

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

Volume 10



Number 5

# Novelists' Ink

May 1999

## Perchance to Dream...

### Female Fantasies vs. Male Fantasies

By **PHYLIS ANN WARADY**

Once upon a time there was a geologist who decided she'd rather write fiction. She suspected breaking into publishing was tough. So she decided to get her feet wet writing a romance. After all, she reasoned, how hard could it be to knock out one of those "silly" romances so disparaged by the majority of book critics, academia, feminists, and psychologists?

Of course, she was dead wrong. Writing a romance is no easier than writing a thriller, a mystery, a Western, or a mainstream novel. However, there was no way she could know this in advance because, up to this point in her life, she "wouldn't have been caught dead reading a romance!"

But on with our tale. What with her scientific background, her first step was to read a cross-section of romance novels in order to get a handle on the genre. Delving into them turned out to be a revelation.

"Once I started reading romance novels, I found all the things I'd been searching for in other kinds of fiction and never found."

Today, our ex-geologist is an award-winning, highly successful romance author with no plans to move on, because writing romance novels satisfies something within herself and within her readers.

Which is what female fantasies do for women and what male fantasies do for men. They satisfy some inner need. Still, healthy-minded members of both sexes know the difference between fantasy and reality. They recognize that real life can be harsher and less romantic than we'd all prefer it to be. And also that if one's fantasy slides into an obsession one can be in real trouble.

Yet down through the ages, fantasy persists because it fills a basic need of our psyche. And because our myths, legends, and fairy tales contain more than a grain of truth, allegorical truth, if you will, but truth all the same.

In the book, *Women in Power*, authors Cantor and Bernay point out in a chapter entitled "Sandbox Dreams" that small boys dream of doing great things for themselves and the world at large, whereas only 20 percent of little girls do. The other 80 percent are vague about their aspirations, chose traditional

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(Ed. Note: Even long-suffering columnists get their due from time to time...just don't let it go to your head, Evan...)

### DO NO HARM

Maybe they are 30 years old, but they're still your kids, right?

My 30-year-old kid became an illustration of the dangers of modern medicine the other day, and I'm still getting over it. She had this pain in her side, see, and it didn't go away. A visit to an emergency room led to sonograms and MRIs and other \$2,000-a-pop indignities...

...and to conflicting diagnoses. The surgeon said it was probably appendicitis. The sonogram technician said it sure looked to him like a fairly common female problem, one that can be treated with medicine.

Well, to make a long story short, the surgeon won, mainly because appendicitis is so potentially lethal and because the surgery to cure it has become relatively minor, thanks to fiberoptics and endoscopes.

"Besides," the surgeon said, "you'll never have to worry about that worthless little organ again, even if it isn't the problem right now."

Sort of like saying, "Everybody ought to have their appendix out as a prophylactic measure because it's so *easy*!"

So off the kid goes to the OR. (Alone, of course. That's the thing about emergency surgery. No time for bi-coastal families to gather around.) Thirty minutes later, the surgeon had reached periscope depth. First thing she finds is evidence that the undereducated, lowly sonogram tech was probably right.

So much for that extra seven years of medical school.

And here's the appendix. Looking disgustingly healthy. Oh well, let's just grab it while we're here, right? Procedure finished.

And in the process *Cont. on Page 9* ▶ ▶ ▶



**EAST OF THE  
HUDSON**

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### Advisory Council

Rebecca Brandewyne†	Linda Barlow
Janice Young Brooks†	Georgia Bockoven
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Marianne Shock†	Victoria Thompson
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If you have questions regarding Novelists, Inc., please contact a member of the Board of Directors.

### 1998 Board of Directors

**PRESIDENT** Julie Kistler  
26 Gloucester Circle  
Bloomington IL 61704-7604  
Ph/Fax 309-663-8221  
E-mail: info@ninc.com

**PRESIDENT-ELECT** Carla Neggers  
P.O. Box 826  
99 Deer Path Lane  
Quechee VT 05059  
Ph 802-295-1193  
CNeggers@vermontel.com

**SECRETARY** Becky Barker  
6800 State Rt. 323  
Mt. Sterling OH 43143-9417  
Ph 740-869-2477  
Fax 740-852-0814  
E-mail: BEKYBARKER@aol.com

**TREASURER** Debbie Gordon  
1240 Noonan Drive  
Sacramento CA 95822-2507  
Ph 916-448-1964  
E-mail: DBHGORDON@aol.com

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR** Terey daly Ramin  
2376 Musson Road  
Howell MI 48843-9082  
Ph 517-545-8946  
Fax 517-545-4027  
E-mail: terey@ismi.net

**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)

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

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The President is allowed to step aside every now and again, to delegate the monthly column to someone else. So this month, I'm turning the column over to the Site Committee Chairman. Unfortunately, that also happens to be me. Which means I don't get out of writing this month's column, but I do get to talk about something different.

I've been working with the Site Committee for several years now and I've done what feels like a million site trips. Okay, only five. But I feel like I have a pretty good appreciation of the challenges involved in looking for a place to host NINC's annual conference.

The first thing to do is find the right city. The Board of Directors normally discusses the all-important choice(s) right after it gets settled in January. (Right now, we're siting two-and-a-half years ahead, or trying to pin down NINC 2001.) The Board talks about where we've been, where we've never been, what sounds like a draw, and inevitably—whether New York is feasible. Although there's been an attempt to vary the location geographically—East Coast, West Coast, North, South—there are no hard and fast rules, and the membership's vocal support of a place that doesn't fit the pattern (New York City after Baltimore, for example, or Vancouver instead of New York) may influence things.

The Board usually chooses three or four cities it considers to be good bets, and the Site Chairman then contacts the Convention & Visitors Bureaus (C&VB's) in those cities. Most C&VB's send out fact sheets on our conference, and the hotels that are interested get in touch.

We're looking for a first-rate hotel, both in terms of ambiance and location; a reasonable rate for sleeping rooms; a good number of suites (so that members who like to pool their resources or just enjoy a little more luxury will also be happy); meeting and banquet space that fits our program; and prices for catering and meeting rooms that won't break the bank. We also look at room service, restaurants, bathrooms, parking, floor plans, safety issues, elevators—the works.

Some hotels are obviously not going to work—just too small. Others are way too big for us, so large they're not willing to commit a corner to us except at the last minute, because otherwise we might block just the space that thousand-room-a-night conference needs. Too small—too large—just right. We are the Goldilocks of conferences.

Our other problem is that we meet in October, which just happens to be the busiest month for conventions nationwide. That means prime space is at a premium, and the most popular conference cities, like Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, and New Orleans, are priced right out of our range.

Based on the "bids" we get back from the hotels, the Board chooses the city with the most impressive array of hotels which a) want us and b) fit our requirements. Once that decision has been made, the Site Committee arranges an in-person visit to see the hotel possibilities close up. We visit, we tromp through every nook and cranny and ladies' room, and we try to find a local member to give us the real skinny on where you wouldn't want

**This Month  
from the  
President:**

*Your turn, Site  
Committee  
Chair...and you,  
too, members*

to walk after dark, what's hot and what's not, and who has the cursed 14th floor with the ghost of a murder victim still walking the halls. (No, we did not pick that hotel.)

It's pretty much of a given that the city and/or hotel you choose will be second-guessed by everyone from your mom to your best friend's agent's mom. But, hey, it's an imperfect world. You balance A against B and C, and you do the best you can. You remind yourself that where our conference goes is of interest and import to the whole membership, so of course everyone wants to have a say.

Besides, if people don't complain, you'll never find out where they really do want to go! And you hope enough of them remember that what makes the NINC conference special is them, not the location. We have the coolest people, the most interesting discussions, and the best insider info, no matter where we go.

So that's just my way of saying—keep those opinions coming! 2002 is just around the corner.

