otherwise. In other words, the rights belong to the author and any agent who tries to say otherwise is flat wrong.

By the way, I almost find the beginning of this question offensive. Everyone knows my big authors, but there are people who have been with me 20 years and I'm breaking my back to keep them working. It is the heartbreak of this business. An agent can spend a terrific amount of time selling an author's book and not see a dime out of it. If I get rid of someone, it is because I made a mistake taking them on in the first place, not because times are tough. But again, I can't speak for all agents.

Donald Maass: Seems to me that it's publishers dumping authors. I have fought long and hard to salvage clients' careers. In some cases, I've worked years without pay. As to the commission issue...well, that's the system. Agents get nothing up front. For us, all the payoff is on the back end. So long as the contract is in force, revenues come—and commissions are paid—to the agent of record. Once rights revert, that's over (except with respect to outstanding subrights contracts). Alternatives? Pay agents like lawyers, or on a fee-for-service basis? Hmm. I doubt anyone would cheer the results.

Natasha Kern: When rights to a published book revert to an author, she can get a new agent to handle reselling those rights. I have resold many reverted titles for clients. I have also transferred rights to other agents if the client preferred to do that. It seems to me a rare situation for an agent to drop a client who has been productive and has been established through the efforts of the agent because of a downturn in the market or the author's fortunes. I have certainly kept clients who did not write (or did not sell) at all because of personal problems or market problems until we could restart their careers. It is true that an agent can collect royalties due on a contract she negotiated as long as they continue to accrue. Authors sometimes transfer rights on previously published books from one agency to another, or request that the original agent not sell additional rights for their titles if they are changing agencies.

Question 4: Are publishers promoting any of their authors

nowadays? Have you seen this lack of publisher support impact genre fiction?

Aaron Priest: Absolutely publishers are promoting their authors. They are promoting them just as much as they ever did.

The problem today is not caused by publishers but by booksellers. When I say booksellers, I mean the big chains. They have put a lot of independents out of business and now we are left with superstores that don't sell quantity like the mall stores, and they don't offer service like the independents.

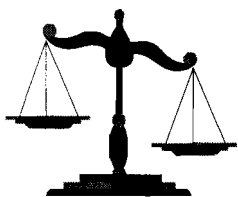
Here's the thing: everything is on computer and if your first book doesn't sell, then you are in trouble. Say hypothetically the superstore takes 10,000 copies and sells 7,000, which is 70%. Next time, they only buy 7,000 and pretty soon you are down to nothing. Some publishers are better at combating this than others. To me, this is the biggest problem confronting the book business today, no doubt about it.

Donald Maass: Genre fiction has always received a disproportionately unfair share of promotion budgets. Nothing new there. And yes, publishers still promote. Sometimes with brilliance. Nonfiction is easier. With fiction, what plays best with media is not plots, but personality. Are you a roman candle? Do you crave publicity like food? Good. Nothing will stop you, not even paltry budgets.

Natasha Kern: There is no question that publishers have increasingly become “very good printers,” and publicity efforts have fallen more and more on the shoulders of writers who are often unsuited by training, temperament, or financial resources to fulfill this task. This diminishing of publisher support impacts all writers except those high on bestseller lists. At a recent AAR meeting, this was discussed in some detail, and agents considered avenues of publicity for their clients' books. Having worked in publicity, I have a great deal of sympathy for the overworked publicists who work for publishers. I am also realistic about how few books each month can get any kind of special treatment or media attention from each house. I send publicity kits, instructions, contacts, etc. to authors of both fiction and nonfiction to help them with this Herculean task. We are also developing more avenues for online promotion through a Web site. Nevertheless, for an author of genre fiction, it is particularly difficult to get noticed by the media or the general public. It is even more disheartening to realize that for these writers, even if they are successful, their print runs or laydowns are not going to be increased for the book they are publicizing. It is unlikely there will be a new printing, with a few exceptions. Of course, they can develop a stronger readership and readers of future books, which will help their careers in the long term.

Aaron Priest opened his agency doors 22 years ago. He specializes in thrillers, but also represents the spectrum of fiction.

Donald Maass has been an independent literary agent since 1980. A fiction specialist, he represents more than 100 novelists. He's also the author of 14 pseudonymous > > >



The Fine Art of Agenting

(Continued from page 15)

novels of his own, and of a book for full-time fiction writers called *The Career Novelist: A Literary Agent Offers Strategies for Success*.

