

**Subject:**

September 2014 Newsletter

Kill Your Darlings.

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*Founded March 1983*

*September 2014*

*Chapter 33, Region 5*

*Volume 33, Issue 9*

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## **Letter from the President**

I'm moving into another house—downsizing in a big way, er, uh, a small way. Which means I have to get rid of more than half of my stuff.

Easy to part with: my fifteen year old couch that four boys played the hot lava game on and jumped over the back ripping out the heavy-duty furniture staples. You know, that couch that the bottom has been gutted out of in multiple searches for missing iPods. And yeah, that odd stitching in the back? Pirate saber wound. Don't ask. Boys.

The couch is a goner. Buh-bye. Adios.

But then there's the bread machine I've used maybe twice in the last ten years. It's still all

shiny and new looking. From non-use. As if I even have a fresh packet of yeast in the house. But I neeeeed that bread machine. What if I get a hankering for homemade bread? Which I'll have to drive to the store for yeast so I might as well just buy the homemade loaf while I'm there... (Um, don't look too closely at that last sentence.) But seriously I'm having a hard time parting with that.

Just like when I need to pare down the prose. Tired and clunky clichés are as easy to cut out of a manuscript as getting rid of a hot lava gamed-to-death couch. No problemo. Even though they are so comfortable to slide into.

But those beautifully crafted stellar sentences that have no usefulness in a scene...except they are awesome and I amaze myself with my sheer brilliance and I'm certain I might need them later, but most likely not because then my heroine will have to drive to the store and purchase yeast packets and then wait three hours for a little loaf of bread that maybe has five slices she can get out of it...but, but, they are so shiny and new looking, how can I part with those sentences?

Kill my darlings? Really?

Of course the beauty is is that I don't have to if I don't want to. Sometimes I keep my darlings. Yep, you heard me and I'm officially giving you permission to keep your stellar, non-useful sentences if you want to.

Then again, sometimes I get over myself and realize that if it has no use for the scene, toss it out.

So on that note, would anyone like a bread machine?

Clover Autrey  
NTRWA President



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## ***Upcoming September 20th Meeting:***

### ***Tex Thompson ~ Dialect to Die For***

When it comes to dialect, we often hear that less is more. So how do you render a good Scottish brogue or Southern drawl – and, for that matter, how can you give a non-English-speaking character a voice that’s distinct but still readable?

Tex Thompson will examine how to represent accents and speakers of other languages in a way that captures their voices without reducing them to verbal tics, gimmicks, or stereotypes.

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# My Most Hated Word

By Jen FitzGerald

I'm a writer.

I love words.

I love when seemingly benign words are strung together to create an image or thought so profound or moving or beautiful that I find tears misting my eyes.

I love the right words.

Anyone who's been the recipient of a critique, proof read, or copy edit from me will tell you I have probably asked them if *this word* or *that word* might better convey what they're trying to say, might better invoke the emotion they're trying to impart.

When I write, Thesaurus.com is always open. Always. I want my words to say exactly what I mean for them to say. Sometimes, I learn that a word I thought meant one thing, really means something else.

But there's one word I despise.

Yes, really.

Are you wondering what that most hated word is?

Well, I'll tell you...

It's literally.

Yes, I really truly honestly hate that word.

Why, why, why do people feel the need to sprinkle that word in their prose, or more

commonly, in their speech?

Let's borrow a sentence from my second paragraph.

*I love when seemingly benign words are strung together to create an image or thought so profound or moving or beautiful that I find tears misting my eyes.*

Tell me—did you believe me when I said that the right combination of words could make me cry?

Would the insertion of LITERALLY between I and FIND have made you believe me more?

I doubt it.

Let's take a look at another sentence.

*Yes, I really truly honestly hate that word.*

Did you believe me when you read that sentence?

If you hadn't believed me to begin with, would me adding LITERALLY, as opposed to the other three adjectives, have convinced you?

Probably not.

If you tell me something that is fundamentally true and I have no reason to doubt it, why write or say LITERALLY?

*I literally scarfed down my sandwich.*

Scarf tells me plenty—that the "I" was really hungry and perhaps hadn't eaten in a while. Why would I doubt the veracity of the claim without the modifier?

I'd also like to know what other way you might have scarfed it??

Metaphorically?

Or virtually?

Of course not.

In addition to being annoying, LITERALLY is an adverb. Adverbs do have their uses and a place in your prose, but use them sparingly. I mean SOFTLY tells us something. So does MECHANICALLY, LOVINGLY, or SLEEPILY.

But LITERALLY adds literally nothing to your prose. Now does NOTHING really need to be modified at all?? Nothing is nothing, right?

When I say I hate the word LITERALLY, I mean it.

Literally.

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*The following article first appeared in the September 2014 issue of In Print!, the monthly newsletter of Houston Bay Area RWA. Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.*

## The Editor's Corner - Does "One Hundred Words" Really Work?

By Leslie Marshman, InPrint! Editor

I recently joined a "one hundred words a day for one hundred days" online group, hosted by my friend, author Jessica Trapp. Some days, one hundred words are a snap to pound out and I go way beyond that target. Some days I keep hitting the word count button, asking "Am I there yet?" But overall, it's working for me on so many levels.

