



The official newsletter  
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novelists,  
inc.

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# *Nink* May 2019

## Contents

- ◆ President's Voice ~ Wayne Stinnett
- ◆ Conference Report ~ Alyssa Day
- ◆ Conference 2019: Planning For Success
- ◆ In Their Own Voices: Part Three ~ Trish Milburn
- ◆ Converting Your Books into Comics/Graphic Novels ~ Jennifer Stevenson & Elizabeth Person
- ◆ Procrastination: The Good, the Bad, and the Hopeful ~ Patricia Burroughs
- ◆ An Insider Look at Traditional Publishing: An Interview with Michelle Grajkowski, 3 Seas Literary Agency ~ Trish Milburn
- ◆ An Insider Look at Traditional Publishing: An Interview with Jane Porter, Tule Publishing ~ Trish Milburn
- ◆ Unearthing Hidden Clues About Your Creativity ~ Denise Agnew
- ◆ The Mad Scribbler: #CopyPasteCris ~ Laura Resnick
- ◆ NINC Membership Benefits
- ◆ About NINC

# President's Voice

*By Wayne Stinnett*



Well, the countdown clock is ticking down. In just 20 weeks, many of you will be packing bags and getting in trains, planes, and automobiles, bound for St. Pete Beach. It seems that many of you, like me, are making a full vacation out of the NINC conference; I'm arriving the Saturday before it starts to relax and do nothing. My schedule is clear. Planning for Success means also planning for recharging and reenergizing. Tradewinds is a beautiful resort, so why not relax with your tribe?

Tradewinds is well over the number of rooms we blocked for the days prior to the conference, which leads me to believe we will go over on the days of, as well. We can increase or decrease that block up until July 22nd. I'd much rather increase it. Please, if you have to cancel, let us know so we can adjust. We expect some last-minute cancellations after our deadline and we take that into consideration. But any blocked rooms that aren't filled will be on NINC.

Speaking of deadlines, the regular registration price ends on July 31st, and late registration will be from August 1-15. So, we have less than three months before the price goes up. After August 15th, no more registrations can be taken. So, register now and reserve your room early. You can register in three monthly payments if need be.

By now, you've seen some of the speaker bios and topics the Programming Committee and Social Media Committee have released, here and on social media. Alyssa Day and the PC are to be commended on the work they've done, along with Conference Coordinator Mel Jolly. They are *way* ahead of schedule.

What you've seen so far are only those speakers who Alyssa has contacted by phone, to review both bio and description, with headshot received. The rest of the schedule has been pretty much completed, including Night Owls, and will go to the printer well before the conference, but not all the information for each speaker has been verified and finalized yet. The Programming Committee, the Social Media Committee, and *Nink* editor are working together to release only fully completed descriptions and bios of what's to come. Rest assured, you'll have it all very soon.

I'm really looking forward to this year's NINC 30th Anniversary Conference. For me, it will either be a 10-hour round trip drive or a month-long sail, we haven't decided yet. So, in the words of my people, "Feet up, anchor down." Make it a vacation, and I'll see y'all at the beach.

**Wayne**

### **NINC Member Benefits**

Don't forget to sign up for the [email loop](#), [critique/brainstorming group](#), and the members-only [Facebook group](#) if you haven't already. The Pro Services Directory, member [discount page](#), and [sample letters](#) are also great resources.

Missing a newsletter? Past issues can be found [here](#). You can also [propose an article](#) or submit a [letter to the editor](#).

### **Accessing the NINC Website**

Not sure how to log in to the NINC website? Visit the login page here: <https://ninc.com/membership-overview/login-to-ninc/>

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*Wayne Stinnett writes your typical murder and mayhem in paradise. His characters and plots come from real people and situations he's encountered, fictionalized to protect the guilty.*

# NINC 2019: Planning for Success

## Conference updates

*By Alyssa Day*



Just a short update this time to tell you we're very excited to announce that we've completed the draft schedule and it's up on the website. We're thrilled to have such a wide range of speakers and an entire track for traditionally published authors. <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/conference-program-schedule/>

Keep watch on the Facebook group and Twitter for more announcements.

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*Alyssa Day is president-elect of NINC.*

September 25 - September 29, 2019



Join us for *NINC 2019* to discover the latest strategies and insights, from marketing innovations to high-level craft to running your business as smoothly and effectively as possible.

**Registration:** <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/2019-member-registration/>  
**2019 Conference Assistant/Industry Guest registration:** <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/ninc-2019-conference-non-member/>

**Conference FAQs:** <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/ninc-conference-faq/>

**Conference e-list:** <https://groups.io/g/BeachNINC2019>

# In Their Own Voices: Part Three

## Addressing cultural appropriation and whether it applies to fiction

*By Trish Milburn*



In the previous two articles in this three-part series, I covered the genesis of, need for, goals of, and concerns about the #ownvoices movement. In some discussions about #ownvoices and the movement's intent to shine a light on and elevate stories about characters in marginalized communities written by authors from those same communities, the conversation has sometimes veered into the topic of cultural appropriation. While I have not personally heard of an author claiming #ownvoices when they actually don't belong to the marginalized group, that doesn't mean it hasn't happened or the potential isn't there for someone wanting an unearned benefit.

### What is cultural appropriation?

According to [Wikipedia](#), cultural appropriation (also known as cultural misappropriation or misrepresentation) occurs when "cultural elements are copied from a minority culture by members of a dominant culture, and these elements are used outside of their original cultural context—sometimes even against the expressly stated wishes of members of the originating culture." One of the most recent examples is when [Teen Vogue](#) covered non-Native people wearing Native American headdresses/war bonnets as either a fashion accessory or part of a costume at Coachella.

When it comes to #ownvoices, the question of intent can enter the discussion, although there are instances when it's still cultural appropriation regardless of the intent, and determining this can be hard.

Author [Laurie Alice Eakes](#) shared a story of how a Latina acquaintance once gave her a gorgeous, hand-embroidered dress from Mexico. "When I wore it to the going-away party she gave us," she said, "it wasn't to appropriate her Mexican culture; it was to honor it and her in the gift and beauty of the creation."

The key was Eakes didn't claim to either be Mexican or use the dress as part of a costume. I have some Chinese pieces that I bought at Epcot's China pavilion and I wear them not to lay any claim on the Chinese culture but because they are beautiful.

## **How cultural appropriation applies to fiction authors**

"I know cultural appropriation has been lumped in with the #ownvoices discussion, but I don't personally consider them to be the same thing," author [Jordan Summers](#) said. "I think of people who adopt a specific culture (or pieces of it) for their own benefit and/or gain. Hate groups perpetuate stereotypes in their propaganda as a way to enrage their followers, feed the fears of the uneducated, and grow their numbers. Large numbers equal power. A famous group of sisters, who shall remain nameless, practice regular cultural appropriation to get 'clicks.' In their case, clicks equal money."

Summers said that most, but not all, cultural appropriation that has taken place in fiction boils down to poor research.

"I genuinely do not think that the authors who wrote those books were trying to harm any specific group of people," Summers said. "Like a lot of us starting out, they took their cues from television and movies. In my opinion, a white—or any other color—author who wants to write, for example, about Native American characters wouldn't cross into cultural appropriation unless they're claiming to be a card-carrying Native American and aren't, or they're wantonly perpetuating stereotypes (i.e. all Native Americans are alcoholics/savages, they need to be saved by the white savior, etc.). The latter is super common in movies to this day. Why? Lazy writing and agendas, but mainly lazy writing."

Author [Nicki Salcedo](#) said that cultural appropriation in fiction of the past bordered on fetishism, and that won't work for modern readers.

"The history of indigenous people in romance is complicated, because those original stories never came from own voices," Salcedo said. "Now we expect the author, regardless of background, to tell an authentic and careful story."

Like in the overall #ownvoices discussion, some authors have expressed concerns about writing characters that don't look like them and who are from marginalized communities when they themselves are not. Even if the authors don't claim #ownvoices, there is some concern they might be seen as appropriating a culture. This is not a baseless concern as some readers may be more sensitive to actual or even perceived slights or appropriation than others and they may be more willing to point it out—sometimes loudly and publicly on social media. However, the authors interviewed for this series were of the mindset that authors should not be limited to writing only characters who are like them.

"It's not my place to tell someone they can or can't write about a topic, people, idea, job, or anything," author [Priscilla Oliveras](#) said. "However, just as I do my research when deciding to write about something or someone that's outside of my personal experience, so too do I expect the same from others, especially when it comes to my culture. Within the Latinx community there are differences—in language, foods, traditions, etc.—from one country to another. If an author wants to write a Latinx character, they must know from which specific Spanish-speaking



country the character's family comes because there will be nuances that should be honored. It's a matter of respecting others—their lifestyles, their customs, their beliefs, their careers. I won't say if you're not Latinx, you have no business writing a Latinx character. I will say, please do your research."

[This article](#) by Itxy Quintanilla has some good tips on how to ensure you're not crossing over into cultural appropriation or misrepresentation in your writing.

"Unfortunately, cultural appropriation will always fit into the mainstream discussion until true representation by marginalized groups exists," author [LaShawn Vasser](#) said, but "this discussion becomes less of an issue when there is more of these diverse authors and true inclusion."

While the topics of #ownvoices and cultural appropriation are by their very natures more sensitive, they are similar to a variety of other **aspects** of fiction writing. You're never going to please everyone. Someone may say negative things about your work. All you can do is your very best research; be careful not to fall back on caricatures, stereotypes and offensive tropes in your character creation; and take several deep breaths and don't adopt a defensive posture or tone if you are accused of cultural appropriation. Try to look at the situation from the other person's point of view. Can you see where they are coming from? If so, acknowledge that and, if you choose, enter into a thoughtful, respectful conversation with the person. Hopefully, this too will help create a more diverse, respectful and representative publishing environment.

*Author Note: I wanted to say a special thank you to the authors who participated in the series.*

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[Trish Milburn](#) is the author of more than 40 titles of romance and young adult fiction for Harlequin, Penguin, Bell Bridge Books, Tule, as well as via indie publishing. When she's not writing, she enjoys reading (duh), visiting museums, attending fan cons, cosplaying and indulging in her new love for Korean dramas and pop music.