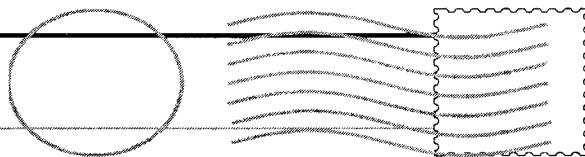
— Julie Kistler

**Got questions?  
Need information about  
specific projects and  
activities in the works or  
in the planning?**

**Got ideas?  
Read more about all NINC  
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**But remember, 100% of NINC receives our  
newsletter, so don't miss the opportunities  
to write letters, ask questions,  
pose ideas here, too!**

## 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.

### Praise for Kay's New Hat

Who is the gutsiest writer in Novelists, Inc.?  
What has she done for others?  
Where does she appear in this magazine?  
When does she find time to work on behalf of a group of like-minded authors as well as write her own books?  
Why is she such a caring person?  
And...  
How did she accomplish what she did?  
I'll answer the last one first, and proceed back up in order: How? By believing that justice must prevail. By exhibiting extraordinary abilities to coordinate others to reach a common goal.  
Why? Don't know. Probably due to the way she was raised, to look out for others, sometimes at possible great risk to herself and her career.  
When? That's something only she can tell us. Maybe she never sleeps.  
Where? Under a new hat.

Who? Ladies and gentlemen—I give you...(drum roll, please, & fanfare—no pun intended...) Ms. KAY HOOPER!

For those who don't know, Kay ramrodded a concerted effort by a number of former Bantam Loveswept authors to regain the rights to their titles once the line went out of business. I am one of those authors. Many of us had tried to do this prior to Kay's stepping in, and been shunted from department to department, with Legal telling us we needed to talk to Editorial, and Editorial choosing to ignore us in the hope we'd go away. Most of us did until Kay organized us.

Despite still being contracted by Bantam, despite her intention to continue to write single title novels for the company, she refused to be intimidated, refused to be put off by meaningless baffle-gab, and refused to take no for an answer. At great risk to her career with them, she found out who we should approach, passed on that information along with the correct procedures to follow, and united us in our desire to see justice done.

Thanks to Kay, most, if not all the former Loveswept authors who wanted the rights back to their books now have them. Kay has proven herself to be the right person to head up the Advocacy Committee and I, for one, want to thank her publicly. I do.

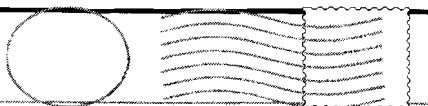
Thank you, Kay. You're a good person to have on our side.

— Judy Gill

### Evan Strikes a Chord

A few months ago I said to a friend, "If anyone figures out how to make reading a social activity, that person will get rich."





Continued from page 3

According to April 1999's "East of the Hudson," I sure know how to call them. But it isn't because of my psychic abilities. It's more that I have a fairly good feel for the Baby Boomers, who by the way, are the number one market for popular fiction. Overall, the Boomers have stuck together, moving like some massive wave that has dominated American culture for over 40 years. In the '50s, the Boomers discovered the power of commercialism, transmitted via television and invading every aspect of our lives. In the '60s, the Boomers set out to change the world. In the '70s, they discovered partying with a vengeance. In the '80s, it was the joy of amassing money and material goods. In the '90s, the boomers discovered their inner selves—and so the rise of self-help books, spiritualism, and therapy. I suspect the next thing Boomers will discover are their minds. And why not? With retirement looming and time (and money—lots and lots of money) on their hands, they might as well get intellectual.

Thus, we have Oprah and her book club. Thus, we have readers groups and reading group leaders telling us how to use fiction to enrich our lives. I foresee, in the very near future, the resurgence of literary magazines and thoughtful criticism. And who knows? Maybe poetry will make a comeback. Poetry readings are not only a good excuse for a genteel party, but they make the participants feel smart, too.

So where does that leave writers of genre fiction? Not in the best of positions, I fear. We've dropped the ball, and badly, by neglecting to grow the next generation of readers. Movies, television, and computer games have all but shoved aside science fiction, fantasy, and horror novels. Ditto for mystery markets. The next generation has so very little interest in history that the Western and historical markets are

all but dead. Has anyone taken romance's temperature lately? In the competition for entertainment dollars, genre fiction writers are losing, and how.

We need to accept that the Boomers, our major market, adore social activities. We liked whistling the same commercial ditties together, we liked fattening our bank accounts in mega-corporations and mutual funds, and we adored group therapy. We also need to accept that Boomers love, more than anything, the advice of the experts. Boomers read "Hints from Heloise" to make housekeeping easier; "Ann Landers" and "Dear Abby" to know how to relate; and now here comes Oprah and reading group leaders to tell us which books to buy.

Seems to me, the only choice genre writers have is to make our fiction as smart as it is entertaining. We need to create stories and characters worthy of discussion. Instead of book signings, we need to arrange book readings, with Q&A and discussions to follow. We need to start showing our readers how genre fiction will make them better, smarter, and more intellectual. (Silly? Boomers made smiley faces, pet rocks, and Beanie Babies seem important.) We need to get involved with our readers.

Maybe in 20 years, with the Boomers ensconced in retirement homes, bound to their oxygen bottles, solitary reading will be in vogue again. In the meantime, unless we figure out how to endear ourselves to our readers' intellects and desire for group activities, genre fiction will become as quaint, outdated, and unpopular as radio serials.

As an endnote, to Evan (whom I adore, by the way and slurp up every word of "EOH") I have not only purchased several of Oprah's picks, I've read them, too. For the most part, the lady has good taste in fiction. Instead of grouching about any real or perceived literary pretensions she might hold, how about developing our own expert, someone with the voice and clout to get out there and tell the Boomers how genre fiction will enrich their lives.

— Jaye W. Manus

## PERCHANCE

Continued from page 1

occupations such as teacher, ballerina, nurse, or social worker, and make clear their ultimate goal is to be a wife and mother.

In romance novels every effort is made to portray our heroines as feisty, independent problem solvers capable of supporting themselves. And yet they dream....

But then, we all dream, we all fantasize, don't we? And have since time immemorial. There's even an ancient Chinese saying: Same bed; different dreams.

On the theory that knowledge is power, let us explore our respective fantasies.

### The chief male fantasies are:

1. If I trade in my present mate for a younger model, I'll recapture the fountain of youth.
2. Sex with no strings attached.
3. The madonna/whore complex.

### The chief female fantasies are:

1. Someday my prince will come. We'll marry and live happily ever after.
2. I have a Ghostly Lover by which I measure every male who crosses my path.
3. I can tame the savage beast.

Now let's backtrack to the three principle male fantasies.

Fantasy #1 entails dumping one's wife for a younger, sexier model. As far as I'm concerned, this is a ticket to an early grave.

In *The Casanova Complex*, author Peter Trachtenberg relates the story of Howard, a lawyer in his 50s, who after years of extramarital affairs finally met Annette, the sex partner of his dreams. Trachtenberg states, "In the divorce that followed, he lost his house and most of his money. To meet his alimony payments and keep up his extravagant life with his mistress, he had to moonlight in a legal clinic, working 70-hour weeks. A few months later, he had a small but terrifying stroke; he was 49 years old."

Fantasy #2 is sex with no strings

attached. In his award-winning best-seller, *Why Men Are The Way They Are*, Dr. Warren Farrell states, "Playboy and Penthouse outsell all men's magazines. They represent men's primary fantasy: access to as many beautiful women as desired without risk of rejection."

This fantasy explains the appeal of Ian Fleming's James Bond spy series. Sex kittens with names like Pussy Galore are Bond's for the asking. This same fantasy is also a staple of the hard-boiled detective story.

Fantasy #3 is the madonna/whore complex. The male of the species desires a wife who will nurture him and their children, in other words a homemaker. He also wants a wife who's a passionate bedmate.

Down through the ages men perceived women as either madonnas or whores and treated them accordingly. But now a slow but steady evolution is taking place in the male psyche. To be sure, contemporary Casanovas still prefer a strict dividing line between the madonna/wife/mother and the femme fatale/prostitute/slut. However, the more integrated, more mature male combines the two. He wants to marry a loyal, nurturing woman, who will be a good mother to their children, but whose passion equals his in the bedroom.

An amusing illustration of this evolution in male thinking can be seen in the movie, *True Lies*. The hero leads a glamorous, danger-charged life working for the CIA. His wife, Helen, is portrayed as a mousy drudge, who is raising their daughter almost single-handedly since her husband is seldom home. Enter Simon, used-car salesman and womanizer. He's clever enough to know neglected wives are bored and crave adventure. So he pretends to be a master spy working for the CIA who desperately needs her help. The hero learns of his rival's existence when he comes to his wife's office to take her to lunch and overhears her phone conversation with Simon.

