

Monarch e-News



Monterey Bay Chapter RWA
P. O. Box 1002
Felton, CA 95018

<http://www.MontereyBayRWA.com>



IN THIS ISSUE

- ◆ President's Message
- ◆ Editor's Note
- ◆ December Meeting:: Holiday Party
- ◆ Website and Blog
- ◆ Sister Chapters
- ◆ Author Gender and POV
- ◆ Three Reasons to Break Up ...
- ◆ What I've Learned From Proofreading
- ◆ Rules
- ◆ Book Reviews

ABOUT US

Monterey Bay Chapter is affiliated with Romance Writers of America, headquartered in Houston, Texas. RWA® is a non-profit professional and educational association of romance writers and other publishing industry professionals. www.rwanational.org

OFFICERS

President - Kathleen Dougherty - [katdougherty at yahoo.com](mailto:katdougherty@yahoo.com)
 Vice President/Program - Maureen O'Hagan Betita - [jacarnda at sbcglobal.net](mailto:jacarnda@sbcglobal.net)
 Vice President/Communications - Christie Maurer - [maure4cr at baymoon.com](mailto:maure4cr@baymoon.com)
 Secretary - Carolyn Comings - [ccomings at redshift.com](mailto:ccomings@redshift.com)
 Treasurer - Bette Nybakken - [bnybakken at redshift.com](mailto:bnybakken@redshift.com)
 Webmistress - Carolyn Comings - [ccomings at redshift.com](mailto:ccomings@redshift.com)
 Literary - Carolyn Woolston - [carolynw at cruzio.com](mailto:carolynw@cruzio.com)
 Membership - Julie Bernard - [jacahill1 at yahoo.com](mailto:jacahill1@yahoo.com)

COPYRIGHT 2011

The Monarch, E-News is a monthly publication of California's Monterey Bay Romance Writers, RWA® Chapter #92. RWA® sister chapters may reprint articles with proper credit. Any other publication must obtain written permission from the author.

Holiday Party and Potluck

Saturday, December 3

- * Bring a wrapped, unlabeled gift for the Gift Grab
- * And a snack to share for potluck buffet

President's Message

by Kathleen Dougherty

It's been a wild couple of months for me. Two months ago I broke up with my husband of nineteen years. My life is now heading on a more positive path, but it's a rocky way and I'm picking my way through. I'm still writing, but slowly and carefully as if my writing were a mirror into my own world. It all seems so new right now. It all feels so important...and yet different. I am not writing to finish the book at the moment. I'm not writing to meet any goals or self-imposed deadlines. I'm writing the way I'm living--to experience the moment. To see where it leads me. To taste the freedom of the world as I create it.

Yes, my friends, life has changed, but I knew it would. What has always amazed me and continues to amaze me is the way my writing keeps evolving and changing, too. Just when I think I got it figured out, it becomes something more and it continues to mean more to me.

I can't wait to see you all at the next meeting. I particularly enjoy our December parties. I love the laughter and friendship and the room full of warm, caring, talented and intelligent people. I hope you are all finding good joy and happiness both from the season and from your writing.

Editor's Note

by Christie Maurer

I am pleased to have an article from former MBC member Cate Townsend. Editor Link articles discuss when to abandon a bad idea and funny mistakes your spell checker doesn't catch. I had to include one about one of my favorite authors, Agatha Christie. When I was in the hospital last summer, feeling hopeless and depressed, I downloaded a couple of dozen of her mysteries onto my iPod. Some of the stories now seem quaint but delightful. They lifted my spirits and kept me sane. Agatha Christie probably broke every writing "rule" there is--show and tell, author

Editor's Note (cont.)

intrusion, and POV jumps--yet her books were international best-sellers, her plays are still performed, and she remains one of the most beloved writers of the 20th Century. I doubt there's a writer alive who wouldn't give their eyeteeth for her reputation, to say nothing about her royalties.

I'd love to use *your* article. E-mail me to discuss your ideas, or send me copy by **December 20**.

WIP Article: Anyone can write a WIP article, and it's a great way to share where you're at with your fellow members. Did you finish a scene? A book? Write a (or lots of) paragraph(s)? Find a research source? If "life" has gotten in the way, or you're ready to quit--share that, too. **Deadline: November 20** - maure4cr at baymoon.com

December 3, 2011 Meeting:

Monterey Bay Chapter's next meeting is on **Saturday, December 3, 2011**, 10:00 a.m. at the Watsonville Hospital Senior Circle Room, 75 Nielson Street, Watsonville, CA 95076, (831) 724-4741.