# Converting Your Books into Comics/Graphic Novels

## A one-page experiment

*By Jennifer Stevenson*

*Art by Elizabeth Person*

With graphic novels and comics all the rage, I worked with Elizabeth Person, an illustrator, animator, and comic book writer-artist on a three-panel experiment. This will show you how author and artist collaborate, a different exercise from drawing one's own.

### Original 250-word story

*At three in the morning of March first, 1893, the moon rode high in London's sky over the old mansion in Grosvenor Square. All was still: no hansom cabs rumbled over the cobblestones, no policeman's whistle sounded, and even the gas lamps burned with a fainter hiss, around which bats flitted noiselessly. No house thronged with a private party, no orchestra was heard behind the tall, darkened windows. The only sign of a disturbance was a window ajar on the ground floor at number 12, its curtain blowing outward.*

*Inside the darkened drawing room, Miss Emmeline Moriarty stood behind the curtain, her pistol raised, listening for telltale sounds of the householder's return. It had been simplicity to enter. She knew Lord Jowles to be at his club that night, celebrating the success of his plan to seize her father's criminal empire. The servants would be in their attic rooms. The square was silent. She hadn't even had to break the glass.*

*Lord Jowles was still drunk; he had walked all the way home from his club and the unseasonably warm night air had nearly put him to sleep. He never noticed the curtain blowing out of his own drawing-room window. He had spent the evening drinking whatever friends bought for him, eating roast duck and oysters and pudding and everything his medical advisors had forbidden him, accepting congratulations from his cronies until they had tottered home one by one, the slackers. Unsteadily, he now paused on his own doorstep and scrabbled at the keyhole with his wayward key.*

Let's turn it into a script in three panels. In my directions to the artist, I sent the following:

- **Establishing shot:** London city scene, full moon in a starry sky, and below, small, a house lit in front by a street lamp. On the first (ground, if you're British) floor front, a casement window (door-style, not opening up-and-down) is a little open, and the tail of a light curtain is hanging out and fluttering slightly in a breeze.
- **Interior closeup shot:** Mostly dark. Half of a young woman's face illuminated by moonlight from the window. She is standing behind the curtain inside that room, but all we see is half her stern, lovely young face, perhaps a curl beside her fiercely narrowed

eye, her small hand raised, holding an enormous service revolver circa 1893, pointing up, and perhaps a bit of the street, sidewalk, streetlamp below. If you can't fit all that in, just give us a bit of her face, the hand holding the revolver, the curtain, and maybe the moon beyond it.

- **Interior closeup shot:** A bit lighter. All we see is Lord Jowles's plump bare hand trying to thrust his key into the keyhole. The key is attached to a fancy key chain with a fob and a couple of other keys dangling on it. Lord Jowles wears a gaudy man's jeweled ring. Small speech bubble comes down into the picture: "Damned keyhole moves around on a feller."

I also told Elizabeth "There's no room for her clothes as you're showing how tiny a keyhole image an artist can work with to create the mood, illustrate character, set the time of day and setting. You'll notice the backstory doesn't mention whether she's working *for* her father's criminal empire or working *against* it, so the artist is at liberty to make her look villainous or virtuous, as well as pretty and young and well-bred and determined."

Elizabeth then sent me some draft images.



## Feedback

At this step, as the author, I provided the following feedback: "This is lovely! Street and house are the right kind of architecture. Emmeline looks ladylike, resolute and fierce. The revolver is terrific—huge in her hand, and clunky like army revolvers of the period. The doorknob & keys are excellent. Also, Lord Jowles's hand is nicely masculine without looking 'stevedore.'"

I then gave her more specific feedback on what I had envisioned:

- **Panel 1:** I had imagined looking down on the house from up above, but this works fine! When you polish, might add a tiny bit of light from the streetlights, and a sliver of a moon above, to help signal "nighttime."
- **Panel 2:** I imagined this closer up. Perhaps show us maybe less than half her face, and the revolver in her hand or even just part of the revolver (barrel & cartridge-cylinder), the rest of her face partly concealed by the edge of a closed curtain. Because you've made her hair, face, collar, hand, and revolver perfectly signal all the things I wanted, if you zoom in, you will *still* give us everything we want, nice and large, without wasting extra space on the room décor or much of the street view. Also, Emmeline should be



*behind* a curtain. Probably not behind the one that is blowing open. Although it adds continuity to have her standing beside the open window we saw in panel 1, it isn't logical. The implication being, she is waiting for Jowles to enter the room, and she expects to ambush him when he is inside it.

- **Panel 3:** The third panel, another extreme closeup, brings the promise of the waiting menace of the revolver-holding woman closer to a moment of actual conflict. Lord Jowles's hand is just right. How about you take out his thumbnail and add a seam on his thumb and a button at his wrist, to indicate a white glove (surely a sign of the upper class!) and add his ring.

Elizabeth responded that she could see what I meant in the wider shot feeling less intimate and dramatic. She then offered her thoughts and sent a cropped copy of the second panel that approximated what she had in mind for my feedback.



At this part in the process, I found what she had done interesting, and let her know that the shorter, wider frame looked better. I also noted that perhaps we needed to consider putting the door on her right so doesn't have her back to the door and that the view through the window of the buildings across the street confused me. Logically, I knew that the houses across the street very likely look like that, but my immediate assumption is that she's in a window across the street from the house with our blowing-curtain-open-window. This is because I am a lazy reader. Since there's no action or dialogue, I think we should expect lazy reading.

I then proposed some solutions, giving her three possible solutions. She chose the third, which was to use the short, wide panel-view she'd sent, and changing it to put her behind the curtain and shift the camera angle toward sky.

After a bit more back and forth emails, Elizabeth sent me the cleaner versions of panels 1 and 3, and three compositions for panel 2:

**Panel 1:**

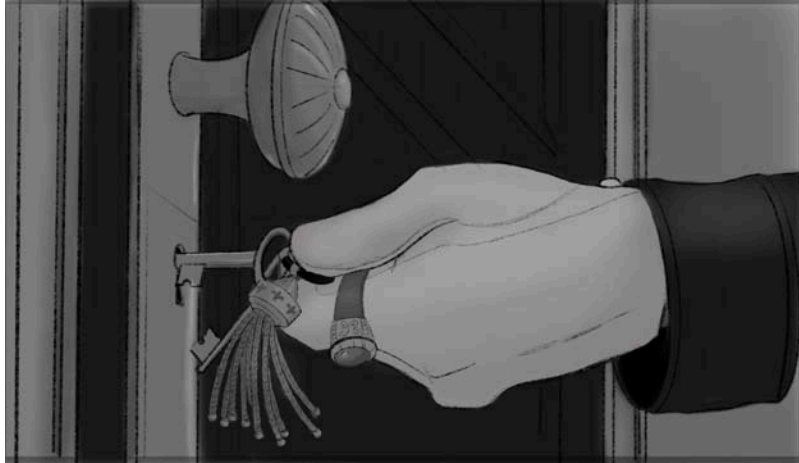


**Panel 2, three versions:**

- **Top:** The same as before but with the door right next to the window on the right. Architecturally, this might seem weird, but visually it read well.
- **Middle:** The view from a lower camera angle with the door closer the reader. The light draws reader eyes to her immediately before seeing the door, so it works narratively.
- **Bottom:** A lower camera angle, but parallel to the wall. It's dramatic but the door is a bit hard to read.



**Panel 3:**



The minute I saw panels 1 and 3, I knew we were good there. I also thought the second of the three options for #2 was most effective, because she takes the eye! But I thought that she should have the pistol should be bigger, and she should give the reader a stern eyeball.

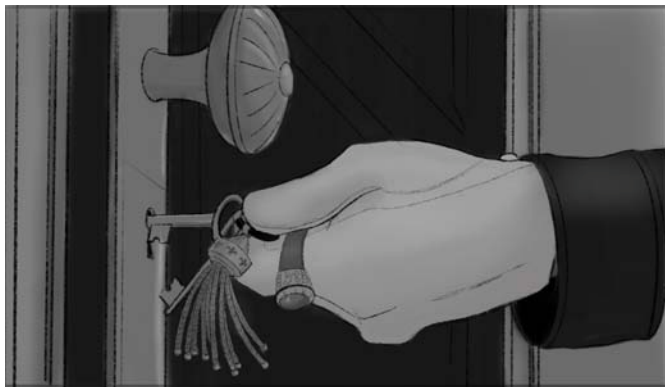
I also noticed what seems to be a pole in the room, because the view is of being in the room looking out. As we discussed this, Elizabeth realized the lamp post didn't have a grounding point in the image, which made it look odd. We decided adding the moon might give a better idea of the camera angle without mistaking the lamp post for some kind of indoor pillar.

Here is the final shot for panel 2:





The final series of images comes out like this, then:



### A few takeaways from the process

- Your story shifts shape on its way out of your head and onto a page. First, you imagine a series of images and words. Then you convert those images and words into fiction. Then you revisit the fiction to convert it into a comic book script. So your story moves a lot between right brain and left brain, and you may find that what you imagined when you originally wrote the story is not on the page, perhaps has never been on the page.
- Don't be afraid to try drawing your comic book yourself first, using stick figures, to block out the story you want to tell. "Thumbnailing" your script like this will help you learn about communicating with the artist...and learn about your story as well!
- Listen to the artist. You have your expertise and they have theirs.



*Jennifer Stevenson* is the author of five series, nineteen novels and twenty short stories. Her story "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" appeared in *Jam! Tales from the World of Roller Derby*, a graphic anthology. Her paranormal women's fiction series *Coed Demon Sluts* was nominated for the James Tiptree Award and featured on John Scalzi's "The Big Idea" blog. She lives in Chicago with two cats and a stagehand.



*Elizabeth Person* is a freelance illustrator and graphic designer. She graduated from Allegheny College in 2017 in fine arts & computer science. She has been illustrating covers, maps, and characters for writers since 2011.

# Procrastination: The Good, the Bad, and the Hopeful

[Or: Did you know your brain deals drugs?]

*By Patricia Burroughs*



Are you a chronic procrastinator? Do you surf Pinterest, binge watch *Game of Thrones*, even find your oven needing a good scrubbing that can't wait another minute?