Our hero is a broken man. Although he's neglected Helen, he loves her. He doesn't want her to leave him; he doesn't want her messing around with Simon either. Wildly jealous, he has his wife tailed. Helen leads him to

Simon. Separating the pair, he intimidates Simon until he grovels. Still angry and hurt, he interrogates Helen from behind a one-way glass, using a voice synthesizer.

Helen is terrified, but brave and forthright. She says she agreed to help Simon (who she thinks spies for the American government) because for once she wants to do "something outrageous," and risking her life for the sake of her country seemed a good way to get her feet wet.

As the hero is confronted by Helen's innermost longings, the play of emotions upon his face is well worth the price of the ticket. He realizes that unless he cuts her into some of the excitement his life as a spy provides him, he'll lose her.

The next scene finds Helen about to enter a hotel room dressed as a hooker. Her mission is to plant a bug in the suspect's phone. Her husband meets her there, only he's standing in the shadows so she can't see him, and he's using a hand-held voice synthesizer so she won't recognize his voice. He orders her to strip slowly and enticingly out of her dress and then dance for him semi-nude.

What happens next saves the scene for a woman. The hero becomes so emotionally involved in her erotic dance that he drops his control box and tenderly begins to woo her. This climatic scene mirrors the satisfaction women feel when reading a romance in which the hard-edged hero seemingly holds all the cards. But in his effort to dominate the heroine sexually, he finds himself equally ensnared.

After viewing *True Lies*, a woman leaves the theater with hope in her heart that the battle of the sexes can be amicably resolved to the satisfaction of both. At the movie's conclusion, she sees Helen being treated and behaving like an equal partner and is more tolerant of the male madonna/whore fantasy, which seems to be evolving in a manner that can lead to a richer, more fulfilling relationship for both partners.

On the distaff side of the ledger, a woman's primary fantasy appears to be: Someday my prince will come

to my rescue and we'll live happily ever after.

In the book, *Why Men are the Way they Are*, Dr. Farrell discusses the television fantasy "Dynasty." "When good, sweet Krystle becomes pregnant after marrying the owner of the oil company for which she was a secretary, he gives her a Rolls-Royce as a pregnancy present. After several years' leave of absence she returns to work. As secretary? No. As head of the multimillion-dollar corporation's public relations department. What training did she have between being a secretary and being head of public relations? She married the boss. This is the 'Flashdance' Phenomenon—finding the right patron. Qualifications? Look like a princess."

I am not a trained psychologist, and even if I were, I would not dispute the above example. But in all justice to womankind, I feel it only fair to point out that women did not invent the concept of marrying up. Their fathers did. For centuries they were treated like chattel by fathers whose sense of dynastic power far outstripped any affection they had for their daughters.

Do you honestly think twice-widowed Catherine Parr really wanted to marry Henry VIII, an obese man 22 years older than her? Considering that two of her predecessors had ended up with their heads chopped off, if she had a grain of sense, she'd have vehemently opposed any such match. Not that her objections would have been heeded. Her father arranged her third marriage just as he had the other two.

Arranged marriages persisted until the close of the 19th century, but even today, although officially frowned on, I suspect behind the scenes that many socially prominent parents exert undue pressure on their daughters.

Which is not to say that women don't deliberately marry up. Dr. Farrell cites Princess Di, Jackie O, and the late Princess Grace as examples of women "marrying up," that is, gaining something not earned by the sweat of her brow. However, all three women's families were either socially prominent or, in the case of Princess Di, of the nobility. And while they married husbands of even higher stature (or perceived as such), I really

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# PERCHANCE

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don't think that financial gain was their motive.

I think all three married for love. That, in at least one instance, that love subsequently soured does not mean any of the trio were necessarily gold diggers.

I also think they married in order to bear children in a secure environment. Bearing and rearing children is a risky business that if done well can be very rewarding. But if, as Dr. Farrell claims, "woman's primary fantasy is security and a family," does it make any sense to marry a poor provider?

Romance authors, particularly American romance authors, make every effort to portray their heroines as independent women, determined to support themselves and not to depend on a man—be he ever so charming—to solve their problems.

European romance authors cater to readers who prefer to see their heroines more subservient to a dominant male. Worldwide, they sell more books than we do. Yet American authors and their readers feel strongly that they shouldn't perpetuate the image of woman just marking time in a level-entry job until Mr. Right comes along and sweeps her off her feet. Author and reader alike admire a strong heroine, who prefers to achieve financial stability, instead of waiting around for Prince Charming to come kiss them awake.

Still, the reality is that far too many women make this very mistake, according to an article entitled: "This is your Wake-up Call: Stop Dreaming of Rescues," in which Englewood, NJ psychotherapist Claire M. Brody observes, "many of her female clients long to be 'taken care of.' Yet when someone tries to do just that, they find they can't bear the loss of their decision-making power and autonomy. Only then do they discover that what they really wanted all along was not to be rescued but to be loved."

Fantasy #2 involves the Ghostly

Lover. Dr. Toni Grant notes in *Being a Woman*, "The Ghostly Lover may be a real man, a man she has loved and lost, a love that can never be."

It is said that a woman never forgets her first lover. If there is no actual lover in her past, a woman is predisposed to concoct a dream lover. He is her soul mate, her other half. For the average man this is a hard act to follow.

Let's assume that our heroine is young, naïve, and has low self-esteem the first time she meets her ghostly lover. The fantasy is that the day comes when she's older, more mature, more in charge of her life, when she has an M.B.A. degree and is moving up the corporate ladder, when the opposite sex find her attractive and eagerly court her.

Still she cannot forget her first love. He's always in the back of her mind. Years slip past and suddenly she gets a second chance. Only this time around, she knows how to stand up for herself, knows just what to say. And this time, instead of the scene ending with the man she desires above all others walking out on her, he's intrigued and fascinated. And, far more important, ready to make a commitment to her. This time our heroine can look forward to living happily ever after.

Little wonder romances have happy endings. These novels deal with relationships—wholesome, healthy relationships that hold out the hope of a reasonably secure future once the curtain descends.

The Ghostly Lover fantasy is explored in Susan Isaacs's best-selling novel, *After all These Years*. The book is ostensibly a witty murder mystery in which the heroine, Rosie, is suspected of killing her husband, Richie, who decides to divorce her and marry Jessica the day after they celebrate their silver wedding anniversary. The police are about to arrest Rosie when she goes on the lam to prove her innocence.

It's the subplot that revolves around her ghostly lover. In high school, she and Tom were lovers. Years later, Rosie is still hurt that he took someone else to the senior

prom. Presently in deep trouble, Rosie turns to Tom, now a highly successful businessman. Because he takes her in, Rosie is able to buy the time she needs to pinpoint the true murderer. At the novel's conclusion, it's clear they've picked up where they left off in high school. Only this time around, Rosie no longer suffers from low self-esteem and the reader feels she and Tom will make a good life together.

Another example of women's fiction that deals with this same fantasy is Georgia Bockoven's *The Way It Should Have Been*. In childhood, Carly, David, and Ethan (Carly's husband) were inseparable. Then in high school, Carly and David fell in love. Both had high aspirations. Carly wanted to be an artist, David a novelist. David reached his goal, but Carly married Ethan and now has three children, her former ambition apparently sublimated.

David returns for his father's funeral. For years, the fact that Carly threw him over has rankled. He calls on her to see if he can learn the reason. To put it mildly, all hell breaks loose. The characters are well drawn; the plot twists are inspired. In the end, Carly realizes her ambition to become a serious artist and wins David in the bargain. Best of all, the entire novel is truly romantic.

Compare these two fantasies with real life. Dusty is a retired teacher. Very attractive, she's divorced with grown children. During World War II, she was a WAVE who had an affair with a handsome Naval officer and, despite the fact that she came from a lower-middle class background and he from a wealthy East Coast family, they were inseparable until the war ended.

Then her lover went home to Philadelphia and married a girl from his social set. Dusty got a degree, married, and spent the next several years rearing a family and being a teacher.

Years passed and suddenly out of the blue, her first love contacted her. (He'd traced her through her dog tag. Honest!) They spoke on the phone. She learned he, too, was divorced. They arranged to meet.