Directions:

Exit Highway 1 at Airport Boulevard, go left onto Airport Boulevard. Nielson is the second street to the right. Link to map: http://www.montereybayrwa.com/special_location_maps.htm

We will have directions posted in the lobby. The coffee kiosk is closed, but we get Starbuck's for inspiration.

Program:**10:00 a.m. Critiques:**

First-come/First-serve: Bring up to 3 double-spaced pages--copies for everyone--for feedback and discussion.

Holiday Potluck & Gift Grab

Besides your warm smile, bring a wrapped, unlabeled gift worth up to \$15 for the notorious and hilarious Gift Grab, and a snack to share for the potluck buffet--nothing hot or difficult to eat--and prepare to celebrate.

Website and Blog

Take a look at our Chapter website: <http://www.MontereyBayRWA.com> Our webmistress, Carolyn Comings, has also created a Chapter Blog. Read the posts on <http://montereybayrwa.blogspot.com/> If you haven't yet joined, e-mail her for an invitation - ccomings at redshift.com

Sister Chapter Meetings

Check out the websites for what's happening at nearby Chapters. They have some terrific programs:

San Francisco - <http://www.sfarwa.com/>

Silicon Valley - <http://www.svrwa.com/>

Author Gender and POV

by Cate Townsend

(Based on an August 2011 blog post in catetownsend.wordpress.com/)

There's a review on Amazon for *The Descendants*, by Kauai Hart Hemmings, where the reviewer wonders why an author would write a story from the perspective of a character who is not the same gender.

The author is female, and the story is told through the point-of-view of a man. The reviewer went on to say that this was the book's biggest flaw, in his opinion, because the character did not think like a man or do things that a man would do. Another reviewer questioned the "advisability" of a female author writing in a male voice, saying that many of the character's actions and feelings "rang false."

These reviews disturbed me because I have written three novels with male protagonists. Even though my brother (ruthless critiquer, beta, and aspiring author) has pointed out things in my writing "that a dude would never do," I sometimes doubt my ability to craft my male characters in a genuine voice.

The word "advisability" in one of the reviews is troubling. So, if writers should only write main characters in their own gender, then Wally Lamb shouldn't have written *She's Come Undone*. Patricia Wood shouldn't have written *Lottery*. Sara Gruen shouldn't have written *Water For Elephants*. Nora Roberts shouldn't have written the Chesapeake Bay series. Elizabeth Berg shouldn't have written *Say When*. Nicholas Sparks shouldn't have written anything. And we, as readers, would have missed out on some awesome stories by these authors.

(continued)

Gender . . . (continued)

It brings up the question: was there really a flaw with the portrayal of gender of the character in *The Descendants*, or was there just a flaw with the character in general? I've learned through writing thousands and thousands of pages, and reading more, that it's really not about getting into the head of a male, or a female, but getting into the head of the character. If a writer truly understands their character, then that person will come across on the page as genuine, and it won't matter what gender they are. They are simply . . . alive.

How do you feel about stories written from the perspective of a character who is not the same gender as the author? Have you ever read a book where the character didn't feel genuine because the person writing that character was a different gender?

Former MBC member Cate Townsend remains committed to writing. She has an agent, and wants to keep in touch with the Chapter.

Three Reasons to Break Up With an Idea

by Taryn Blackthorne

(This article is from the Fall 2011 Issue of Lovelights, the newsletter of the Romance Writers of Atlantic Canada, Michelle Helliwell, Editor. The article may be used/ forwarded with credit to the chapter and author.)

We've all done it. Held onto a story that has potential. It could be the next great thing! And we discovered it! If only we could get it to change, do what we want it to, be what we need. But ideas, like relationships, sometimes are too good to be true. Know when to walk away before the idea eats up your creativity and precious writing time.

It's not me, it's you.

Say you're at a party on some wintery night. You're gathered around the table, laughing away at some silly joke that you really had to be there to get, when Joey realizes you're a writer. "Hey, you know what you should write about? Whiskey Jacks. You can have them solve murders or something!" Joey is convinced this is a brilliant idea and so is everyone else there. Gosh darn it, you've never read anything about Whiskey Jacks, it's unique, fun, and figure it's a good idea too. You sit down the next day during your carefully carved out writing time and nothing. Maybe you should research it. Three hours later, you have no writing done, no plot ideas, no characters and no idea why you thought this was a good idea. It wasn't, like that blind date with the ventriloquist who looked like fun in his online persona. It was someone else trying

to fix you up with what their idea of a good story should be. You know what? They should write it.

Shhh, I'm embarrassed to be seen with you.