Well, we all know what this means, right? Those of us with this issue are simply lazy, lack self-discipline, have no will power...blah, blah, blah.

Wrong.

Meet Lim. Imagine Lim as a cocky, sexy, live-life-in-the-minute personal bodyguard whose sole job is to keep you alive by any means necessary. And in Lim's world, any means necessary involves sex, food—all the good stuff.

Also, Lim has all the best drugs.





Problem is, Lim is not alone. Lim has an uneasy (often adversarial) relationship with Cort. Cort is more responsible, evolved, and organized. Cort believes in long-term planning and sustained effort. Cort is exactly who you need to write an article, a poem, a short story, a book.



The battle between Lim and Cort is the source of your procrastination.

It's your brain, not your characters.

Lim—the limbic system—is a less evolved part of your brain that deals with the most visceral things like emotions and survival.

Cort—the prefrontal cortex—is the new kid in the brain, the most recently evolved. Among other things, Cort handles executive function that control organization, planning, sustained effort and focus.

Evolution-wise, our need for that developing prefrontal cortex with its extended and extensive executive function has been around a shorter time period when compared to the thousands of years we relied on fight or flight and yes, instant gratification, to survive.

For thousands of years humans ate, slept and reproduced when they had the chance because life was precarious. A drive for instant gratification kept us alive by making sure we did the essentials every time we got the chance. Also? Lim was handy for those primary and primal “fight or flight” moments—providing drugs.

Your limbic system is the source of adrenaline, dopamine, and more. We all know about adrenaline—the surge that allows a 98-pound woman to lift a car off a kitten.

Dopamine is the good stuff, an immediate shot of energy. It has been called what cocaine would be like if cocaine was on cocaine. Lim has kept you alive for a long time, and is not about to drop the ball now.

What does this have to do with procrastination?

*Everything.*

If you are prone to procrastinate, it's because Lim is winning the battle for your brain, in a war you aren't even aware is happening. That's because Cort is the new executive who has moved into the front corner office, and he's responsible when you do the right thing instead of

the easier thing—whether it's life-changing, or complimenting somebody's alarming new hairstyle, or reaching for the fresh fruit when everyone else is reaching for the brownies.

Many of us party under Lim's influence when we're brainstorming and creating.

But when the fun ends and the slog begins, it's like Cort disappeared on vacation. We're not sure Cort ever even claimed the corner office. And some of us know Cort's there but find ourselves constantly turning away from that elevator and following Lim over to YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, because *someone is wrong* and our political side is right and *proving that with our words is vital to the future of the entire world as we know it* or—or—that one subject that trumps all—

*Cats!*

Just know we are born this way.

The brain calls the shots, and the parts of the brain sometimes fight to prove who's the boss and our efforts to get stuff done falls victim.

It's not our fault, and we need to stop beating ourselves up over our guilt—because we are *making it worse*.

Remember what Lim does? Lim protects you. When your body tenses and your emotions turn to dread or even worse, self-loathing, Lim interprets those as assault and looks for immediate pain relief—because Lim is always looking first to “protect and save.”

A comfy bed. TV. Ice cream. Chocolate. All bring a release of dopamine that Lim knows you not only deserve but need.

Oh, and it gets better! Dopamine makes things seem important, gives them precedence. Whatever is “protecting” you (read: distracting you) from your writing will seem too important to stop.

Food, sex, alcohol, addictive drugs—all activate the almost immediate release of dopamine. Dopamine provides instant gratification, and then more, and more, until it's a vicious circle of dopamine fueling the prefrontal cortex, sending bliss signals back to Lim, and Lim happily sending more because dopamine is short-lived. (This is the source of addiction, by the way.) Visuals and music can also stimulate dopamine. Is it any wonder that YouTube, Facebook, and other internet sites are so difficult to break away from?

Work? Writing? That stuff that is making you tense? Your brain is actively trying to avoid it. It should be no surprise that psychologists now believe stress is the source of most procrastination.

But there's good news. Remember I said Lim has all the best drugs? If he doesn't sense distress, he won't fight-or-flight his way to YouTube or Facebook!

Enter serotonin.

Where dopamine is instant gratification, serotonin is sustained focus.

Serotonin fuels executive function of the brain. A balance of serotonin and dopamine forms the kind of work/reward cycle that recognizes accomplishment as something that feels good, and thus your brain wants more of it.

Ninety percent of serotonin is actually produced in the digestive system and does all sorts of important and marvelous things for your body. But serotonin can't cross the blood-brain

barrier, so any serotonin that Cort needs for your executive function must be produced inside the brain.

And Lim controls the drugs.

Once you activate your prefrontal cortex, Lim realizes that you aren't under stress attack, and Lim will move to sustain your new state.

He allows Cort to take over and even provides the juice to do so—serotonin.

Dopamine motivates. Serotonin focuses. That golden combination is why you can get in the zone and write for extended periods of time.

Lim and Cort are supposed to work together. When they don't, the result is procrastination. Not lack of will power. Not weak character.

Which means we have to find ways to engage the prefrontal cortex so it will send Lim the 'all's well!' signal.

Which means we have to act like 'all's well' before we feel it is. Which is probably why a lot of standard advice can work—not because you're suddenly donning your will power but because by taking that first step, you're physically pulling your prefrontal cortex into action.

"Start writing" or "Start writing anyway" can be frustratingly bad and patronizing advice. It's throwing you at that same mountain of overwhelming stress that you've already been banging against unsuccessfully.

But if you can kick your prefrontal cortex into action by creating situations where it feels good to write, your limbic system and prefrontal cortex will work together to keep that good feeling going.

This may mean breaking your writing down into the smallest, least threatening or boring bits necessary for you to start "nibbling" at it. Keep creating smaller and smaller writing goals until you finally hit on one that makes you feel you can manage it. Even if it's only two sentences a day.

Most of the time once you start writing, even badly, there will be a reduction in stress. A reduction in stress means Lim stops trying to "save you" from your work. Once you get the ball rolling, *stopping* is what will make you feel bad. Lim will want you to keep going and feeling good so he will start giving you the serotonin you need.

And if you write your four pages or 500 words or two sentences and don't feel the change? First, reward yourself for doing that much and walk away. You hit your daily goal. Celebrate that you tricked your brain into producing something even when it wasn't cooperating. It may be that you can take a break and use another trick to give it another try. But even if that's it for the day, you won!

When it comes to survival, feeling good has always been a major indicator that you're doing well. Feeling bad means something's wrong, maybe even dangerous—and needs to be eliminated as soon as possible.

How do you make yourself start writing if Lim is being really difficult?

Experiment.

- Stand Lim up against the black board to write sentences. You know why making kids write the same sentence over and over is punishment? Because the brain rebels against

monotony and boredom. The brain wants dopamine and wants it now. By forcing your brain to write the same sentence over and over, you're forcing it into a situation it will try to escape, often by flinging other words for you to write just to stop the agony.

- Or give yourself permission to write a really horrible, awful, sucky, no-good chapter. Or scene. Or paragraph. Whatever it takes to get your fingers on the keyboard. Write badly. Fix later.
- Grab a pen and paper and move to the kitchen and start free-writing about what you would be writing if you were writing what you need to be writing.
- Write for 10 minutes every hour. All day long. Odds are extremely high that at some point—maybe even the first effort—you won't stop at the end of 10 minutes.

This is key: All of these actions break the hold your limbic system has and forces your prefrontal cortex into action. More often than not you will have tricked your brain into rewarding you with the good drugs (serotonin), and hey, that's pretty cool because after all, being addicted to writing isn't illegal.

Just remember:

It's your brain.

You were born this way.

Forgive yourself and let the bad feelings go so Lim can let them go, too.

You have magic to create and the brain to do it.

**Note:** I have ADHD, dyscalculia, and associated cognitive disorders, all of which are disorders of executive function and the prefrontal cortex. I'm not a neurosurgeon nor am I a psychologist. I'm a fiction writer who uses parables like the one about Lim and Cort, to present information in an easy but never-to-be-confused with scholarly or medical exactitude. Understanding how Lim and Cort work—or don't work—has helped me immensely. We will always have to handle Lim. There's no magic cure. But just this basic knowledge—that engaging the prefrontal cortex—breaks the cycle, has made a huge difference.

I encourage you to seek more information if you want to better understand the nitty-gritty of brain function and how you can step in as mediator and moderate or manipulate Lim and Cort to your needs.

The following are a few places to start:

[Why do we procrastinate?](#) A general overview of procrastination and the brain.

[Why procrastination is good for you.](#) The flip side! "I write better under pressure!"

[How to procrastinate effectively.](#) Yes. Seriously. Including why you get sudden epiphanies about your book when you're doing something else.

[How to fight your procrastination anxiety \(and Win!\)](#) Addresses procrastination with a lot of tips on relieving your stress and anxiety that are sound for anybody, not just those with ADHD.

[How Brains of Doers Differ from those of Procrastinators](#) presents a summary of and a link to a research on the subject.



Finally, do an internet search on procrastination + brain, + serotonin, + dopamine, + the limbic system, + the prefrontal cortex, and variations thereof. There are infinite sites and options that range from fun videos and articles, to scholarly and medical papers—whatever education source you desire.

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*Patricia Burroughs has ADHD, dyscalculia, and associated cognitive disorders, all of which are disorders of executive function and the prefrontal cortex. She is not a neurosurgeon nor is she a psychologist. She is a fiction writer and thus tells stories like the ones about Lim and Cort, but encourages you to seek more information if you want to understand the nitty-gritty of brain function beyond their squabbles.*

# An Insider Look at Traditional Publishing

## Interview with Agent Michelle Grajkowski of 3 Seas Literary Agency

*By Trish Milburn*



*Michelle Grajkowski*

*This continues the feature for Nink in which NINC members interview agents, editors, and marketing professionals so that authors can get an in-depth look at how to network with traditional publishing. All questions came from those culled from questions asked on the traditional publishing loop, some verbatim. If you have a house/editor/marketing professional you'd like to see interviewed or if you'd like to volunteer to do an interview, please email: [ninkeditor@gmail.com](mailto:ninkeditor@gmail.com).*

In the nearly two decades since Michelle Grajkowski opened the doors of the [3 Seas Literary Agency](#), she has seen a lot of change occur in the publishing industry and, like authors, has had to adjust to those changes to create maximum benefit for her clients as well as her agency. Since those fledgling days in 2000, the agency has sold almost 800 books to major publishing houses and the client list has grown to include several *New York Times* best-selling authors. Full disclosure: I am also one of Grajkowski's clients and have been for the majority of the agency's existence.