Dusty, being an incurable romantic, dreamed that this time their differ-

ent backgrounds wouldn't matter.

So what happened? Dusty flew to Los Angeles and took a cab to the hotel where he was staying. It turned out that he was en route to Hong Kong and had only an hour to spare. Even that hour was not exclusively hers. Either the phone or his traveling companions kept intruding.

According to M. Ester Harding, author of *The Way of All Women*, "Fantasies with an emotional tone which bring their own satisfaction are a normal part of psychological life. Only when the preoccupation with this fantasy material withdraws attention from the world of reality does it become a menace."

Little wonder so many women love to read romance novels. Within those pages, they know the heroine won't be short-changed and that, despite obstacles, the story will end happily.

Fantasy #3 assures a woman she can tame the savage beast.

The reality is that no matter how irredeemable the man, far too many women fantasize that all he needs is the love of a good woman to straighten him out. While any sane person would walk away, she is the only person in the world who can persuade him to change for the better.

But facts are facts. I don't care if the woman is a combination of Marilyn Monroe, Margaret Thatcher, and Sister Teresa, she cannot change the behavior of certain kinds of men, like homosexuals, for example. She should also not dream of changing an insatiable Casanova, a mainline addict, an alcoholic, a psychotic, or a serial killer. She might as well not beat out her brains trying.

However, a reasonably together woman can sometimes modify the behavior of a reasonably normal male—provided said male has sufficient incentive to change and the will to do so. Needless to say all change is hard won.

A tough hero with a bleak past is a hard nut to crack. But like all fantasies, there is a grain of truth in the conviction that a woman's love can tame the savage beast and heal his wounded heart. In real life, I would

imagine it to be an uphill battle with absolutely no guarantee of success. More to the point, in real life, a woman who attempts to tame the Alpha type male runs the risk of ending up heartbroken.

As Patricia Chatham, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist who specializes in personality disorders, cautions, "Only about ten percent of your partner's foibles are amenable to change."

Chatham adds, "Ninety percent of what makes a good marriage is in the pick! Paradoxically, the very trait that initially attracts you is inevitably the trait that will eventually repel you. Which means you have to pick carefully."

In Janice A. Radway's *Reading the Romance*, she describes the typical heroine as feisty, independent, and spirited—this paradoxically, despite her ultimate goal of surrendering her autonomy to the powerful hero, of losing herself in a romantic union.

The promise of a happy ending without personal risk to the reader is, I suspect, part of the appeal of novels featuring the Alpha-type male.

In Susan Elizabeth Phillips's essay, "The Romance and the Empowerment of Women," she confesses, "...the fantasy these novels offered me was one of command and control over the harum scarum events of my life—a fantasy of female empowerment."

Fortunately for the sanity of all womankind, romance authors love to create tough, hard-bitten heroes just as much as our readers love to read about them.

I happen to believe that, cultural and gender differences notwithstanding, the major reason women and men perceive things differently is because we are inextricably involved in different fantasies. Conscious awareness of the major male and female fantasies can only help both genders better understand and respect each other, and any author—particularly a romance author—will benefit from a thorough exploration and understand-

ing of our deepest longings and dreams.

Romance novels that speak to our fantasies provide a subtext that enriches both author and reader. Furthermore, I feel it a grave mistake for a woman to try and suppress her fantasies. Far healthier to acknowledge that they are an integral part of her being and do her best to understand them. In short, I'm a staunch believer that enlightenment is empowerment.

NINK



NINK's heartiest congratulations to Julie Tetel Andresen whose studio-pubbed book, *The Blue Hour*, won the *Writer's Digest* (cash!) award for fiction. Julie pubbed the book under her own imprint, Madeira. Way to go, Julie!

#### **SFWA & Bibliobytes Harness 'Net for Major Literary Award**

Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) and BiblioBytes, a firm that provides the free text of many books and stories to readers on the Web, have joined to provide the complete text of all novels and short works nominated for the Nebula Awards to SFWA members on the Internet.

This is the first time that the power of the Internet has been harnessed to assist the voters for a major literary award. In years past, it has been difficult for many members who wish to vote on the awards to hunt down all the published works. In particular, it is often difficult to find the back issue of a magazine containing a short story, and in some cases, nominated works have been published in relatively obscure journals. Even novels are sometimes difficult to find, since publishing trends have produced shorter and shorter shelf-lives for books. BiblioBytes ► ► ►



## BREAKING NEWS

Continued from page 7

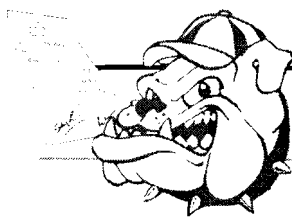
([www.bb.com](http://www.bb.com)) has therefore agreed to provide the complete text of all of this year's nominees at its site, in a password-protected area open to SFWA members. The area is not open to the general public, in order to protect the authors' copyrights in their works.

The Nebula Awards are the highest literary honor in the field of science fiction and fantasy, and have been awarded by SFWA since 1965. All active writer members of SFWA, an organization of 1400 science fiction and fantasy professionals, are entitled to vote on the awards. They are awarded annually to the best novel, novella, novelette, and short story in the genres of science fiction and fantasy. A list of this year's nominees can be found at <http://www.sfw.org/awards/nebula.htm>.

### E-First

*Entertainment Weekly* reports author M.J. Rose has sold her erotic thriller, *Lip Service*, to the Doubleday Direct Bookclub, and that Rose's agent, Loretta Barrett, also brokered a deal (in the high five-figure range) to Pocket. The key here is that Rose couldn't get any interest from conventional publishers when she first tried to sell the book, so she self-pubbed it on the Internet. *EW* reports this as the first book ever to go from self-publication on the 'Net to Doubleday's book club.

**For More "Breaking News,"  
Turn to Page 13**



## ASK THE LAWYER

*This month I have again received a number of questions about author/agent relations, this time in the area of exploitation of subsidiary rights reserved from the publisher.*

**Question:** *When an agent (or a former agent) holds subsidiary rights to an author's work, at what point is she/he ethically bound to put those rights on the sales block? When a book is published? Before? After?—And how long before or after? What are an agent's obligations to a former client when it comes to updating a client as to the current status of rights under the agent's control? What is ethical for agents? Is the agent ethically bound to market those rights for the client?*

**Answer:** It is important for authors to understand that once an agent sells publication rights in a work to a publisher and reserves certain rights to the author (i.e. does not grant those rights to the publisher), the agent is not only reserving the rights for the author, the agent is also reserving the rights for himself. Please note that unless your agreement with your agent states otherwise, the agent has the right to receive his or her commission on licensing all reserved rights essentially forever.

Once your agent reserves subsidiary rights from the publisher, your agent has the obligation to make a good faith attempt to exploit those rights for your (and his) benefit. Since your agent does not receive any commission on the reserved subsidiary rights unless and until he sells them, it is in his best interests to try to license reserved subsidiary rights. That is your best protection that your agent will try to license the reserved subsidiary because you and your agent have a mutuality of interest.

However, remember that you are just one of many clients your agent has. His best shot at selling your

reserved subsidiary rights is at around the time of the initial trade publication of your book. This is because any promotional activity for your book (and interest in your book) will be around the publication of your book.

If your agent is unable to sell the reserved subsidiary rights in your work at that time he is going to lose some interest in those rights. It is less likely that he will be able to license rights at a later date unless something else happens to make them valuable or interesting, such as your becoming a more important or bestselling author or because your book is made into a motion picture.

Your agent does not normally issue periodic "activity" reports or status reports to his clients, whether present or former clients. Generally, the way you learn that the reserved subsidiary rights in your work have been sold is because your agent is interested enough or excited enough about making a sale that he calls you to let you know, otherwise the accounting you get from your agent will reflect the licensing.

In the event you find yourself in a situation where your agent has not even attempted to sell your reserved subsidiary rights, he is not meeting his obligations to you and you have a legal right to get your rights back (but enforcing that right can be a long, drawn-out, and costly situation). But that would be a very rare situation, again, because it is in his own interests to sell rights and earn commissions.