This one is really tempting to get trapped into. You're at the supermarket and that nosey Joey shows up again. "Hey writer pal, what are you working on?" Joey's a gossip. You know she'll spread it all around. Your great idea is too dear, she'll never understand. Or worse, she'll try to steal it for herself! No, not your precious idea! *coughcough* Step back. Unless you are Bill Gates or J.K. Rowling, chances are your idea isn't going to rock the rest of the world, even if it rocks yours. It's probably safe to share. And as far as you losing the idea if you tell someone, think of it this way. If you don't want your mom to meet your idea because you're scared it will leave you, you probably shouldn't be together in the first place.

You're great in bed, but what else do we have in common?

I had this bear of a day at work. I'm a substitute teacher in my day job, so you can imagine. I was in the same class the next day. In desperation, I started telling this story idea that had been kicking around in my head about a girl and a gargoyle. They loved it. Success! They'd work twice as hard to get their stuff done just so they could hear it. I ran home that day, flipped on my computer and wrote the first three chapters as quick as lightning. It was a dictation from God kind of writing session.

The problem? Well, for one, I didn't have one, in the story, I mean. I just had some really cool things that happened to the characters when they first met. I didn't know what they were going to do afterwards. I didn't have a bad guy. I didn't even know why the kid had moved into the building with the gargoyle in the first place. And why did she fall for a gargoyle when there were perfectly good looking kids in her building, her school, the computer club she was in? And the gargoyle, couldn't he just get someone to carve him a good-looking stone-hottie? How was he coming to life, anyway? Yeah, I had serious logic issues. The story wasn't ready to be written. And those three chapters that I wrote? They're still kicking around somewhere. I go back for a fling every now and again, but basically that idea and I are just friends with benefits. Maybe it will develop into something else, maybe not, the point is, I jumped into bed too soon. I fell in love with the characters looks' and didn't get to know them. I've done versions of it with world building too.

(continued)

Break Up . . . Idea (continued)

All you talk about is the setting and the characters just aren't there. Kinda what CGI did for a certain set of prequel movies messa thinkin'.

Hopefully this gives you a start on your own personal inventory of idea relationship rules. As with every rulebook, my friends, knowing when to add to it, when to bend it, and when to throw the damn thing against the wall is the key to happiness. Until next time, may your roads be filled with plenty of interesting side trips that make for great stories.

Taryn Blackthorne learned how to read before she started school, often making up stories to entertain her friends. In fifth grade, she was sent back to her desk to write instead of doing her math...because her teacher wanted to see what happened next. In sixth grade, she was kept indoors during Field Day to complete her first attempt at a novel, which was added to the school library. Her dream of becoming a writer when she grew up was born. Taryn's still waiting to grow up, but decided that after two degrees, a cat, and several teacher postings around North America she couldn't wait to become a 'writer' anymore. She published her first e-novel in 2008 with Samhain Publishing. She divides her time (in no way evenly distributed) between her family, her keyboard and her teaching. Learn more from her website <http://tarynblackthorne.com>

What I've Learned From . . . Proofreading

by Tanya Michaels

(This article first appeared in the November-December 2011 issue of *The Galley*, the online newsletter published by Georgia Romance Writers. Permission given to forward or use with proper credit to author and newsletter, Marilyn Baron, Editor.)

Typos happen to the best of us. The good news? Accidentally subbing your for you're isn't cause for an automatic rejection if the story's fantastic. But mistakes can hurt us. In a highly competitive writing contest, too many careless errors can make the one point difference between the person who finals (and gets his/her work in front of an industry professional) and the one who doesn't. Or, imagine you're an overworked editor with a four-foot slush pile. You've found a promising yet ultimately flawed manuscript and you're on the fence about whether to reject it or ask for revisions. Pages and pages of unprofessional mistakes might tip the scales.

One thing I've learned from my own work is that spellcheck is no substitution for proofreading! Spellcheck won't help if you leave a word out of a sentence—or leave off the end of a word, which I once did when I had to take a call from my son's school. I returned to my dialogue and absently

typed a period and end quote, not realizing I hadn't yet completed my thought. My heroine's intended "Thanks for your assistance" became "Thanks for your ass." Awkward, but not a blunder of genre-changing proportions. I nearly turned one of my home and hearth romances into a horror story when, instead of a tow-headed child, I typed two-headed. And if I hadn't caught a last chapter typo before submitting my January 2012 *Claimed by a Cowboy* (which mentions eleven tourists on a trail ride), I might have received a confused phone call from my editor. "Tanya, what's with the elven tourists? The story's set in Texas, not Middle Earth."