Natasha Kern came to agenting from the other side of the publishing business. She was previously an editor for several New York City publishers before founding her own agency in 1986.

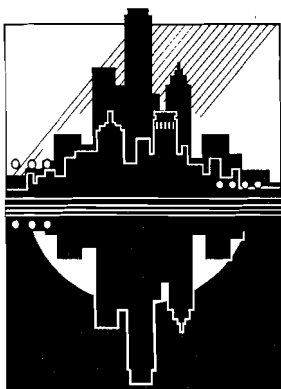
If you have a question you wish the Advocacy Column to address, forward it to Cathy Maxwell, 14216 Chimney House Road, Midlothian VA 23112 or e-mail C.Maxwell6@genie.com

Attention:

The Board has asked the Advocacy Committee to look into publishers selling Spanish translations in the U.S. at U.S. prices but paying a foreign royalty. We are collecting information on this problem. If you have information on this issue, please contact:

Cathy Maxwell
NINC Advocacy Chair
14216 Chimney House Rd.
Midlothian, VA 23112
e-mail C.Maxwell6@genie.com

Thank you.



I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE...

As Oscar Wilde might have put it, to lose one keynote speaker may be regarded as a misfortune, but to lose two begins to look like carelessness... Never fear! At the moment, I'm merely misfortunate (unfortunate? misfortuned?). As I write these words, we are again in search of a keynote speaker for the 1997 NINC conference. However, by the time you read this brilliantly constructed and spiffily modified sentence of startling clarity and originality, I will have

found another—and that person's identity will be revealed in my scandalous tell-all nonfiction masterpiece, coming to mailboxes everywhere in July (or maybe August): the 1997 NINC Conference Registration Brochure!

Meanwhile, I have received several reports that Bantam Books has sent out invitations to a dinner wherein Bantam authors will meet the 1997 NINC keynote speaker, Irwyn Applebaum. Before anyone gets any more confused than is absolutely necessary, let me clarify the situation at this end: Irwyn Applebaum will not be this year's keynote speaker, and Bantam is including writers on their invitation list who are not NINC members (and

therefore not conference attendees). As these circumstances should make clear, the Bantam event is in no way connected to NINC. I know nothing more about it—not even when it's scheduled, or how Bantam means to get around a slight logistical problem (i.e. introducing Bantam authors to Mr. Applebaum, who, I have recently been informed, will be in another country during NINC).

My compliments, by the way, to Warner Books, *Romantic Times*, and Silhouette Books, who all called me to discuss their entertainment plans and thereby avoided scheduling conflicts with the conference.

— Laura Resnick,
Conference Coordinator



ONLINE

NINgers (and others) have really come through with those great Web sites I keep asking for. Well, okay, people aren't actually sending them TO me, but they've been posting them to Ninclink and other lists, and I've been pestering them for permission to share their posts (or parts of them) here. More work for me, same results for you: lots of great sites to list and describe in this month's column, all for your Web-browsing pleasure.

First, a few sites I heard about and hunted up myself, so I could form my own opinions: <http://www.sfw.org/> is the home page of (you guessed it!) the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America. Great stuff there, and you don't have to be a member to access it. You'll find links to members' home pages, info on cover art and artists, and other interesting tidbits, plus two very useful areas: posts of standard contracts (yes, the actual text) for hardback, paperback, magazine, and other sales, and a whole section on ergonomics for writers, complete with pictures (how to position your wrist, etc.), and links to other ergonomics/health-related sites.

<http://www.torstar.com/corporate/> is Torstar's corporate page. Now you can read their quarterly stockholder reports (for the last four quarters) without owning Torstar stock! You'll find reports on the various arms of the company (including Harlequin and the *Toronto Star*), including future plans. Very educational!

<http://www.hamiltonbook.com> is the E.R. Hamilton Catalogue online. Since I've bought at least 3/4 of my research books from that catalogue, I was delighted to discover this site! Not only can you search for books by subject, title, or author, but the listings are *much* easier to read than the tiny type in their newsprint catalogues. You can't order online (they don't take credit cards) but this site should be a great time (and eyesight) saver.