**— Alan J. Kaufman**

*Alan J. Kaufman has over 25 years of publishing legal expertise, including 19 years as senior vice president and general counsel for Penguin Books. He currently practices law with the New York-based intellectual property law firm of Frankfurt, Garbus, Klein & Selz, where he specializes in publishing and media. For private, for-hire consultations, phone 212-826-5579 or fax 212-593-9175.*





## EAST OF THE HUDSON

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 1*

of backing the fork-lift out of my kid's abdomen, the surgeon cuts an artery, spilling what my Green Beret buddy refers to as half a unit of salsa and suddenly changing the whole simple procedure.

Instead of a one-inch incision, suddenly we're dealing with a five-inch gash to make room for the surgical crew that dives in after the "retracted" artery...

...none of which would have been necessary in the first place if the surgeon had just stayed out of someplace no sane person would have gone if it were not for medical insurance and hubris.

Everything turned out as well as major surgery can turn out, we are glad to announce, but the whole experience really came back to me as I read a recent *Publishers Weekly* column by Tom McCormack, former honcho at St. Martin's.

Now I have to admit that I resent McCormack. He is a handsome silver-haired guru, while I'm a paunchy hack; he does the same sort of column I do, but he probably gets paid real money for it, and he only has to write when the muse blows in his ear, not when a brow-beating editor demands it.

But his last effort was entirely admirable because he turned on his former colleagues, editors, and told them what somebody should have told my daughter's surgeon: Just because your employer gave you pencils and an eraser, do not assume that you are morally entitled to use them like L.A. cops use nightsticks.

McCormack cautions editors sternly. "The primary rule of editing is, first do no harm. If a novel isn't sick, get away from it with your diagnostic rules and tools."

The meat-ax editors are singled out for particular scorn. They're the ones who spout generalizations like "Show, Don't Tell," and who hip-shoot (and often gut-shoot) on the fly. My wife and I once had a horrid experience with an overworked and overstressed harridan who seemed convinced she could line- and content-edit a manuscript on her first and only pass through it.

And many of her fixes were based on a *priori* of rules that she trotted out to justify the most fundamentally flawed "suggestions" I have ever encountered before or since.

McCormack is almost as wordy as I am. He threw a great deal of ink over a full magazine page in his discussion of weak editors. But he did, in the end, manage to reduce his point to a paragraph that ought to be tattooed on the backs of all editors' hands:

"The purpose of editorial diagnosis is to help identify what ailment is causing observable symptoms. It's important that the symptoms always be in terms of unwanted reader-reaction. The breaking of a cookie-mold rule is never a symptom of an ailment in a work of art; the symptom would have to be disappointment, bewilderment, or the like in the ideal reader."

Surgeons like my daughter's must have a certain amount of arrogance. It takes brass balls to say, "I know what's

wrong and I'm going to fix it," and then to stick a knife into another human being as a means of making them healthy. I can't fault the one who "nicked" Heather's artery too much; she at least had the self-confidence to admit what had happened and to say, in effect, that she had learned something from the experience.

So, too, it ought to be with editors. There are lots of writers turning in average manuscripts these days (and every day since writing was invented), but every one of those manuscripts is somebody's child and is entitled to sympathetic treatment and reluctant surgery, not aggressive doping and gleeful butchery.

### THAT'S WHAT I MEANT TO SAY

In my old age, my memory sometimes gets fuzzy, but I think I recently attacked politicians, publishers, and marketers who use focus groups to shape their judgments.

If I didn't, I certainly meant to do so. I think focus groups are the worst methods of ascertaining truthful opinion I can imagine. Politicians are fond of quick polls, and those polls regularly lead them astray. If you disagree, reflect on the polls Dick Morris ran for Bill Clinton the day after the name "Monica Lewinsky" entered the popular mind.

(In case you didn't follow the meanderings of the matter, Morris did an overnight pulse count that led him to tell the President the country would never forgive an affair with an intern.

(Clinton listened, nodded and is supposed to have said, "Well, then I guess we'll just have to win.")

At any rate, I was doing some further reflecting the other night on focus groups and what's wrong with them. Lots of my best thinking is done in the middle of the night, with the wind howling under the eaves and my wife making those cute little sounds in her sleep beside me. My thought on this particular sleepless night is that focus groups and, for that matter, public opinion polls, are fundamentally flawed because they are all susceptible to being influenced by exposure to the opinions of others.

Get a dozen folks around a table discussing an issue or a story or a painting or a film and you will get a dozen carefully edited responses. Those responses are shaped by the panel members' perceptions of the group sentiment. All groups generate their own ethos, their own set of publicly voiced beliefs and values. You can call it "politesse" or "political correctness," but it still amounts to the publicly espoused values.

And those public values may not be an accurate reflection of how individual people really feel. In fact, they rarely are. Why else do you suppose the secret ballot was invented?

The tyranny of the group ethos is harsh. I feel it myself or I wouldn't say so. It's only in the last few years, thanks to this column, that I have learned to shoot off my mouth publicly in pretty much the same way I feel privately. That may sound like an odd admission from a writer, but it's true. I think we all write with one eye over our shoulder, at least part of the time. We write to please our editors or our audiences or our colleagues or our critique ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



## EAST OF THE HUDSON

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 9*

groups. We write lots of what we write not because we think it is absolutely true, but because we think it will sell or be well-promoted or nicely reviewed or it will win a RITA or an Edgar or a Nebula or some other kind of in-group award.

And usually, that's the writing that is absolutely awful—artificial and turgid and lackluster and, often as not, downright silly.

That insight leads me to the conclusion that focus-group politics and marketing are of such limited value that they ought to be outlawed. There is the public opinion, then there is what we think in the privacy of the polling place or our own homes. Sometimes the two converge, but the older I get, the more I suspect the overlap is smaller than Dick Morris and Bill Clinton thought.

Look in front of you when you write, not over your shoulder, and certainly not at some group of folks that aren't saying what they really believe, anyway.

(Whew. I feel better now. But I'll be damned if I know where that little rant came from. I think I've been listening to Dennis Miller too much.)

### THE FABULOUS INVALID

*NYTimes* writer Doreen Carvajal broke the news the other day: mass-market paperbacks are in trouble.

Actually, I think we've all been discussing that matter for some time, but Ms. Carvajal's front-page piece did collect some interesting statistics and offer a slick compendium of the conventional wisdom as to why this trend has developed.

Carvajal reports that since 1995, mass-market paperback unit sales have declined by almost nine percent. The actual unit sales shrank to 464 million last year, so we are talking about a sales loss of more than 40 million units. In macrocultural terms, that's substantial, almost three times the percentage loss of consumer books generally.

Some of the loss has been disguised by price creep, which now has the average mass-market paperback price point at \$7. Carvajal suggests that such price increases may have something to do with the loss of mass-market unit sales. With discounted hardbacks and so-called quality paperbacks becoming more popular, the loss of mass-market sales may be less important for the book business than otherwise would be the case.

There are other factors at work, as well, Carvajal suggests. The incredible consolidation of the independent-distributor business has meant there are fewer titles and fewer copies stocked in supermarkets and drug stores. Declining popularity of mall stores has meant fewer impulse purchasers, who tended toward cheap paperbacks.

There is a decline in interest in some of the genres

which have been at the heart of the mass-market business, she says. In support of that idea, she pointed to Westerns, but I got the feeling she would have liked to throw romances into the picture, as well, except that romance sales don't seem to have declined.

And there may be demographic forces at work, as well. The reading population is aging, and their eyesight is getting worse. Paperbacks printed in six-point type are not as popular as they once were. Audio books are more popular.

As with most journalistic endeavors, Carvajal's piece was long on description of the obvious, but it did offer a couple of pieces of news I hadn't heard before.

The most interesting, I thought, was that consumers are now spending more money on videotaped entertainment than they are on books. According to *the Statistical Abstract of the United States*, the average American spent \$88.79 on videos in 1997, the most recent year for which numbers are available. By contrast, the average citizen spent only \$88.09 on books.

That proves I am not average in at least two important regards. I spend \$88.09 on a single visit to my neighborhood superstore, and I go there a hell of a lot more than once a year.

The picture Carvajal painted was distressing for someone who has made much of his living out of those four and a quarter by seven-inch tomes called mass-market paperbacks. But she did admit in the tail end of her story that the business is still viable. She quoted Irwyn Appelbaum, publisher and president of Bantam: "Like Broadway, (the paperback business) is that fabulous invalid and every day there are rumors of its demise, but people keep showing up."