Just as you can't rely solely on spellcheck, you shouldn't rely only on yourself, either. Too often, since our brains know perfectly well what we meant to say, we subconsciously fill in the correct wording. Find someone who can look at your work with fresh eyes! At the very least, if you must read it yourself, try reading it aloud. That's how I discovered a real doozy in my upcoming *Tamed by a Texan*. My heroine's overprotective brothers want a word with the hero, and the sentence should have been, "Ty hadn't expected the two angry men in his path." If that came as a surprise, just imagine how shocked Ty was to find a couple of angry guys in his bath.

In this day and age, many people choose to self-publish. If you're really excited about a piece of work, you may be tempted to put it on-line, pronto. But is the writing polished enough? Every page—and every mistake—creates an impression on our readers. Leave a bad impression, and that's a paying customer you may never get back.

There's a lot of anecdotal evidence suggesting it's more effective to print your pages and proofread them on hard copy rather than on the computer screen. For final proofing before you mail your submission, try reading the pages out of order. That way you stay focused on individual words and sentences and don't get sucked into the flow of the story. Conversely, we want editors, agents, and readers to fall into the story—polishing your work to an error-free shine leaves them free to follow your characters' journeys without being distracted by slipups along the way.

Tanya Michaels is an award-winning author and popular workshop speaker. Her *Hill Country Heroes* miniseries for Harlequin American Romance begins in January 2012 with *Claimed by a Cowboy*. Tanya maintains that any typographical errors in this article are to help illustrate her point and not the result of deadline sleep deprivation.

Rules?

by Jean Harrington

(This article was published in the October 2011 issue of *Tropical Heat Waves*, newsletter of the Southwest Florida Romance Writers (SWFRW), Linnea Sinclair, editor. Permission is granted to sister RWA chapters to reprint or forward with proper credit to the author and chapter.)

This past month I reread Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* (also published as *Ten Little Indians*). My purpose was to see how Christie handled a cyanide poisoning. Lightly, I'd say—the poison is slipped into the victim's drink, he chokes, turns purple, dies and that's that.

In rereading this book, often cited as the most popular mystery novel ever written with over 100 million copies sold, I discovered something far more interesting than the poisoning scene. As writers, we're told that certain rules exist and to break them is to sound a death knell to our publishing hopes. One of these "rules" is don't have too many characters at the story's beginning, or you'll confuse the reader.

In *Indians*, by page twenty, the reader has met eleven characters—count 'em, eleven--and these are not flat characters with walk-on parts. They're major players, the ten victims and the skipper of the boat who brings them to the island where they will be killed. Even this boatman, in his cameo appearance as a symbolic Charon ferrying the doomed across the River Styx, has a passage of chilling interior monologue.

Now have you, in your WIP, introduced eleven characters in the first twenty pages? Probably not. I haven't dared to either. But Christie did, in a world-famous book that has been translated into multiple languages, produced as a stage play and made into a movie. If you're tempted to say, "Well, a famous author can get away with breaking the rules," *Indians* was first published in 1939 when Christie was a relative unknown. And today, seventy some years later, it has morphed into an e-book currently selling for \$6.99 on Kindle.

Wait . . . there's more. Backstory. The plot of *Indians* is based on isolating ten people so they can be murdered in punishment for crimes they committed in their pasts. So as each character is introduced into the story, the nature and circumstances of his crime have to be revealed to the reader. Backstory, backstory, backstory.

On page two, we meet one of the victims, Vera Claythorne, as she touches on her past: She was

indicted in the accidental drowning of a child in her care. She swam out to save him but didn't reach him in time. As she thinks of this, she remembers a Hugo who loved her.

That's all. So though the possibility of something having gone wrong is dropped into the plot, we're only given a teaser. There is no information dump, nor are there any in the tales of the other nine characters. All is anticipation, from scene to scene, as past transgressions are revealed a little at a time, luring us on like the proverbial rabbit with the carrot.

Twenty pages later, for example, the second time we meet Vera she murmurs to herself: "Drowned . . . Found drowned . . . Drowned at sea . . . Drowned . . . drowned . . . drowned . . . No, she wouldn't remember . . . She would not think of it! All that was over."

Now reading that passage, aren't you intrigued? Don't you wonder what happened? Why won't she think of the drowning? Was she responsible? As in this instance, Christie handles the backstory of each victim so masterfully, clue by clue, that she keeps the reader panting for more until finally, at last, all secrets are revealed.

The point here is that you can introduce a plethora of characters up front and get away with doing so. You can write a book larded with backstory and succeed in that as well. This is your world, and in it you can do anything you like.

Success, however, lies in how you handle your material. Handle it well and you'll get away with literary murder. In fact you might not even have to explain

- a) where a character obtained the cyanide,
- b) if he hid it in his luggage or on his person,
- c) or how he disposed of the poison vial after he bumped off his victim.