Some sites of special interest to mystery writers, courtesy of Susan Chen, the research guru of the Painted Rock writers' colony on the Web (<http://www.paintedrock.com>): "The Forensic Science Resources in a Criminal Fact Investigation Index at <http://www.public.usit.net/rscarp/fsbindx.htm> is comprehensive, including info on firearms identification, arson/explosives, fingerprint/hair, fiber, paint, glass, accident reconstruction, and blood spatter analysis. Also, links to forensic pathology resources, eyewitness identification, child witnesses, investigation methods for processing a crime scene, and a great bibliography. Reddy's Forensic Home Page is at <http://haven.ios.com/~nyrc/homepage.html#FP> Here,

you'll find links to info on crime scene processing, DNA, toxicology information, rules of evidence, admissibility standards, lots of professional organizations (mostly forensic scientists, journals and newsletters, national and international crime labs, different law enforcement agencies, Dr. Henry Lee's homepage, information on narcotics, a list of newsgroups). All in all there are 24 pages of links that are topically arranged. The poison & antidotes index from the botanical.com site: <http://www.botanical.com/botanical/steapoison/poisonix.html> includes a reprint from *Steadman Shorter's Medical Dictionary 1943* and links to several poisons and their antidotes. Mystery Ink Resource page (http://www.jnpcs.com/hhahn/Murder_Ink/mi_links.htm) has lots of links to literature, games (online), reference about detective stories and mysteries, some online stories, true crime, and writers' group resources. Finally, there's Criminal Defense Online at <http://www.sado.org/> The bulletins and recent Criminal Defense Newsletters section of this page are full of info on different topics." Thanks, Susan!

Ninclink is rolling right along, with the usual variety of fascinating discussions. Some recent ones include: working on more than one book at a time; sales to Russia; different word processors and tricks/tips for using them; Free Cell addiction (apparently a very common malady!); tax tips; ghost writers; changing names/pseudonyms; and breakout books (pros, cons, and advice).

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— **Brenda Hiatt Barber** :)

Members: to obtain a copy of the full minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting, send \$2 plus SASE to the P.O. Box. For an updated copy of the Bylaws, send \$2 plus SASE. For a copy of the Treasurer's Report, send \$1 plus SASE to the P.O. Box.



EAST OF THE HUDSON

Ghosts, Ghosts, Ghosts

One of the ongoing discussions on this bank of the Hudson has involved the vanishing role of writers as writers in contemporary publishing.

I sparked some interesting discussion last year when I quoted Esther Dyson, a noted futurist. She believes that in the new electronic age, authors will no longer be able to protect their work by copyright. With the advent of instant republishing via computers and the Net, she says, hardcopy books will no longer be sold. Instead, writers will become celebrities, paid for personal appearances rather than for copies sold.

I disputed Dyson but I am in the process of rethinking my position. That's why a *New York Times Magazine* article by Jack Hitt made such strong sense to me.

Hitt, a professional who has done his share of ghosting in the past, thinks that writers are, indeed, vanishing. This is not to say that Big Blue has made the leap from chess to creativity, merely that the role of the man or woman who sits down in front of a blank screen or sheet of paper is changing.

Radically.

And for the worse.

The physical work of writing is no longer the crucial act in the creation of the book, Hitt says. "The writing of the book is no longer the most important part of authoring one," he suggests. In fact, authors of books are quickly becoming "what screenwriters are to movies, secondary characters in their own industry."

Much of the piece, printed in the May 25 edition of the *NYT Magazine*, deals with nonfiction. I pride myself on recognizing the veiled presence of ghosts in many, if not most, of the books written nowadays by politicians, actors, lawyers, and even journalists, but Hitt tipped me off to some I had missed.

For instance, Ted Koppel, ABC's *Nightline* guy, didn't write his own book. Kyle Gibson did. Comics like Bill Cosby can't take time to put their own words on paper. They are far too busy. So schlubs like Ralph Schoenstein do the drudge work.

Schoenstein has developed a pretty good gig, though. After his own *Yes, My Darling Daughters*, had modest success, he "blended his voice" with Cosby's in *Fatherhood*, and *Childhood*, which combined to make more than \$20 million for all involved.

Then Schoenstein teamed up with Joan Rivers on her new book.

Hey, a guy's got to keep writing, right?

David Rensin, another ghost, left his imprint on Tim Allen's book and on Jeff Foxworthy's.

Now I know why the two books sounded so much alike, although their "authors" were quite different types.

Hitt also showed me some interesting items in fiction. Ivana Trump paid her "voice," Camille Marchetta, \$350,000 to write the dud that bore Ivana's name. Maureen Dean's book, *Washington Wives*, was actually written by Lucianne Goldberg, who afterward had the exquisite torture of reading newspaper interviews in which Dean told of writing and writing "until I was exhausted," with No. 2 pencils on stacks of legal pads.