I can only hope that the mass-market paperback business has more life than Broadway.

### THE \$40 ASSASSIN

In my declining days, certain questions recur. What's the meaning of Life? Why do flowers bloom in the spring and not in winter, when we really need them? Did Monica ever inhale? Why do people review books?

These questions come back, time and again, because they have no satisfactory answers. That's particularly true of book reviewers. Why on earth would any normal and seemingly intelligent human undertake to read a book, and then to write about what he or she has read, usually in a derogatory way?

Jayne Krentz, who is a natural-born scamp, clipped something from a Seattle weekly that answered that question in a candid and direct manner. In the piece headlined "Reviewers Who Love Too Much," Jonathan Taylor, identified as a former reviewer for *BookForum*, *The Nation*, and (my favorite) *Kirkus Reviews*, made some unsettling admissions about the anonymous monsters who strip flesh from writers' bones. I admire Taylor's candor, even if I am puzzled that he would put such a confession on paper.

Young Taylor (I call him that because he seems

remarkably naïve) became a *Kirkus* scribe some time ago, mainly because a friend of his recommended him to a *Kirkus* editor. He pasted up a couple of his clips, pieces that had been published in national magazines, and shipped them off to the review service.

"The editor called me and asked me to come see her," Taylor wrote. "I'd love to have you write for *Kirkus*," she said at the beginning of the interview."

No background check, no verification of résumé, no little chat to see what kind of person he was.

Training? He got a page of instructions on the *Kirkus* review format: punchy opening sentence, big paragraph of review that is not to exceed 300 words, and punchy closing sentence.

That was it. Hell, he got more training on how to e-mail his reviews to the newsletter than he did in evaluating books. Oh and there was this short contract which specified that he would be paid \$40 per review, one review a week.

A good word from a friend and a couple of clippings were enough to turn Reader Taylor into A Powerful Review Voice.

To his credit, Taylor was made uneasy by the transformation. "I felt weird about my qualifications every week, but never for very long. At that pace, I didn't have much time to think before I had to e-mail the review into oblivion and start the next book."

But he kept plugging away. Why? "The main reason I slaved away for such little money was to accumulate published clips, and after I had a couple dozen or so, I stopped. With my enlarged collection of clips, I wrote to some editors of magazines and got a light string of assignments. It was real easy in fact. There can't be that much competition."

So the reviewer bootstrapped himself into longer and longer reviews for bigger publications. "The book was usually just as bad, but I had to write about it at greater length, which meant more time in which to procrastinate, to put off actually thinking about the book while still worrying about it, so that by the time I got down to writing I was sick to death of the whole endeavor, but hadn't even put any real thought into it."

Breathtaking, huh? Kind of puts the whole humiliating process into perspective. Almost makes you sorry for the poor little devils.

Clearly, Taylor is a little too introspective, and a little too honest, to make it in the cutthroat world of *belles lettres*. His career was winding down. It was harder and harder to muster the proper murderous mood to flay some author. In a betrayal of objectivity, he asked to be allowed to review a new book by an author whom he already knew well, and loved greatly.

"My review was, more than I knew at the time, an article about myself, an explanation of why I thought this writer was perfect...It was a sort of open letter to the author, demonstrating to him that I understood, I got it right."

Clearly, this sort of critical outlook would never do. And to make things worse, the reviewed author wrote

Taylor a letter in response, "acknowledging the one thing I had dreamed of ever since I read his novel—that I had gotten it right."

At that point, Taylor says his career as a reviewer was over. While he doesn't say so, I understand why. He had ceded too much power to the subject of his writing and had not reserved enough for himself. A reviewer must be a presumptuous, arrogant pedant, else he or she will be unable to climb far enough above the reviewed work to do it justice. Reviewing is the antithesis of both writing and reading. It envies the former and belittles the latter.

Which is why I hereby swear that I will never again read a review of my own work. As a matter of fact, I'd probably better quit reading reviews in general, so as not to have my mind tainted.

Of course, I won't give up my little pulpit here, which is a kind of review tower in itself.

At least not until the end of the year.

### UNCLE EVAN'S HORNBOOK

Here's a bit of advice to writers about invasion of privacy and other legal issues that arise when you base a character on a real human being. It comes from literary lawyer Leon Friedman, who led a recent panel on the subject for the Authors Guild.

"To protect yourself, add a lot of unflattering characteristics to the fictional character. This is what libel lawyers call the 'Small Penis Rule.' What you do is describe a male character as having a very small penis. No self-respecting man will come forward to start a lawsuit that would require him to say: 'That character with the small penis—that's me.'"

— Evan Maxwell

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## INTRODUCING...

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*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 NINC issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of NINC:*

### New Applicants

Joan Reeves, Houston TX  
Kristen Robinette, Pinson AL  
Tina Wainscott, Naples FL

### New Members

Laura Baker, Albuquerque, NM  
Pat Hamon (*Patricia Roy*), Duluth MN  
Marguerite (Marge) Smith (*Elizabeth Sinclair*),  
St. Augustine FL  
Cynthia Thomason, Davie FL

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# Oh, My Aching... (and what to do about it)

**T**wo years ago, I'd never heard of Alexander Technique. I was months into medical treatment after my son's "sneak attacks" and my years at a keyboard had finally caught up with me in the form of shoulder pain and reduced range of motion. Here's the thing: I never hurt when I was typing. I had an ergonomic desk, an ergonomic chair. I thought I was safe from repetitive stress injury.

Not so. Instead I was like those women who wore high heels for years. Their feet don't hurt unless you ask them to put on a pair of Keds. I didn't hurt at the keyboard. I hurt when I did things like reach into the backseat of the car, shake open a bedsheet, or jerk my right shoulder in any sudden movement. Then the pain was so excruciating it sometimes doubled me over.

At first, I thought whatever was wrong would go away with rest, exercise, and ibuprofen. Then I saw an orthopedist, a physical therapist, and a chiropractor, who did their thing and warned that I might never be pain-free or regain full range of motion. They all said that my decreased range of motion, with or without pain, was an early warning sign of damage. How should I have known I was in trouble? My PT gave me the following exercises...little tests to check:

Hold your right arm out in front of you. Keeping your shoulder straight, use your left hand to slowly and gently push your right hand down, so that your fingers are pointing at the floor. Now, make a fist. How hard is it? Try it with the other hand.

Lean back against a wall. Clasp your hands behind your neck. Now, press your elbows toward the wall. When I began this odyssey, I couldn't get within 45-degrees of the wall.

Lie on your back. With your arm at shoulder level, bend your elbow 90-degrees. Rotate your arm down and touch your palm to the floor. Now rotate your arm back to touch the back of your hand to the floor. I couldn't do the second part. No way. Hurt like hell.

When my chiropractor finally suggested I try Alexander Technique, I was game. I called Rupa Cousins, a former actress and Alexander teacher for the past 20 years who is also trained in Feldenkrais and Rubenfeld Synergy, and made an appointment.

If you're an actor or know actors, you've probably heard of Alexander Technique. It's taught at most major theatrical institutions, including Juilliard. F.M. Alexander (1869-1955) was a Shakespearean actor who studied his own habits to figure out what was causing a stubborn vocal problem. He discovered that his overall body posture,

## Episode 2: Alexander Technique

By CARLA NEGGERS

movement, and breathing were all affected by the relationship between the head, neck, and spine. Alexander Technique does not purport to be a medical treatment like physical therapy. Its purpose is good movement. Reduced pain and muscle tension, increased range of motion, fewer asthma attacks, fewer migraines, and other results are what Rupa calls the positive

side effects of "good use."

Most people take about 30 lessons once or twice a week over three to six months. Lessons are one on one, involving table work and ordinary tasks (sitting on a chair, picking up a box) with a teacher guiding a student through gentle touching and verbal direction. There's nothing electric or hot or painful. You only have to take off your shoes. The process is subtle yet profound. I learned to recognize and inhibit "bad use" and direct myself toward "good use"—doing "less" rather than "more," freeing the neck, lengthening the spine, widening the torso. There's no forcing.