But don't take my word for it. Look to Agatha. She's the one with the answers to writing a stunning mystery.

Here's another mystery. Will Designed for Death, the first book in Jean Harrington's new series be called *A Designer Murder Mystery* or *A Rooms to Die For Mystery*? Jean's money is on the latter. But for now, only a killer editor knows for sure.

Book Reviews

by Joan Powell

To Wish for Adventure

by Jayme Evans, Wings ePress Inc., June 2011

Multi-published futuristic author, Jayme Evans began her writing career in 1992. She embraces her love of escaping reality by creating the Euphratorian Empire, and the adventures of its royal family members. She has seven releases in her *To Wish For* series; along with her other releases. Ms. Evans has a fine flare for creating a complex other world society. I have truly looked forward to reading each new book (as I am sure you will), and have enjoyed the development of the Royal Ominar household.

Princess Elkava of the royal family Ominar of the Euphratorian Empire seeks adventure in the faraway Masdrona galaxy, not realizing one of its eight planets is already inhabited by a war-loving dictator, Gondran of the Rendoran Government. He is hell-bent on eradicating the entire Vaker bloodline. The planet is also home to a dissident band of descendants of the white-haired, telepathic Vaker family, who had escaped their home-world during a historical planetary war.

Not realizing he has kidnaped a well-loved Ominar princess, Kandon Vaker, the leader of the Vaker renegades hides her in his stronghold. Her brother, Crown Prince Daamic Ominar, is dispatched to travel the month's space journey to the Masdrona galaxy accompanied by a fleet of war ships. He is determined to retrieve his sister even if he must overthrow the Rendoran government.

Princess Elkava had sought the thrill of adventure, but during the span of her confinement as Kandon's prisoner, she realizes her love for her Vaker captor. Can she justify this to her father, His Majesty Emperor Ominar? And can she talk him out of following the established law, the Death Penalty...execution for kidnaping a royal member? If not, can she learn to live without her renegade sweetheart?

Dreamtime Drift

by Kev Richardson, Wings ePress Inc.

Multi-published Historical writer, Kev Richardson, found himself truly challenged in his endeavor to locate the Aboriginal voice to weave into Australia's early history. As is often the case, the indigenous people were without a written language. Therefore, the Aborigine's story in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land could only be unearthed from their vocally repeated myths, and metaphysical beliefs.

Through the eyes of the gentle natives, [1824 -1830] in *Dreamtime Drift*, Kev recreates the emotional conflict and mystical beliefs of the peaceful Turrbal and Jaggera people. It is a then account of the injustices and savagery inflicted on a gentle race of people by the conquering English invaders, who took little regard for the rights of the indigenous people. This exceptional book truly touched my heart.

What really gave me satisfaction in this historical account of Aboriginal abuse is Banyo's parting sentiments to the notoriously cruel Captain Logan. At the end of the battle, he buries his enemy face down in the dirt, rather than have his spirit roam free with the Earth Spirits of *Dreamtime*. I felt this a fitting and subtle salutation to a man with so much evil in his heart, to be forbidden the right to enter the tranquility of the afterlife.

Right of Champions

by Stephen Benson, Wings ePress Inc. 12-2011

Stephen Benson's very complex, multi-layered young adult release, *Right of Champions*, would also make an excellent mid-reader. There is plenty of conflict, and adventure where one could imagine role playing, with devious threats, fast knife fighting, dare devil antics, and royal treachery. The question is does Prince Garrick of the Copper Kingdom honor his vow never again to shed blood or to fight with his matching blades to save his lady love, Mahlee, The Pink Princess of the Silver Kingdom? In this tale one never quite knows when your worst enemy might turn out to be a good friend. This is definitely a fantastic read packed with misadventure and action.

When Prince Garrick and his tutor, Old Jitsu join the festivities in the city, for the Pink Princess's Suitor's Games, they do not expect to immediately get into difficulties, but his reputation precedes him. A knife fight begins, then Old Jitsu deflects Stor Bo's killing blow thus saving the prince's life. When his friend and tutor dies, Garrick vows never to shed blood again. He has other ways of fighting skills that he has learned. His brothers take up his matching swords for safe keeping.

When Mahlee, the Pink Princess of the Gold Kingdom is kidnaped he goes in pursuit into enemy territory to rescue his true love. This creates a whole string of exciting and dastardly events as he attempts to keep his vow while he struggles to rescue Mahlee and take her home to her own kingdom. During his travels he has a challenging time knowing just who to trust, and who is his enemy.