Below follows my interview with Michelle, whose answers represent only her and her company, not any other industry professionals.

**1. Besides "writing the best book," what are things authors can do to advance their careers? What are some "career" busters or mistakes that authors may not even know they are making?**

In today's tight and overcrowded market, I think one of the most important things a client can do is to learn to be flexible, creative and to be open to new opportunities. I read a stat that in 2017, there were 975,000 self-published books. With literally millions of books on Amazon, as industry professionals we need to look for new ways to find and to interact with readers. Word-of-mouth growth is so crucial, as is finding unique hooks to get your name out there. For

example, one of my clients, Winnie Griggs, wrote a contemporary romance that centered around a handbell choir. She reached out to a national handbell choir organization, who in turn notified their members of the book in their newsletter. It was an organic way to grow readership.

**2. How can authors be the best authors for their publisher? How can authors be part of that team?**

To me, the most important thing an author can do is to be a good listener and to be receptive of the publisher's input. Now, that doesn't mean that an author shouldn't give their opinions or stick to their guns if something just doesn't feel right. But I've always been a firm believer in listening first, processing the information and then taking action. For example, a publisher may present an author with a cover that just doesn't fit the vision the author had for the book. My recommendation is to ask *why* the art department went in that direction rather than fully discounting it from the get-go. Sometimes publishers have good reasons for doing things that might not at first seem like it makes sense. If there isn't a good justification, though, or if the author still doesn't feel like the cover best packages the book, of course they should discuss with their agent and/or editor.

**3. How can authors create sustainability in their careers, and what steps should an author take for achieving that? How does having an agent fit into this role?**

The biggest thing an author can do is to write down their goals. Studies have proved that people who write down their goals are more than 30 percent more likely to reach them than people who do not. If an author can *see* where they want to be, it can help their team get them there faster. With so many publishing options these days, it's easy for an author to lose site of what really matters to them. Is it sales? New readership growth? Number of books published in a certain time frame? Frequency of social media posts? Whatever your goals are, having them written down and defined will help keep you moving down the right path. And, it 100 percent helps an agent so we can do all we can to help you move your career to where you would like to see it.

**4. What are agents doing for their midlist and/or new-to-you authors (anyone other than your NYT/USA Today bestsellers)? What type of strategies should authors/agents be focused on when trying to sell and promote books?**

As the market tightens, it's becoming increasingly more difficult to sell romances. We've been sitting in an interesting paradox for the past handful of years where it's great to be a reader (there are more romances at their fingertips than ever before, at price points they could've only dreamed about 10 years ago), and a hard time to be an author (because discoverability is becoming increasingly difficult).

All that being said, we still have had success selling debut authors, and I will never, ever shy away from signing them!

Because even as the market is tightening, we have many new opportunities. Hallmark is a shining beacon in the industry, and many strong publishing programs are still looking to build and grow authors. Sourcebooks and Kensington have both stayed true to their romance programs and are doing a wonderful job creating spaces for midlist and debut authors.

Additionally, I've been working closely with agents in Hollywood who are actively looking for romances to sell, even before the manuscript has sold. So, there are still lots of wonderful opportunities.

However, back to the question of strategy—my philosophy is still the same. I want my authors to write what they love. To write what they know. And, to let their great writing sell their books. One of my long-time clients, Alexis Morgan, just hit the *USA Today* list with her first cozy mystery, *Death by Committee*, which was published by Kensington. The funny thing is her career has gone full circle. She first started writing for Kensington just before we signed together, writing Western historicals. From there she wrote paranormals for Pocket, contemporary and fantasy romances for Penguin, Loveswept and Harlequin, and now she's reinvented herself and is writing cozies for Kensington. It's been a wild ride, but through it all one thing has never changed. Her writing remains as wonderful and as imaginative as it was from the first manuscript that I fell in love with.

#### **5. How important is an author's social media in deciding what type of author to sign? What mistakes do you see authors make, or what strategies should they apply?**

I'm going to be honest here. I look for professional writers who handle their brands with care. An example of what not to do? A few years ago I discovered a writer online whose work I requested. She sent me her proposal, and I was hooked. She was a terrific writer, and I wanted to see more. Before I did, I visited her website and found her blog. And, I'm so glad I did.

I discovered a blog that was full of negativity and spite; she would post all her rejection letters and then would write snarky replies on why each one of the rejections were wrong and that the agents and editors were all kinds of bad words. I was appalled. This is a small industry. I've been agenting for almost 19 years and have many friends in the industry. To see them torn apart did not endear me to the writer. Just the opposite. I never responded to her for fear of what she would post about me.

I was raised in a generation where we were taught the Golden Rule, and I live by it every day. I don't like the feeling that writers are tearing each other apart, or that they are dragging my friends in the industry down. And, honestly, I don't think readers like that, either.

Social media is an important tool, for sure. And, I'm not saying that writers can't (or shouldn't!) share their views on social media. But, I'm an old-school journalism major who I guess is pretty caught up in branding.

To simplify marketing, I look at a website like a drive-by of your house. Readers see the façade and can get a glimpse of who you are. But, when you invite them into your home for coffee, that's where social media fits in. When you serve your guests at your home, how do you want them to feel when they leave? Enlightened? Happy? Fulfilled? Social media gives you the chance to really let your readers get to know *you*.

**6. What should a publisher do for an author in the way of marketing (as in, is there a basic minimum that every book should get, which authors may not even be aware of when they say, "My publisher did nothing for me!")**

This is really a sticky wicket. But, here's the bottom line. A publisher needs to make money off your book. They have already invested money in labor (editing, cover design, marketing, production, sales, etc.), printing, warehousing, and rent which they want to recoup, plus make a profit! Because they can't survive if they can't make money on the sales of their books. So, now more than ever, publishers are not just slapping on a cover and calling it a day!

You may feel like they aren't doing anything for you, but, honestly, most are doing something. Unfortunately, it's hard to break down a minimum because each house has a different philosophy and a different strategy. Further, within each house, there are hierarchies as well. If you're top dog, you will get top billing. If you're a debut, you may get the minimum.

Never be afraid to ask what your publisher's plans are, or what they are doing on the back end. Often there are things happening in the background (even if it's playing around with metadata) that you may not be aware of.

**7. What is your biggest success, or your most surprising success/fail?**

I have been so, so incredibly blessed by the romance community! It's so hard to pick just one success. But I will say, to me this business has never been about *me* and my own successes. To me, it's always, always been about helping my authors reach all their career goals. So, I guess, in turn, their successes are mine, too. I still love being able to make the first "call." But I love making the 40th call just as much! Many years ago, I had an editor tell me that I have the best clients, that they are all so professional and kind. One of the joys of being an agent is being able to work with the people who you get, and who get you.

Through it all, I do feel proud that I started the agency in a time when Amazon wasn't the Amazon of today, when e-publishing was just a spark, and when the perception was that agents needed to live in New York to be successful. I am so thankful that I joined RWA, took a copy of that market guide and made a trip out to New York City in 2000 and met with each of the publishers in the guide. And, I'm even more thankful that the editors encouraged a 26-year old from Madison, Wis., to follow her dreams. Because without their affirmations, I never would've had the courage to start the agency. Sometimes putting yourself out there can be the scariest, yet the most important thing you can do!

**8. What authors have you signed and what direction do you see specific genres heading?**

I have a wonderful, wide list of authors who are writing in many different genres. Liz Talley is writing terrific women's fiction with strong romantic elements for Montlake. We have a strong list at Hallmark with Liz Talley, Lizzie Shane, Jennifer Brown and Janice Lynn all coming out with original stories for their imprints. Additionally, we just moved Kerrelyn Sparks's and Katie MacAlister's fantasy romances to Kensington. Harlequin remains our stable, and we represent many great authors who write for them, including Cathy McDavid, Rhenna Morgan and Lindsey Brookes, to name a few. We are expanding our cozy mystery footprint with authors like Alexis Morgan and Christine Wenger. And, finally, we are also growing strong in young



adult and middle grade as well with Jennifer Brown, Kimberly MacCarron and Christine Gunderson.

The beauty with self-publishing is it has really opened up the romance market and has expanded the tropes within. I love that there are so many more opportunities for books of all subgenres. It's an exciting time to be in the industry!

**9. Besides having a great manuscript, what does an author need to know about switching genres and/or finding a new agent?**

Always, always, always, always, always write what you love to write. Too often I see writers chasing trends, and that trend chasing can be seen when their heart isn't in their words. And, always make sure you are sending in your final, polished work to an agent. We literally receive hundreds of submissions a month, and even though developing manuscripts with my clients is one of my favorite parts of my job, because we are so taxed, I need to make sure what I am representing is strong from the get-go.

**10. How can an author support their traditional published books in ways that their publisher can't or won't? What can authors do? What promo works?**

Promotions are becoming more and more tricky as the noise continues to grow. As such, social media really does seem like the best connector with readers. But that interaction happens *after* the readers find you.

So, how can you be found? Again, look for out-of-the-box ways to be discovered. One of my favorite examples is a crazy-cool book tour that one of my clients, Jason Kotecki, and his wife Kim devised. Jason is a motivational speaker by trade and wrote a tremendous book, *Penguins Can't Fly*. So, where better than to hold his book signings during his "Not-a-Rule" tour than in a zoo, in front of the penguin exhibits! Jason and Kim loaded up their three small children and did a cross-country zoo tour! They brought along cookies for the kids to decorate while Jason talked to the parents. It truly was an amazing tour, and he received a lot of media attention along the way.

**11. How does a professional author handle ghosting (never getting a reply) from a potential agent or editor who'd requested a work?**

I'm guilty of this as we changed our policy last year to only reply to work that we are interested in. Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on how you look at it), we receive hundreds of submissions a month. I welcome them all, and we try to read through each one, but with the sheer volume we aren't able to reply to each and every one any longer. As you can understand, my first priority needs to be on my clients and their needs. Our website clearly states our policy.