"Good movement," not any particular look or posture, is the hallmark of Alexander Technique. I learned what a truly neutral posture feels like. I learned to use my body's own design to "direct" myself toward an ease and efficiency of momentum, undoing muscle tension, achieving more balance and grace. It's been a gradual process, and one day I suddenly realized that I was pain-free and had full range of motion back. Now I'm more attuned to my body's design and its early warning system. I go about my daily tasks with less strain—typing, using the mouse, reaching for the phone, getting up from my chair, picking up stuff, even walking.

To understand what Alexander Technique is and how it works, you really have to have a lesson. Otherwise it's like trying to explain how to fall asleep. The North American Society of Teachers of Alexander Technique (NASTAT) has a comprehensive Web site at [www.alexandertech.com](http://www.alexandertech.com). It also offers a toll-free teacher referral: (800) 473-0620. There are books and articles on Alexander Technique, but you really can't learn it by reading. You have to experience it. *NINK*

**Author's Note: This article is for your information only. It's not meant to treat or diagnose anyone.** (Editor's note: Regarding the regular use of ibuprofen for chronic pain... [Yes, this is a crusade...;->] Ibuprofen can cause serious liver damage when used regularly. I also recently learned from an all-too-reliable source that daily use of ibuprofen has been linked in more than one instance to recurring bouts of viral meningitis. To which news I said "yuck, it's back to aspirin.")

## Now It's Your Turn to Make the NINC Conference a Success!



I'm happy to report the Conference Committee has grown by one member since last month—Ellen Taber is working up a menu of sightseeing options for those who want to see more of Savannah than the inside of the Hyatt. Jasmine Cresswell is hard at work planning the program and selecting the menus, and doing all that boring behind the scenes stuff. Meanwhile, our dedicated

Editor/Agent Liaison, Sandra Kitt, is doing some exciting "in front of the scenes" stuff, namely inviting editors and agents to attend the conference. Now comes the part where you can help!

Those who attended the conference in Lake Tahoe last year were thoroughly impressed by the caliber of publishing professionals who attended. We were also shocked, amazed, and enlightened by their candor and the depth of information they shared. **THIS IS JUST THE KIND OF NITTY GRITTY INDUSTRY NEWS WE WANT AT A CONFERENCE!** everyone exclaimed. And that's just the kind of nitty gritty industry news we'd like to give you at a conference, too. The thing is, we can't make these publishing professionals come back this year! All we can do is invite them. Nicely. Politely. Charmingly. Even insistently. But we can't put a gun to their heads and force them to come.

Only their authors can do that.

Please, I'm joking! You don't have to use a real gun. Or any kind of weapon at all, in fact. All you have to do is call up your editor and your agent and tell them they'd better be there or they'll never hear the end of it!

Oh, you can also mention the networking opportunities, the chance to meet authors they might some day like to work with, and the forum we offer for them to demonstrate their considerable expertise to a whole hotel full of published authors.

Every editor and agent who attends will have the opportunity to participate in the professional discussion groups. We will also offer editors time on Sunday morning to meet with authors to discuss what's going on at their house, and agents will have the opportunity to meet privately with any authors who are interested in representation.

You may now be wondering what you get out of making this effort. Well, your agent and your editor might well learn things about the industry they didn't know before, such as how the author's viewpoint is always slightly different on any issue. They might also learn things from their peers that will make them smarter and better at their jobs. Just imagine a world in which editors and agents knew as much about publishing as writers do!

Well, I can dream, can't I? And meanwhile, we'll have a wonderful conference, and people will come away even more shocked, amazed, and enlightened than they were last year.

But only if you do your part. Get on the phone!

— **Victoria Thompson, Conference Coordinator**



## BREAKING NEWS

### BLACKLIST: Writers Guild of America Announces Six Credit Corrections:

On March 10, Oscar-nominated screenwriter Warren Beatty (*Bulworth*) joined former WGA Presidents George Kirgo and Del Reisman for a press conference to announce changes in the credits of six films written by blacklisted writers.

The Board of Directors of the Writers Guild of America West, unanimously voted to correct the writing

credits of seven blacklisted writers. They will officially change the credits for six films released between 1948 and 1961. These changes are part of a continuing effort on the part of the Guild to determine true authorship. The films are:

1. *Luxury Girls*, United Artists, 1953 (Original credits: "Written by Ennio Flaiano") Corrected credits to read: "Written by Norma Barzman" Correspondence confirms that Flaiano worked as a front for Barzman.

2. *The Magnificent Rebel* (aka *Schicksals-Sinfonie*), Walt Disney, 1960 (Original credits: "Written by Joanne Court") Corrected credits to read: "Written by Joan Scott." Guild records clearly indicate that Joanne Court was a pseudonym for Joan Scott.

3. *The Two-Headed Spy*, Columbia, 1959 (Original credits: "Screenplay by

James O'Donnell. Based on a short story by J. Alvin Kugelmass.") Corrected credits to read: "Screenplay by Michael Wilson and Alfred Levitt. Based on a short story by J. Alvin Kugelmass." Records clearly indicate that James O'Donnell was a pseudonym for Michael Wilson, and also that Levitt was secretly employed to collaborate with Wilson on this film.

*Omissions:* These titles involve films where writers did not receive any writing credit because of the blacklist.

1. *El Cid*, Allied Artists, 1961 (Original credits: "Screenplay by Philip Yordan and Frederic M. Frank. Story by Frederic M. Frank.") Corrected credits to read: "Screenplay by Philip Yordan and Frederic M. Frank and Ben Barzman. Story by Frederic M. Frank."

2. *The Prisoner of Zenda*, ▶ ▶ ▶

# The 13 Dumbest Words I Ever Said

By **VICTORIA THOMPSON**

Awhile back, I realized that the historical romance market was due for a shakeout. Publishers had noticed how much money these books were earning and decided that they could make ten times as much money if they published ten times as many of them. Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it, and like others before them did with category romance, they flooded the marketplace with too many historicals. We all know what happened next in the category romance field, and it's happening now in the historical field. Too many books means fewer royalties for individual titles being sold means far less royalties for writers. Publishers cut back, writers end up homeless, until the market shakes down to where it should be again.

I've been around the block a few times, so I knew what was coming. I fully intended to be one of the historical authors left standing when the cutbacks began, but I also wanted to branch out, just to have some options. I'd already decided that romantic suspense (which is what it is, no matter what they call it to try to fool the salespeople!) was going to be the next hot genre, and I planned to be on the crest of that wave. Several books, lots of glowing rejections, and a movie option later, I had decided that maybe I couldn't write a romantic suspense after all. What should I do instead?

Along the way, my agent had pointed out that one of my woman-in-jeopardy proposals could easily be a mystery. In fact, she said, the characters were so engaging, it could be a series. She wanted to submit it as such. This was my agent, the woman to whom I give 15 percent of my earnings to compensate her for knowing what's what and giving me good advice. Do you know what I said to her? I said, "I don't want to be stuck writing the same characters over and over!"

Don't bother counting. Those are the 13 dumbest words I ever said. I could've let her submit that proposal as a mystery series. I could've sold a mystery series five years ago. I could've hit the mystery series market when it was really hot. I could've been a contender! But no, I didn't want to be stuck writing the same characters over and over. Opportunity knocked, and I slammed the door in its face.

So guess what happened next. My publisher tells me, after 20 books, that they won't be offering me a new contract because my numbers are so bad. Nobody else wants me either because my numbers are so bad. I'm not one of the few left standing in the historical romance shakeout. My career is over. Period.

Except that my agent calls me one day and says Berkley is looking for someone to write an historical mystery series set in turn-of-the-century New York with a midwife as the heroine. Would I be interested?

Would I be interested? I'd already been putting murder mysteries in my historicals for years. I'd just recently fallen in love with Greenwich Village and had been reading up on its history for fun.

I work for the March of Dimes, and I actually know several modern midwives personally. I was born to write this series! Oh, okay, I'll confess: if they'd said they wanted someone to write a series set in Peoria with a potter for the heroine, I would've researched Peoria and pottery and done a darn fine job of it, too. Luckily, I didn't have to, though. This was my series, and I was going to write it. I sent them a proposal for the first book, and Berkley was as excited about it as I was. The result of all this is *Murder on Astor Place*, the first in the Gaslight Mystery series. Another happy ending. Or at least a new beginning.