I hope Goldberg was well-paid.

Hitt has lots of pithy insights, some of which are aimed at writers themselves. He notes, as we all have, the current trend in incest memoirs and other ostensibly serious literary works that are based on titillation, not content.

"In this atmosphere, everyone's a ghostwriter," Hitt says, "Striving to pick topics or find strategies that will elevate the author to the ranks of the scandalous and the freakish, based more on what they've done than on what they've written."

Although Hitt's piece isn't fun to read, parts of it are very, very funny, the work of a true writer.

Poor bastard. I hope he can find a career at it.

Chain Letter

Publishers Weekly, the mouthpiece of the independent bookseller faction in our business, commissioned a survey whose results must have dismayed indies all over the country.

The principal finding was that more than half of all U.S. readers now buy their books in chain bookstores. *Only 14 percent buy from independents.* This, my friends, is a real sea change in the power of the indies.

I didn't get to the Book Expo America show in Chicago this year, where the full results of the survey were released, so I don't know what else the study found.

Even though I wasn't surprised by the diminishing reader share of the indies, I want to review the entire survey (if I can find a copy) since it contained at least one factoid I find hard to accept: Fiction readership is ahead of nonfiction by a margin of 53 percent to 43 percent; and according to the survey, mystery and suspense is the favorite fiction category, one preferred by 19 percent of readers.

I don't think so, not with romance as powerful a market force as it is. Methinks, or at least suspects, that this result is skewed, probably because the public image of romance has been so roundly trashed that survey respondents are reluctant to admit they read such "garbage."

(Or maybe it's simply that indies usually don't carry romance, which would skew the hell out of any indie reader survey.)

Just a thought, nothing more.

Red and Black, Black and Blue

Publishers Weekly was later than usual this year with its annual roundup entitled "the Red and the Black." Apparently the delay was necessary to allow the magazine's editors even more time to find good news in what was generally regarded as a very bad year.

Too bad, because even with a few extra months to think, *PW* found little to celebrate.

Without going into all the contorted statistics, the study

found that more copies of potential bestsellers were shipped than ever before...

...and more of them came bouncing back than ever before, even despite an industrywide campaign to reduce returns.

In addition, almost all the bestselling novels were by veteran authors...

...and most of the nonfiction bestsellers were by folks with high media profiles.

This, friends, is NOT news.

Oh, sure, there were some revelations that gave the contrarian in me great pleasure:

- Bill Clinton's hardcover debut, *Between Hope and History*, has a sell-through of about 25 percent. Holy cow, even Hillary's book did better than that, although the one by Bob Dole and Jack Kemp did not.

I guess politicians aren't as important to the reading public as they like to think they are.

- Johnnie Cochran's book was a major disappointment. So was Bob Shapiro's. So, too, were several others about the O.J. Simpson trial. *PW* had some lame explanations for the failures, but I would suggest the real reason was that the reading public didn't find anything heroic about either the verdict or those responsible for it.

In that vein, I'd suggest Marcia Clark's new book will probably do no better, and that Mark Fuhrman's will continue to sell very well, flawed though its author may or may not be.

(Fuhrman's book at least gave us some new insight into the mess, including the fact that, just as I suspected, he was banging the erstwhile screenwriter while he was mouthing those racial epithets that she captured on tape. No wonder he lost track of what he was saying.)

You and I, of course, can have lots of fun second-guessing editors and publishers. I am trying to break myself of the habit, but without success.

Besides, it's the only sure pleasure we get in this business.

The New Improved ABA

I didn't go to Book Expo America this year. Neither did half of New York, it seems. But Susan Elizabeth Phillips, who lives close enough to commute, tells me she spent a full day, dawn to dusk, at the show that used to fill the main exhibition halls and minor meeting rooms of McCormick Place in Chicago.

The good news, SEP reports, is she had a wonderful time.

The bad news, SEP reports, is the show was so quiet and laid-back that she *could* have a wonderful time.

"I stayed later than I've ever stayed, and by the time I got home, I realized I was totally relaxed," she said. "It was actually fun."

That, friends, is not a ringing endorsement of what is supposed to be the high-point of commercial publishing's year. Fun is what you have with friends or family. The ABA, as it used to be called, is supposed to be work.

I don't know about attendance, but I did read that foreign publishers and agents stayed away from this year's

show in droves. I also know from the *NYT* that exhibit space was down by 25 percent.