**12. If you could look into your crystal ball for 2019, where do you see the market headed? What trends might be coming? What do readers want more of, and what are readers tired of seeing?**

I actually see the romance market with the Big 5 opening up again! Editors are telling me they are looking again, which was super encouraging. I'm hoping the wave will begin to rise again. I also have a feeling we might be moving a little more toward mainstreaming the successes of Hallmark, so I could see sweet romances on the rise. I know there is a huge push for own voices, and I don't see that slowing. And, I feel like paranormals might start to make a little more of a comeback with the traditional houses as well.

Personally, I'm always on the lookout for outstanding, fresh stories and ideas.

**13. How has the #metoo movement affected romance? What should authors be aware of here?**

I feel like strong women have been the focus in romances since I started working in the agency in 2000. I once got into a heated discussion with a thriller writer at a conference years ago because he asked me how many books a year he should try to write. At that time the trend was a book every six-month months. He scoffed and said, "Oh that's right. You represent *those* books. If I wrote romances I could write a book a month!" I asked if he had ever read a romance, and he said he had not. Let's just say he got an earful! Seriously, though, strong characters have been the backbone of our industry for so long. Of course, the #metoo movement has strengthened important issues like consent. But, personally, I can't think of a project that I have repped where I felt the hero was inappropriate to the heroine in any way.

**14. How has the #ownvoices movement affected publishing? What should authors be aware of here?**

Historically, while there have been some #ownvoices represented in what publishers bought and published, it was handled differently and in numbers that didn't represent society at large. There have been many successful imprints throughout the years housed in publishers like Harlequin and Simon and Schuster, and many strong independent presses like Parker and Arabesque to help give the authors a platform to write. I worked closely with these lines and am grateful that we had a platform at the time. That being said, the #ownvoices movement has shone a light on the publishers' practice of segregating the lines and prompted some movement toward more inclusion into the broader publishing lists, which is exciting and needed.

**15. Tell me all about the exciting things at 3 Seas Literary that make it a great company to work with.**

3 Seas has been repping authors since 2000. We've been through so much—the openings and closing of lines, the rise and fall of publishing houses, the beginning of epublising, KDP, hybrid publishing, and the fast rise of audio. I've also seen the not-so-fun things like sitting on Dorchester's creditors' committee, acting as a voice for all the authors involved (not just my own) in order to try to help them get paid. I've seen the *New York Times* lists change as the industry has changed through the years. The list goes on and on! It's crazy to think that we are going to be celebrating our 19th year in business in August, and I can't even begin to fathom all the changes we'll see in the next two decades.

But, through all the changes, the one thing that has stayed true is my commitment to the

industry and to my authors. We've learned to weather the storms together, and I'm so happy to be a part of this journey with them.

**16. Tell me a little bit about why you still love agenting. What do you want to see?**

I love, love, love brainstorming and fixing stories. It's one of my favorite parts of this job! And, of course I love the thrill of the sale. Nothing is better than reaching out to an editor and having her be just as excited as I am about a project. I love the networking. I love the people. I love the negotiating. Gosh, I love just about everything about my job.

**17. Even though you still love it, I'm sure the past few years have really changed the how agents approach their jobs. What has been the most challenging part of the changing publishing landscape from your perspective?**

Honestly, it was a little hard to stay optimistic at times over the last handful of years. Because of the sheer volume of published books, discoverability is such an important factor. Then when we add in the loss of physical bookstores, the shrinking of publishing lists (and publishers in general), and the pricing and marketing issues, sometimes the mountain seems a little steep.

Publishing has always had its challenges, but I do miss the days when we all had a role, when an agent would find a great author. Then the publisher would buy the author and would come up with a plan to promote and sell the author to the physical bookstores (like buying placement so their author would be found). Now, it almost feels like we're pieces of popcorn flying through the popcorn machine, knowing we will all land, but where? Our clearly defined roles aren't as defined any longer.

On the other hand, selfishly I can see the "good ol' days" were good for the publishers, agents and the authors who were being bought because we could see a general income stream and path depending on where the author was placed on the publisher list. But there were also so many amazing books that never got to see the light of day. So, for that reason I am thankful that we have so many options for authors to take control of their careers.

Through change comes opportunity, and I can see that the industry has a lot of room to grow and evolve; it's fun to be a part of it all.



*Trish Milburn is the author of more than 40 titles of romance and young adult fiction for Harlequin, Penguin, Bell Bridge Books, and Tule as well as via indie publishing. When she's not writing, she enjoys reading, visiting museums, attending fan cons, cosplaying and indulging in her new love for Korean dramas and pop music.*

# An Insider Look at Traditional Publishing

## Interview with Jane Porter, founder and CEO of Tule Publishing

*By Trish Milburn*



*Jane Porter*

*This is part of the continuing feature for Nink in which NINC members will interview agents, editors, and marketing professionals so that authors can get an in-depth look at how to network with traditional publishing. All questions came from those culled from questions asked on the traditional publishing loop, some verbatim. If you have a house/editor/marketing professional you'd like to see interviewed or if you'd like to volunteer to do an interview, please email: [ninkeditor@gmail.com](mailto:ninkeditor@gmail.com)*

If you've been around the romance writing world for a while, you've no doubt at least heard of [Jane Porter](#). If you've met her, you were likely impressed with her infectious enthusiasm for publishing, for great books, and for her fellow authors. The author of more than 50 novels since first selling to Harlequin Presents in 2000, Jane's been a finalist for Romance Writers of America's RITA® Award six times—winning in 2014 with her novel *Take Me, Cowboy*. In 2013, she added another hat to the *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author one she was already wearing—that of publisher—when she founded [Tule Publishing](#). The company has grown since then, and Porter and her team have earned a reputation for having a good working relationship with Tule authors and for enthusiastically advocating for those authors' works.

Below follows my interview with Jane, whose answers represent only her and her company, not any other industry professionals.

**1. Besides “writing the best book,” what are things an author can do to advance their career? What are some “career” busters or mistakes that traditional published authors may not even know they are making?**

Don't jump around in different genres, even within romance. Each sub-genre is a different audience, so it's a different market, which means you're building multiple markets at the same time, which is challenging. To really find your loyal audience, you need more of one thing,

rather than lots of different books in different sub-genres. I think once you have 10-15 of one genre, you can probably support another genre. Speaking of genres, books that don't fit neatly in one genre or another are problematic from a marketing standpoint. If you're choosing to break rules, admit you're flying in the face of convention and do your homework so you have strategies for overcoming publishing/marketing obstacles. Some genres are more lucrative than others—it's a reality. And lastly, trends are problematic, so always be willing to examine your career and do assessments about where you are in terms of success. Is the work paying off? Are you getting enough of a return on your investment as a writer? And if not, what else can you do?

**2. How can an author be the best author for their publisher? How can authors be part of that team?**

Authors have to be honest with themselves about what they can do/produce and how creative they feel at that given point in time, as well as how open the author is to taking risks. Careers change as we change, and at different points in time we might be more or less open to experimenting creatively and more or less versatile. Knowing what you can and can't do is really important, and communicating that to the publisher is important as well. At Tule, if an author says I have time to write one book next year for you, we do a lot of talking internally about what we need, what the author does best, and how it would benefit both of us. If an author says she'd like to write a series for us, we do the same thing. One thing that sets Tule apart is that we try to be strategic in allowing the authors' voices to shine with the strongest, most commercial stories so the authors get the reviews and sales they deserve. The authors who check in with us about our needs or gaps in our schedule usually get additional opportunities and contracts.

**3. How can authors create sustainability in their careers, and what steps should an author take for achieving that?**

Sustainability has a lot to do with one's ability to weather storms and adapt to a changing market. Sustainability means being able to manage your disappointment as well as your successes so that your agent, editor, or publisher doesn't have to worry that you are overly fragile or overly precious about the work. Publishing is a business. Our books are commercial fiction. A thick skin is absolutely essential to survival, and survival and sustainability go hand in hand. So bottom line? Sustainability means being able to network, ask questions, learn, change, experiment as necessary to find your own sweet spot in the market and, once you do, really focus on growing those books/series. It's never about one book, but also about what comes next. If you're writing slower, then you have to write smarter.

**4. What are publishers such as Tule Publishing doing for their midlist and new-to-them authors (anyone other than your NYT/USA Today bestsellers)? What type of house-wide plan and process should authors expect?**

First off, we try to stay in communication with our authors throughout the publishing process, and are constantly updating our new authors—from the contract stage to editing



phases to cover design to post-production—on what to expect, and what’s going to happen next. We work hard to introduce our loyal readers to our debut authors, or new-to-Tule authors, featuring them on our website as soon as the final manuscript and cover are available, as well as in our Tule Book Club on Facebook and in all other forms of social media. We supply all authors with social media graphics when they get their pre-order links, along with several weeks at Net Galley for early reviews and feedback. Along with Net Galley, we are always looking for new review sites and blogs for ARCs, as well as reaching out to the author’s local media to drum up hometown buzz. Lastly, on release day, we use all Tule social media platforms to promote the book and make sure to showcase all new releases in our weekly newsletter, too. Some authors come to us with a marketing/PR assistant and we can often do even more outreach by coordinating efforts with them. Every author with Tule is a VIP. But some authors run with marketing and self-promotion better than others.

**5. How important is an author’s social media when choosing to purchase a series or author?**

Not at all. It’s always a nice bonus, but we never ask a submitting author for their social media numbers and we do not research their number of followers before acquisition. In fact, we have resources we provide our authors to help them build up their social media presence, but we do not base a decision to publish a quality story based on the author’s online existence. We buy a story because we love it and believe in it and believe we could be a great publishing partner for that author and story.