I like stories with morals, so I'm trying to figure out a moral for this one. I guess my message would be "never say never." Or maybe "be careful what you don't wish for." But most likely, the true message here is that when God closes a door and opens a window, you don't have to jump out, but at least go over and take a peek. Your destiny might be waiting just outside. Mine waited out in the cold for five years before I finally took the plunge. Let me just say that I'm awfully glad I finally did. **NINK**

*Victoria Thompson is the author of 20 historical romances. Her first historical mystery, Murder on Astor Place, is a May release from Berkley Prime Crime.*



**DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT**



**BREAKING  
NEWS**

**Continued from page 13**

MGM, 1952 (Original credits:  
"Screenplay by John L. Balderston and

Noel Langley. Adaptation by Wells Root from the Novel by Anthony Hope and the dramatization by Edward Rose.") Corrected credits to read: "Screenplay by John L. Balderston and Noel Langley. Adaptation by Wells Root from the Novel by Anthony Hope and the dramatization by Edward Rose. Additional dialogue by Donald Ogden Stewart."

3. *Ruthless*, Eagle Lyon/Arthur S.

Lyon, 1948 (Original credits: "Screenplay by S.K. Lauren and Gordon Kahn. Based on the novel *Prelude to Night* by Dayton Stoddart.") Corrected credits to read: "Screenplay by Alvah Bessie and S.K. Lauren and Gordon Kahn. Based on the novel *Prelude to Night* by Dayton Stoddart." **NINK**



It seems last month I only touched the tip of the iceberg with listserves geared toward aiding writers. This month Jo Beverley reports, "A new list has been set up for language and culture research. The main list members will be romance readers (though it's hoped that in time it will draw in all kinds of readers) who are native speakers of languages other than English, many of them living in foreign countries. Writers with questions about foreign phrases or customs are invited to visit and pick their brains." To subscribe, send an e-mail to **major-domo@lists.swb.de**. Within the body, type: subscribe  
lemot your@e-mail.address.

Flo Moyer mentioned that "HRom is a new discussion listserv dedicated to Historical Romance Writing and Publishing for published romance authors only. To subscribe, you must have at least one published romance novel, (contemporary or historical), and either be currently published in Historical Romance, trying to break into the genre, or trying to break back in after an absence. Focus will be only on the paperback/hardcover marketplace, not on the e-publishing market. Topics include the Historical Romance Publishers, midlist versus 'breakout' historical, editors who are buying, the strength or weakness of the market, time periods that are selling, general questions on WIPs including research, conference information, agents, and posts of support, or any other advanced topic directly related to Historical Romance." To subscribe, visit the Web site at **www.geocities.com/heartland/hollow/5656**.

Online newsletters differ from listserves in that dialogue is not generated between the subscribers. All the newsletters mentioned in this article are free. *Writer's Digest* has "Tips and Updates From *Writer's Digest*," a brief weekly e-mail newsletter with writing instruction and inspiration, as well as updates about *Writer's Digest* publications. To see samples of the material published in the newsletter, visit **www.writersdigest.com/tips.html**. To subscribe, go to the Web site and complete the subscription form at **www.writersdigest.com/listserv.html**.

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Rock Web site. All genres and types of writing are covered but the romance, mystery, science fiction/fantasy, horror, and inspirational genres are most often featured. Submissions are accepted from published authors and experts on writing, marketing, and the business of writing. Payment includes advertising space for book promotion. To query an article submission, e-mail the publisher Carmel Thomaston (**carmel@paintedrock.com**) or the editor Joyce Dixon (**TheRock@paintedrock.com**). To subscribe, send the message SUBSCRIBE to: **prock-on@mail-list.com**.

Submit It! *Traffic Tribune* is a newsletter for Webmasters, online marketers, and Web site owners. It is dedicated to covering the latest methods for building and sustaining Web site traffic, as well as related Web site marketing topics. To subscribe, go to **submitit.linkexchange.com/newsletter.htm**.

If you enjoy browsing the Internet, Terey came across an "awesome" site she highly recommends which might possibly have the largest law (police and legal) links site available: **www.ih2000.net/ira/ira2.htm**. There are eight sites of cop links and a law page.

*Stagecoach Trails* at **cube.icestorm.com/slaywriter/** covers a wide range of information with a western slant. I found the "Museum" which covers history from 1800 to 1900 very interesting.

Women Writing the West® is a non-profit association of writers and other professionals writing and promoting the women in the American West. It recognizes the broader role women played and "speaks to the diversity of women of all cultures and all time periods." It can be found at **www.sni.net/www-writers/**.

If you are not yet comfortable with the Internet and all its terminology, visit Newbie-U (New User University) which offers "information on the wonders of e-mail, the Web, FTP, IRC (for online chatting), and USENET (for newsgroup discussions)." Their Plain English Glossary can help you decipher the acronyms and terms tossed around by those in the know. The site is found at **www.newbie-u.com**.

Terey also reports a "really cool" site that offers brand new scripts from top movies! Check it out at **www.un-official.com/The\_Daily\_Script/**

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Until next month, please send me any notable online news at **LorraineHe@aol.com**. See you online!

— Lorraine Heath







# 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 anthologies, which are often listed by last names only. Marilyn's phone number is 918-227-1608, fax 918-227-1601 or online: [pappano@ionet.net](mailto:pappano@ionet.net). Internet surfers can find the list at: <http://www.usatoday.com>.

Members who write under pseudonyms should notify Marilyn at any of the above "addresses" to assure their listing in "Fast Track."

Member	Title	March 4	March 11	March 18	March 25
Susan Anderson	<i>Be My Baby</i> , Avon	69			
Madeline Baker	<i>Spirit's Song</i> , Leisure		133n		
Jennifer Blake	<i>Luke</i> , Mira	100			
Sandra Brown	<i>Send No Flowers</i> , Bantam	106	124	149	
Stella Cameron	<i>More and More</i> , Warner		153	85	147
Catherine Coulter	<i>Calypso Magic</i> , Topaz	31	66	103	
Jennifer Crusie	<i>Tell Me Lies</i> , SMP	81	136		
Claire Delacroix	<i>The Damsel</i> , Dell			142n	123
Christina Dodd	<i>The Runaway Princess</i> , Avon	37	67	141	
Suzanne Forster	<i>Every Breath She Takes</i> , Jove		246	65	71
Barbara Freethy	<i>The Sweetest Thing</i> , Avon			155	90
Julie Garwood	<i>Ransom</i> , Pocket	57	78	104	135
Eileen Goudge	<i>Thorns of Truth</i> , Signet	94			
Leigh Greenwood	<i>The Cowboys: Sean</i> , Leisure				138n
Tami Hoag	<i>Ashes to Ashes</i> , Bantam		26n	44	50
Susan Johnson	<i>A Touch of Sin</i> , Bantam		59	66	102
Joan Johnston	<i>The Bridegroom</i> , Island	26	54	106	
Jayne Ann Krentz	<i>The Cowboy</i> , Mira	47	132		
Jayne Ann Krentz	<i>Flash</i> , Pocket		35n	25	40
Stephanie Laurens	<i>Scandal's Bride</i> , Avon	79			
Linda Lael Miller	<i>Springwater Seasons: Savannah</i> , Sonnet	111			
Linda Lael Miller	<i>Springwater Seasons: Miranda</i> , Sonnet	51N	45	77	
Amanda Quick	<i>With This Ring</i> , Bantam	49	91		
Julia Quinn	<i>How to Marry a Marquis</i> , Avon			134n	78
J. D. Robb	<i>Conspiracy in Death</i> , Berkley			118n	19
Nora Roberts	<i>The Perfect Neighbor</i> , Silhouette	13	21	38	66
Nora Roberts	<i>The Macgregors: Alan, Grant</i> , Silhouette	51	92	127	
Nora Roberts	<i>Inner Harbor</i> , Jove	58	89		
Nora Roberts	<i>River's End</i> , Putnam		12n	23	37
Nora Roberts	<i>The Macgregors: Daniel, Ian</i> , Silhouette			11n	4
Barbara Dawson Smith	<i>Too Wicked to Love</i> , SMP		74n	74	100
Anne Stuart	<i>Shadow Lover</i> , Penguin	84			
Elizabeth Thornton	<i>Whisper His Name</i> , Bantam		125n	129	

\* et al.: written with other author(s) who aren't members of Novelists, Inc.

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