SEP noticed the same thing. She said that the show used to take up all the available space in that cavern called McCormick Place and spill over into satellite facilities. This year, everything fit very comfortably into one of the exhibit halls with enough room left over for all the returned copies of both Bill and Hillary Clinton's books.

She also said the glitter of the old show had dimmed. The only major commercial fiction publishers present were Harlequin and Warner and the only celebrities were Charlton Heston and Naomi Judd. (Naomi was the one with the goatee.)

In other words, this was pretty small beer, probably great fun if you love books, but not as much fun if you love Business.

In the *PW* trade show issue, I ran across a little tidbit that may help to explain how this situation has come to pass. The tidbit was contained in the profile of *PW*'s Bookseller of the Year, Elaine Petrocelli, who owns Book Passage, a good, 15,000-square-foot independent bookstore in Corte Madera, California.

Petrocelli was a motivating force behind an unfair-trade lawsuit filed 15 years ago by Northern California booksellers against major publishers. Interestingly, when the booksellers' first lawyer became a judge, the case was taken over by Petrocelli's lawyer husband, Bill.

Booksellers claim to have won that first lawsuit. Maybe they did and maybe they didn't, but in 1993, the American Booksellers Association decided to take to the legal warpath once more. They filed suit against the major publishers again, charging price discrimination on behalf of the chain stores. Elaine and Bill Petrocelli were major players in that rebellion.

Now, we all know what followed. After two or three years of litigation, a series of settlements were reached. The booksellers claimed victory, but then, so did the publishers. In the process, almost all of New York's big players withdrew from the booksellers' convention. If the booksellers won, it was a Pyrrhic victory.

I knew that part of the history, but the profile of the Petrocellis provided a fact I didn't know. It seems that the ABA paid for its lawsuits out of a war chest that was stuffed with cash...

...cash the ABA had received for selling a half-interest in the ABA trade show to a professional show organizer.

In other words, the ABA sold off half its crown jewels and used the proceeds to buy a rusty razor with which the organization slit its own throat.

That's how it looks, anyway.

I can't say I would have acted differently if I had been an independent bookseller. I am as easily outraged by change as the next guy, even if I'm less likely to reach for a lawyer to settle my differences. I do know that the ABA/BEA will never be the same, but at least I understand why a little better now than I did in 1993, when the civil war between publishers and booksellers first broke out.

— Evan Maxwell



The Fast Track

Compiled by MARILYN PAPPANO

NINC Members on the USA Today List

The Fast Track is a monthly report on Novelists, Inc. members on the USA Today top 150 bestseller list. (A letter "n" after the position indicates that the title is new on the list that week.)

Members should send **Marilyn Pappano** a postcard alerting her to upcoming books, especially those in multi-author anthologies, which are often listed by last names only. Marilyn's phone/fax number is 918-227-1608, fax 918-227-1601 or online: pappanor@gorilla.net. Internet surfers can find the list at: <http://www.usatoday.com> (Et al.: written with other author(s) who aren't members of NINC)

Member	Title	May 7	May 14	May 21	May 28
Rebecca Brandewyne	<i>Glory Seekers</i> , Mira			114n	
Sandra Brown	<i>Exclusive</i> , Warner Vision				98n
Stella Cameron	<i>Dear Stranger</i> , Warner		77n	83	
Catherine Coulter	<i>Rosehaven</i> , Jove			31n	24
Julie Garwood	<i>One Pink Rose</i> , Pocket		16n	10	26
Jennifer Greene	<i>The Baby Chase</i> , Silhouette		143n	71	
Jill Gregory	<i>Just This Once</i> , Dell			190	114
Tami Hoag	<i>Guilty as Sin</i> , Bantam	139			
Susan Krinard	<i>Twice a Hero</i> , Bantam			136n	
Jill Marie Landis	<i>Just Once</i> , Jove		63n	58	99
Elizabeth Lowell	<i>Where the Heart Is</i> , Avon		183	138	
Amanda Quick	<i>Affair</i> , Bantam	64	87	109	
Amanda Quick	<i>Mischief</i> , Bantam	67	126		
J.D. Robb	<i>Ceremony in Death</i> , Berkley	82			
Nora Roberts	<i>Montana Sky</i> , Jove	16	30	43	47
Nora Roberts	<i>Sweet Revenge</i> , Bantam		78n	47	55
Nora Roberts	<i>Sanctuary</i> , Putnam	151	137		

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