**6. Will editors consider purchasing authors who perhaps need new branding (such as a new name) because of low sales? When should the rebranding begin? Before? After the sale?**

Absolutely, and we have. Because Tule was founded by an author, we are more sensitive to the challenges authors face than publishers founded by those who have gone to business school or attended a publishing program. We tend to be very author-centric and understand that in today’s market mistakes happen; some are small and some become seriously problematic, so the first thing we always look at with a submission or author query is craft. How is the writing? Is this a strong writer? And then the second thing is the author’s flexibility. Will the author revise? It’s always a problem if we take on an author who then says, “I don’t need to rewrite.” Let’s be honest, all books could use a little revision; and some books need a lot of revision, and we want a book to sell. We want a book to get great reviews and awards and lots of reader love. Part of author flexibility is that the author is willing to talk to us, and brainstorm with editorial, and discuss marketing with marketing. At Tule, we don’t think of ourselves as the “publisher” but as the publishing partner, so if we make an offer for book, it’s because we think we would be a good partner for this book, and if we have to pass on one, it’s because we don’t think we can give the book the right support and do it justice in the marketplace.

So to answer specifically about branding, this is a conversation the author has with their agent, or editor/publisher, or with savvy author friends. And if you were to ask this savvy author friend, I would say I think the best rebranding happens in conjunction with a new release.

**7. One author who has been in publishing nearly 40 years asked the following on the NINC loop: I have seen many “cycles” in New York—a publisher would give an author about six books to see sell-through growth. Then it was bye-bye. For a while that number seemed to slip lower before hearing, “Don’t let the door hit you in the rear on your way out.” Are there, now, publishing houses who really mean it when they say they want to “build” authors? Are they really in this for the long haul? Or is that all gone? Is that only found now, maybe, in smaller presses? Because, sadly, what worked for an author even as little as five years ago may not work today. If you could address any or all of this, that would be great.**

At Tule, we look at our relationship with authors like a partnership or a marriage. We are in it for the long haul. We don’t just buy books; we are investing in a long-term relationship with authors. The digital landscape is constantly changing and we have to be flexible to keep up. That doesn’t mean an author needs to be shown the door if sales slow. It means we need to work together to come up with different strategies, including studying the market and what’s working, or trying to figure out where the author’s stories and voices might be a better fit. I can’t speak for other presses, but at Tule we collaborate with authors every step of the publishing process. If our authors are not successful, we are not successful. With that said, we will try a number of different series with an author, and if we still can’t get traction after five to seven books, then we view ourselves as having failed and think it’s in an author’s best interest to go elsewhere to get better support.

**8. Since Tule can be considered a smaller press (as compared to the big, traditional NYC houses), what do you think publishing companies such as Tule bring to the table for authors that they might not be able to get at a bigger house? And, to be balanced, what can you not bring an author that they could possibly benefit from at a bigger house?**

We believe that our small size has allowed us to commit to the belief that Tule was founded on: a publishing house that focuses on authors, and allows them to excel at their craft through supportive and professional editors and staff who really want to see the author succeed. We don’t have a lot of upper management to negotiate with, or a lot of hoops when going to acquisition. We have a CFO and we crunch numbers, and we discuss our vision for the book and why we think we can be a great team with this author. It’s wonderful when we get it right, but crushing when we don’t. Our goal is to always produce the highest quality (and most marketable books) so that our authors are profitable and enjoy their skill and careers. Larger publishing houses may have a larger pool of resources—as well as the ability to put an author in physical bookstores—but we believe our authors receive a very dedicated and personalized experience at Tule, one that allows us to shift with them as their goals change.

**9. What does a publisher do for an author in the way of marketing (there’s a basic minimum of house support that every book gets of which authors may not even be aware when they say, “My publisher did nothing for me!”)?**

The best way to market a great story is with a great package. Your cover, title and blurb are huge. We spend hours just discussing the “package” of the book, and that starts from the

moment of submission and continues from acquisition to publication. Our production team looks at data to ensure that we are keeping current with trends in the marketplace for category placement and then is careful to choose a publication date that fits with the story, considering what other stories may be included in a series.

Tule believes that a strong social media presence is important both for our authors and us as a publisher. We work to introduce new titles as well as keep our backlist in the spotlight through our newsletter, blogs and outreach to romance and mystery influencers. Some of our most successful marketing and sales has come through working our backlists. We love our new releases, but backlist is just as vital to us as the frontlist because some books need more time, and some authors need to get more of a series out. The digital shelf life never ends.

#### **10. What stands out about your publisher's approach to marketing?**

We're realists—marketing is tough. Marketing is hard to measure. Marketing can feel like an afterthought. We're aware of this, but because our team has a broad range of life experiences, ages and backgrounds, we believe that in our weekly marketing meetings we are able to design campaigns that are attractive to a wide range of readers. We work closely with our authors to develop their presence in the marketplace. Marketing plans are designed even before a book is acquired and our ability to market a product is a part of the submission review. Whether it be press releases, author Q&A's or pre-release materials, our team commits to every book and considers how to extend the marketable life with fresh covers, revised blurbs and re-introduction to new readers through social media, etc. Because digital publishing requires visibility, we create sales plans at the same time we begin scheduling out a series. Our marketing goes hand in hand with sales because visibility without sales is nothing, so we work with authors on ads, we create a plan for submitting to BookBub, and discuss targeted sales development, because a pretty marketing plan without solid results is actually no marketing plan at all.

#### **11. What is your biggest success, or your most surprising success/fail?**

Recently, we have been dynamic in our publishing strategy for different global markets. Our Outback Bride series featured a multi-author, four-book series set in a small town Australia. We included tight releases weekly, branded cover design that fit the market, and outreach leveraging each author's readership to collaborate on marketing strategies.

Another exciting success was a previously published series an author brought to us when her publisher closed, and we had her update books a bit with one of our editors, gave the series new titles and new covers, and it sold and sold and sold after getting a BookBub last summer. The author was delighted and we were, too. Sometimes previously published books don't earn what we hope, but in this case this was one of our bestselling series.

I think our most surprising fails came from one of our more established authors. The books came in with huge gaps between them (six to nine months, sometimes longer), and toward the end the readers just seemed to give up. Also, the threads connecting weren't as strong as her first series with us and lacked that connectedness that gave readers a rush, making them desperate for the next book. So we learned—hold the series if need be and publish back to back,

or every couple of months, and make sure the threads are tight and strong, and don't ever assume an author's name is sufficient to carry a series in today's competitive publishing world.

**12. What have you just bought in each genre and in what direction are those genres headed?**

We are really excited to acquire and start publishing mystery in 2019. We have just bought a two cozy mystery series with strong quirky women sleuths as the protagonists and we expect the cozy genre to continue in that direction.

In romance, we are actively looking for strong voices and books with film potential. We don't just view ourselves as a publishing company but as an entertainment company, offering different mediums of storytelling. We are actively pitching two new book acquisitions to different producers while simultaneously going through publishing production. We are seeing an increase in romantic comedy teetering on the chick lit genre line. I think we will continue to see an increase in these types of stories for many months to come.

**13. How can authors support their traditionally published books in ways that the publisher perhaps can't or won't? What can authors do? What promo works?**

We have a number of suggestions we make to our authors: Create a PR outreach list with a broad focus, research those people on social media to look for handles and hashtags, experiment with different angles that point to a broader trend in your pitches to media outlets, use stats, anecdotal cultural touch points or referencing similar writers, leverage social media with a paid campaign, start a street team, make in-person connections and start with local press and book events.

**14. How does a professional author handle ghosting (never getting a reply) from a potential editor who'd requested a work?**

Stay diligent. No response—follow up. Still no response—follow up again. In digital publishing, email is the preferred form of communication, but if an author is getting ghosted, she can move on to print mail and telephone. Also, a good idea is to pursue a different point person if your communications are being ignored. Sometimes, life interferes with best-laid plans and your particular editor could be out of the office due to unforeseen circumstances. Professional authors use tried and true contact information, either from the publisher's website or past communication.

**15. If you could look into your crystal ball for 2019 and beyond, where do you see the market headed? What trends might be coming? What do readers want more of, and what are readers tired of seeing?**

Can't really address what readers want and don't want, but WE want great stories—we want to know what you think would make a great story in today's market. Editorial is always compiling a wish list, and we're interested in #ownvoices in every genre. We would love trilogies featuring brothers of color—black, Latino, Asian, bi-racial. We'd love some series featuring sisters of color. We're interested in romances and upmarket fiction where love is

universal. Simply because we don't have books that are LGBTQIA doesn't mean we're not interested. It means we haven't had the submission come across our desks. Do we still love our cowboys? Yes. Do we love small towns? Yes. But we also love hopeful, redemptive love in all its sizes, shapes, and forms. We publish few novellas now, and focus on a word length where we can price accordingly.

**16. How has the #ownvoices movement affected publishing in general?**

The #ownvoices movement has brought an awareness to a drastic missing piece in publishing. At Tule, we are devoted to acquiring diverse books written by diverse authors with #ownvoices. You can see some of our wish list above!

**17. Tell me all about the exciting things at Tule Publishing that make it a great company to work with.**

Meghan Farrell, Tule's managing editor is amazing to work with. She has a great sense of humor, she's smart, compassionate, and strong. She's been with Tule from the very beginning and has seen Tule grow from four authors to 145-plus, and six releases to 550. She has been involved in every single imprint and has handled contracts for every single book. Meghan is passionate about authors and working with "creative cats," as I call them (I consider myself a creative cat as well!) and has helped train new team members on the importance of excellent author relations, as well as the importance of talking with authors, not at them, and finding out what authors want and need to make sure we're sharing the same vision and goals. I think the team is really fun because it's small, tight-knit, and truly loves books (and going out for Mexican food!!).

Because we're small, the entire team knows every author and is involved in every step of book production. I am involved in almost every step, too. While I don't edit, I'm there from acquisition to publication. I love the Tule team. They are seriously good people, and kind people, and extremely committed to authors and books. When we make a mistake, we try to own it. If we have disappointed an author, we try to make it right.

I really believe what we do is about partnership and responsibility. We are partnering with an author. There is no abdication of responsibility on either side. We are not a gatekeeper, we are not the boss, we are not all-powerful. But we are a great sounding board, we're good at problem solving, and we know what we have to do to take a Word document and turn it into a finished product so we can launch an author's labor of love into the world.

**18. Anything else you think I've missed that NINC members should know?**

Film was mentioned earlier in the questions, and I wanted to circle back to film. We do work a lot on film. My primary job at Tule, besides overseeing editorial, is the development of books to film. There are some weeks where I work on film four to eight hours a day, every day. Then there are weeks where I might only work on film for a half hour a day. When stories are being submitted/evaluated, there is a place on the reader's evaluation sheet that asks about suitability for film. We quickly came to realize that a story isn't just something to read. Story is intellectual property that ought to be exploited in all possible formats. Now it's competitive out



there, and everyone is actively pursuing film as well, but we have been relatively successful for being such a new, small company. In part I think it's because I brought entertainment agent Maggie Marr in early and worked with her on our contracts and film relationships, and Maggie, having been an agent, was a fantastic partner for us. It helps that I'm also just a 75-minute drive from Los Angeles so I personally take meetings in L.A. I personally pitch books. I personally send out queries and proposals to my film production contacts. We now work with 12 different production companies, companies in the U.S., Canada and the UK. But we have placed more than 25 books with producers. Some of those agreements are options. Some are shopping agreements. Two books have been made for Hallmark and have already aired. Two others are in development for Hallmark for late 2019. We have another 10 on the Hallmark grid, plus books in at Lifetime and books at Netflix. Tule has also formed Tule Productions so we can begin producing our own books to film in the near future.

**19. Tell me a little bit about why you love wearing a publisher hat as well as an author hat. Do you ever get criticized for possibly having a conflict of interest because you wear both types of hats?**

I used to be worried that people would think I had no business publishing books. I used to worry that authors would think I was trying to earn money off of them. I used to worry what other people thought and I just don't anymore. For one, I do not draw a salary from Tule and only earn royalties from my own books, and after 5 1/2 years of being a publisher, I know what I bring to the publishing process and it's substantial. I'm proud of Tule, and really proud of the awards our authors have earned, the sales, the reviews, the opportunities, and the film contracts. We started this believing that authors were the heart and soul of publishing, as well as the true creative force behind a book, and I believe it even more after 500-plus releases.

I also believe that not every author is cut out to be a publisher, and/or self-publish. Publishing is a lot of work in a lot of different fields, and some authors want to hand over the finished manuscript and have a team get behind it and take care of it so they can write the next book, and I respect that. I still write four books a year (two a year for Tule, two for other publishers), and I can't be an expert on all aspects of publishing, but I'm damn good at editorial, which is why that's where I focus at Tule.

I really do love being part of Tule, I love working on film, and I'm so happy being able to take all my knowledge and passion and apply it to the market and other creatives' books. Why keep knowledge to myself? Why not help other writers? Why not be creative with other creatives? Why not keep having fun? So that's what I'm doing. I'm working with amazing people every single day, sharing goals and dreams, and it's fun. Even on the worst days, it's still the best life imaginable.

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*Trish Milburn is the author of more than 40 titles of romance and young adult fiction for Harlequin, Penguin, Bell Bridge Books, and Tule as well as via indie publishing. When she's not writing, she enjoys reading, visiting museums, attending fan cons, cosplaying and indulging in her new love for Korean dramas and pop music.*

# Unearthing Hidden Clues About Your Creativity

## Controversy & Shame, Part 6

*By Denise A. Agnew*



Since December, I've discussed the process of discovering hidden clues to what may impede your creativity. This month I'm focusing on going deeper into topics you might consider uncomfortable and if you're allowing other people to decide what you write. In Part One of the series, I asked you to thoroughly answer several questions, so if you want to see the full list, check out the December 2018 issue of *Nink* in the members-only section.

- *Are you afraid to touch on and explore deeper/controversial topics?*
- *Do you let people (strangers or not) shame you into not writing?*

### Exploring controversy

Bear with me while I tell you a story. Once upon a time, I was the author who played it safe. When I started writing romance for publication in 1991, I followed the rules. I took the workshops, went to classes, and attended conferences. Many of the things you expect writers to do, I did. I ignored, for a long time, the part of me that wanted to break outside the box. That started to change in 2002 when I went from writing sexy romance to erotic romance. Still, even that couldn't keep me in the box. I didn't just want to write erotic romance because it sold well. Fortunately, because of the advent of the ebook, I could find a market for any type of erotic (or otherwise) story I wanted to create. Over the last two years, I've started writing more horror and I have even included screenplays in the mix. When I look over my writing life, I recognize that in a way I'm a rebel. I've taken on some controversial and edgy subjects in my stories.

The stories I've enjoyed writing the most have usually included themes that, to me, have a deeper meaning. I'm not as interested, in general, in creating stories that skim the surface. I get passionate about a theme, a plot, and characters that don't fall into a round cookie cutter. I always write down an idea, no matter how wild.

Many (if not most) writers do not take my path. People stick with the safe. The money-making, multi-volume series and the same genre. None of this is bad, unless it strangles one's

creativity, which results in said writer staring at a blank page. Writers rarely ask themselves if conformation created the blank page.

Many writers have heard of going deeper with their writing, but usually they are thinking of concepts such as deep POV. When I say going deeper, I mean bringing to light what you want to say through your characters, plots, and themes. Saying what you want and not holding back. Are you digging deep for the ideas, characters, and situations that come to you that aren't pretty, packaged, and cliché?

What's my point? Not writing what you want to say, whether it is controversial or not, robs you of a true opportunity to fulfill your creativity. It also increases your chances for long-term writer's block.

### **Blocked by shame?**

This is a controversial subject in itself. I was writing gothic romances in the 1970s when I was a teenager. This was my first attempt at writing novels. Only my mom knew I was writing them, because I thought other people wouldn't like it and would tease me. Even into the 1980s, I hid my love for reading romances and writing them. I allowed the possibility of shame to keep me from fully exploring my creativity. It wasn't until 1991 that I jumped in with both feet and said yes to writing romance publicly.

As a romance author, I experienced the typical cliché of people telling me I was writing crap, junk, and trash. When are you going to write a real book, Denise? When I started writing erotic romance, I experienced a minor backlash. By that time, though, my attitude was more confident. Fewer people were interested in razzing me because of my writing choice. When I started writing horror, some women lifted a disapproving eyebrow. Most didn't say a thing, but the silence dripped with ice. All of these reactions could have stopped me from writing with passion what I wanted to create. I made the choice I knew would bring me happiness and creativity. I write horror.

### **Asking yourself deeper questions**

When you answered questions about exploring deeper issues/controversial topics and shame, what did you say? If you answered yes to these questions, it may be time for further exploration. Let's break it down. What are some of the attitudes you may have run into as a writer? Have you heard things like these?

1. Writing is frivolous.
2. Writing romance is stupid because it is "icky," "has sex in it," "is sinful," and "it is unrealistic."
3. Writing horror is stupid because it is "gross," "violent," "blood and guts," and "has no redeeming value."

Of course, these attitudes of others aren't exclusive to romance and horror. I use these examples because I've heard them. It also can be said that these two genres probably get the most flack of any other.

As you continue to explore, ask a few more questions:

1. Taking what you know about what others may think about your writing, do you also believe that your writing is frivolous?
2. Do you believe the genre you write is worth less than another genre such as literary or mystery? Why?
3. Where do your attitudes come from?
4. Why do you give others power over your creativity?
5. Does your self-esteem rely too much on the opinions of others?
6. Does your overall self-esteem need improvement?
7. What do you want to write but are afraid to write?
8. Why are you afraid?

### **Conformity and dissatisfaction vs. creative freedom**

If you conform to ideals imposed by others, chances are you won't be satisfied. You'll experience a vague and nagging sense that something is missing. You'll question what you're writing and why you're writing it. You'll come to the end of your writing life and regret not doing it your way.

As a creative person, you can only be fulfilled if you understand what it is you want to do and then do it.

Next month we'll explore whether writing/creating is essential to your well-being and if your perfectionism is keeping you from writing.

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*Denise A. Agnew is the award-winning author of over 69 novels and screenplays. Denise's novels Love from The Ashes and Blackout were optioned for film/TV by Where's Lucy? Productions, Bright Frontier Films and MDR Entertainment. Denise is a writer/producer (Where's Lucy? Productions, Happy Catastrophe Productions, Bright Frontier Films), a paranormal investigator, Reiki Master, and Certified Creativity Coach. As a creativity coach, Denise assists anyone in the creative arts to maintain lifelong creativity. You can find her at [www.deniseagnew.com](http://www.deniseagnew.com) and [www.creativepencoaching.com](http://www.creativepencoaching.com).*

# The Mad Scribbler

# CopyPasteCris

By Laura Resnick



*"The news has been heard all around, but the party it most concerns is deaf."*

—African proverb

If you ever decide to start plagiarizing, you should probably avoid stealing from an attorney-turned-novelist who used to clerk for U.S. Supreme Court judges and then later became a professor who taught intellectual property law.

Call me over-cautious, but this just seems like common sense to me.

It would also be advisable, I humbly suggest, to make sure your victims don't include, for example, a mega-selling writer with extremely deep pockets who has long been a vocal opponent of plagiarism and who has previously sued a plagiarist.

I mean, while stealing from other writers, why tempt fate or take reckless risks, right?

Probably it would also be best not to steal from *dozens* of writers; that sort of thing is just attention-seeking, if I may say so. However, if you insist on plagiarizing on such a broad scale, you should at least have the sense to make sure your many victims aren't all part of the same well-connected genre community, one with a strong history of information sharing and advocacy. Because, you know, that way likes madness. Or litigation.

Ah, well. Wise though my counsel is, I am sadly aware that it will fall on deaf ears in some cases. There are plagiarists determined to walk on the wild side and thieves determined to get caught.

Like this one, for example: romance writer Cristiane Serruya is being sued for multiple instances of copyright infringement.

In late April, bestseller Nora Roberts, described by the Associated Press as "one of the world's most popular and prolific authors," filed a lawsuit in Brazil that accuses Serruya of plagiarizing from nearly 100 novels written by more than 40 authors. This tally includes stealing from 10 of Roberts's books, as well as from books by bestselling romance novelist Courtney Milan (the pen name of the former Supreme Court law clerk and legal professor). Serruya has



committed “multi-plagiarism” on a “rare and scandalous” level, Roberts asserts.

As you may recall, this isn’t Roberts’s first rodeo. In 1997, she sued novelist Janet Dailey after discovering multiple instances of Dailey plagiarizing her books. Dailey acknowledged she had lifted heavily from Roberts’s work in at least two of her own novels, and she blamed her plagiarism on stress and a psychological disorder. She eventually paid a legal settlement, which Roberts donated to the Literacy Volunteers of America.

The Dailey episode stunned me in numerous ways. For one thing, prior to this, Dailey had been a prolific and successful writer for many years; she was a writer of genuine accomplishment over a long period when she started plagiarizing. I never met Dailey, who died in 2013, but I attended her keynote speech at an RWA National Conference some years before the plagiarism revelations, and I could see many people in that huge audience admired her. Additionally, she and Nora Roberts were friends—right up until Roberts discovered Dailey had been stealing from her for several years.

Anyhow, ever since enduring that experience, Nora Roberts has been so clear about her opposition to plagiarists, I could only wonder, when I learned about this new incident, what kind of *fool* would plagiarize now from this high-profile author who’s known for vigorously combatting copyright infringement in court.

(The AP reports that Roberts said in her recent interview with them: “If you plagiarize, I will come for you. If you take my work, you will pay for it and I will do my best to see you don’t write again.”)

It’s the same kind of fool, I guess, who apparently thought she could plagiarize from *dozens* of writers without getting caught, including writers who have huge audiences and enormous quantities of books circulating among readers. Indeed, it was an alert reader who contacted bestseller Courtney Milan to say she’d come across a book that bore startling resemblance to one of Milan’s novels.

“After investigation,” Milan wrote on Feb. 18, “I have concluded that Cristiane Serruya has copied, word-for-word, multiple passages from my book *The Duchess War*.”

Milan posted a long set of comparative samples on her blog, showing where passages from the Serruya novel appeared to be copied directly from hers, and she stated these weren’t even all the instances she’d found so far.

By the following day, Milan was able to name more victims, and the number has continued multiplying since then. The most recent tally on Roberts’s blog, as of this writing, is that Serruya has allegedly infringed on the copyright of 93 novels written by 41 different authors.

So who is this fool?

Cristiane Serruya, according to her website, lives in her native city of Rio de Janeiro. Her mother tongue is Portuguese, but she was educated in multiple countries and “writes in English.” She was a lawyer for 20 years before becoming a romance writer. According to an [article](#) by Jonathan Bailey on a website called Plagiarism Today, she has self-published about 30 books in the past 6-7 years.

And now according to Serruya, she didn’t write those books—not all of them, anyhow.

She found out quickly about the plagiarism allegations (at the time, she followed Courtney Milan on Twitter; Serruya has since deleted her account), and she immediately claimed that the

work in question had been written by a ghostwriter she'd hired on Fiverr, an online site where freelancers offer their services.

This claim is in noticeable contrast to Serruya's website, however, where she's described as "typing away new stories" and in love with the writing process, which "was just the piece that was missing from the puzzle of her life. Now that she's hooked, she can't free herself—and doesn't want to be freed."

After Nora Roberts was added to the rapidly expanding list of her victims, Serruya emailed Roberts, again blaming ghostwriters, and saying, "I was fooled by some 'mentors' and 'coachers' who told me that 'More, more, more, fast, fast, fast.'"

And so her intuitive leap was to... copy-and-paste the work of many other writers and pass it off as her own? Hire ghostwriters to do that? Both?

Look, we are all aware of the pressure to write more, write faster, blah blah. Except for writers who are naturally very prolific (and perhaps even for them), it is a stress felt constantly throughout a writing career. It's pressure applied by your agents, your editors, your publishers, your readers, your creditors, and your peer group. It is a fact of the writing life.

And if your way of dealing with it is to plagiarize, then *you do not belong here*. Put down your pen, back away from your keyboard, and go find another way of life. This one is not for you, and you *are not welcome* here.

As for ghostwriters... I'm not inclined to opine in this instance about novelists hiring ghostwriters, because I'm not convinced Serruya actually did that. Without more information, it mostly strikes me as a flimsy attempt, invented in a moment of panic, to deflect blame. More than anything, I think the "ghostwriters ate my homework" excuse reflects just how unprepared she was for discovery, despite plagiarizing from more than 40 authors, including at least two people you've genuinely got to be a blithering idiot to choose as your victims for this particular offense: Milan & Roberts.

Indeed, the AP reports, "In an email back to Serruya, Roberts demanded that she 'immediately, unambiguously, acknowledge—without excuses' her 'unauthorized taking' and 'immediately and permanently remove' every novel in question. Roberts told the AP that she decided to sue after Serruya failed to respond."

Roberts said, "A lot of the other writers involved in this, they don't have the money to fight it. I do have the money." And she's going to bat for the whole team.

Unfortunately, it might be a long time before we know the result of the lawsuit. Attorney Saulo Daniel Lopez, a specialist in authors' rights, told the AP that a case like this can take five to 10 years to be decided in Brazilian courts.

"If plagiarism is proven, Serruya could be forced to pay from the proceeds of her books," Lopez said. "The indemnification could be high percentage-wise because Roberts, a world-renowned writer, could allege having suffered a lot of moral damage."

Roberts will donate any damages or settlement from the lawsuit to a literacy program in Brazil.

Criticism has also been leveled at Amazon in this mess. Despite Amazon issuing statements about its sophisticated "teams of investigators and automated technology to prevent and catch the vast majority of bad actors," Serruya operated without hindrance there—as well as on

numerous other vendor sites. Readers and fellow writers tipped off the writers, and then a writer (not Amazon) ran data analysis that uncovered many additional copied passages in Serruya's books.

As indie author and speaker David Gaughran [noted](#) on Twitter, "Amazon claims to have robust systems to detect plagiarism... which missed the biggest plagiarism case in the last thirty years."

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*[Laura Resnick](#) is the author of novels, short stories, and nonfiction.*

# Membership Benefits

Need industry intel, software, or legal help? We've got you covered.

Are you taking advantage of all your member benefits?

As a NINC member, your benefits include industry discounts, newsletter and website articles, professional services directory, networking opportunities, and more.

We've compiled all of these—which you can also find on our website—into this list as a helpful reminder.

## Networking

The email list for Novelists, Inc. Members: <https://groups.io/g/NINCLINK>

Join our Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NovelistsInc/>

We offer a critique/brainstorming group: <https://groups.io/g/NINKcritique>

Follow NINC on Twitter: [https://twitter.com/Novelists\\_Inc](https://twitter.com/Novelists_Inc)

## Conference 2019: Planning For Success

Conference information: <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/>

Conference registration: <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/2019-member-registration/>

Conference e-loop: <https://groups.io/g/BeachNINC2019>

## Newsletter

Propose an article: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/propose-an-article/>

Submit a letter to the editor: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/submit-letter-to-editor/>

Newsletter archives: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/news-archive/>

*Best of Nink* in paperback: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/best-of-nink/>

## Website (you must be logged in to access these services)

Legal Fund: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/legal-fund/>

Pro Services Directory: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/pro-services-directory/>

Sample Letters: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/sample-letters/>

Articles & Links: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/articles-and-links/>

Welcome Packet: [http://ninc.com/system/assets/uploads/2017/01/2017\\_New\\_Member\\_Welcome\\_Packet-public.pdf](http://ninc.com/system/assets/uploads/2017/01/2017_New_Member_Welcome_Packet-public.pdf)

## Member discounts

As described in the March issue of *Nink*, NINC members can use a professional filing service to set up a new entity for free: you pay only the state fees and a shipping & handling fee. See details about this exclusive offer for NINC members from SmallBiz.com, Inc. on the [Member Discounts](#) page.

IngramSpark has updated their offer of free title setup for print, ebook and print/ebook until January 31, 2020. At that time they'll evaluate how often we use it, so by all means, use this nice perk and help us keep the discount! You'll find more information, as well as the code to use, on our [Members Benefits and Discounts](#) page, along with a list of various other professional discounts that are available to NINC members.

## Volunteer

One of the greatest benefits of NINC is the opportunity to volunteer your talents to benefit other members—which pays incredible and unexpected dividends in networking and knowledge. Learn more about volunteer opportunities here: <https://ninc.com/members-only/open-positions/>

Open positions include:

- Social Media Committee
- Tweet Team
- Recruiting New Members
- 2019 Conference Promoter
- Anything!



*Founded in 1989*

### **NINC Statement of Principle**

Novelists, Inc., in acknowledgment of the crucial creative contributions novelists make to society, asserts the right of novelists to be treated with dignity and in good faith; to be recognized as the sole owners of their literary creations; to be fairly compensated for their creations when other entities are profiting from those creations; and to be accorded the respect and support of the society they serve.

### **Founders**

- Rebecca Brandewyne
- Janice Young Brooks
- Jasmine Cresswell
- Maggie Osborne
- Marianne Shock

### **2019 Board of Directors**

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

- President: Wayne Stinnett
- President-Elect: Alyssa Day
- Secretary: Sue Phillips
- Treasurer: Pam McCutcheon
- Newsletter Editor: Michele Dunaway
- Advisory Council Representative: Lou Aronica

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- Marianne Shock
- Vicki Lewis Thompson
- Victoria Thompson
- Steven Womack

## 2019 Committees

- [Complete committee member listings](#) are available on the website. Many committee positions are open and looking for new volunteers.
- 2019 Conference Committee:
  - Conference Director: Mel Jolly
  - Programming: Alyssa Day
  - Sponsorship: Rochelle Paige
  - Logistics: Karen Fox
  - Registration: Mindy Neff
- Authors Coalition Rep: Laura Phillips & Wayne Stinnett
- Social Media Committee:
  - Chair: Jenna Kernan
  - Rick Gualteieri
  - Lisa Hughey
- Membership Committee
  - Chair: Sarah Woodbury
  - Boyd Craven
- Nink Newsletter
  - Editor: Michele Dunaway
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  - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
  - Production Manager: Laura Resnick
- Nominating Committee:
  - Emilie Richards
  - Barbara Dunlop
  - Tawdra Kandle
  - Karen King
  - Pat Van Wie
- Technology Committee
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  - Elizabeth Ann West
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- Discount Program Chair: Emilie Richards
- Volunteer Jobs (Just One Thing) Coordinator: Lois Lavrisa



**Central Coordinator**

Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin

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*Address changes may be made on the website.*

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