It's a small enough goal that it's easy to be successful. One hundred words is only six or seven lines. Maybe a paragraph. And while it may not be much, it's forward progress. Obviously, at that rate it would take years to finish a 100,000-word book. But how long would it take to finish that same book if I wrote no words per day? And it isn't a limit, it's a minimum. I normally write much more than that minimum every day. And there's the key: I'm writing every day. I'm working my way through my WIP. Some days I've even taken a break from the WIP and used my hundred-word time to write complete short stories that I've submitted and sold.

I'll admit, the first few days it was hard to gather momentum. So instead of worrying about writing the perfect words at the perfect spot, I just wrote anything that dealt remotely with the story. A snippet of conversation. A little backstory. Emotions. Descriptions. And a wondrous thing happened. Like a tight muscle after a few days of stretching, my mind began to unlock itself. It bent and flexed with ideas. My internal editor wasn't minding the playground and I could just swing from the monkey bars. I had fun.

And now my head is back in the story, and stays there. Writing sporadically made it hard for me to get back in the groove whenever I did write. By the time I figured out where I had left off and think about where I should start, I'd be out of time for the day. And when I let the WIP sit untouched for too long, the voices in my head didn't talk to each other, let alone me. Writing each day keeps the story afloat in my mind. I find myself thinking about the characters and the plot and even having to jot down ideas before they hit that slick spot in my brain and slide on through.

They say it takes six to eight weeks to develop a habit. I can develop bad habits much faster than that, but good habits take work. I'm approaching six weeks in the hundred word group, and writing every day is definitely becoming a habit for me. Even on busy days from hell when the last thing I want to do is write, I can't go to bed without squeezing out my words. Well, there was the one time I forgot and went to bed, only to drag myself back out from under the covers, turn on the computer and write the darn words. But I wrote them and slept peacefully knowing the next day wouldn't be another Day 1.

You don't have to join a group to write one hundred words per day, but there are benefits. Being accountable. More importantly, support. From a virtual pat on the back for hitting a milestone to an enthusiastic "you can do it" during a rough patch, the other members are there encouraging you, cheering for you, celebrating with you.

Give it a try. You've got nothing to lose, and maybe a book's worth of words to gain.

*Leslie Marshman writes contemporary romance and suspense, and her publishing credits include magazine-length short stories. Leslie called Denver home until she married a Texan without reading the fine print. She now resides halfway between Houston and Galveston with her husband, dog and three-legged box turtle. When she's not writing or working at her day job in insurance, you'll find her camping at a lake with a fishing pole in one hand and a book in the other. [Lesliemarshman.com](http://Lesliemarshman.com) @lesliemarshman*

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*The following article first appeared in the September 2014 issue of Magic Moments, the monthly newsletter of Southern Magic (Birmingham AL USA). Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.*

## **SEEK AND DESTROY SELF-EDITING**

By Callie James

### **PART I**

As a teen, I never envisioned I would become a writer. There wasn't enough correction tape in the typewriting world to cover my neurotic writing tendencies. Then computers and Word Perfect came along (no comments about my age from the peanut gallery, please), and I no longer had an excuse. When stories and characters wouldn't quit nagging me, I borrowed a computer from work and started writing. I didn't have a plan or plot in mind. I just started writing.

To this day, I'm still a panster. I start a novel with only a few story points in mind and I wing my way through the rest. But with an exacting nature like mine, being a panster is an ongoing, internal battle. From chapter to chapter, I'm compelled to review and edit previous pages before writing anything new. The perks to this time-sucking habit are few but important. I'm able to get back into my characters' heads more quickly. I'm able to flesh out more details while the motivations are clear and the scenes are still fresh. I repeat this process until the book is complete. By the time I'm finished, my story has seen so many revisions I could probably submit the manuscript as "polished."

But I don't.

I go a step further—an editing process I refer to as **Seek and Destroy Self-Editing**. This process is so detailed and time consuming that I've broken it into three parts.

- Part I is a broad sweep of the book.
- Part II is a grueling find/replace/delete process that often takes me more time to complete than writing the book.
- Part III is the persnickety part of editing. This usually involves a critique partner, a copy editor, and lots of booze.

*Before I get started, I want to give a shout out and big thank you to all bloggers who share writing advice on their blogs/websites. My self-editing process is an accumulation of online self-editing tips I've picked up from innumerable sites over **many** years, none of which I noted at the time so I can't list them here to thank them. But here's me paying it forward.*

## **PART I**

Once I finish a book, I make a table and list the chapter sizes, noting the page and word count in each chapter. After getting a sense of the average chapter size, I highlight the chapters that are too small or too large. Making a list of these inconsistencies allows me to focus on specific sections for adding/culling. Adding is rarely the problem, so I prepare myself to split chapters and/or delete like crazy.

I've listed the expected chapter sizes below for reference:  
1500-3500 words for YA

2000-4500 words for Adult

NOTE: Many YA books have only a handful of pages per chapter. I've read similar adult books (James Patterson anyone?). Personally, I don't mind smaller or longer chapters, but I do prefer some consistency in length. Otherwise, I find it a little jarring.

Once I've noted the pages and word count of each chapter, I go through the entire novel again and confirm that each chapter:

1. Begins by describing some new problem.
2. Raises the stakes for the main character and/or characters.
3. Concludes at some critical decision or turning point.

These three points are crucial in keeping the pacing fast and the tension high. If you've written an amazing book, you've probably incorporated these three points into every **scene**, too. If I don't have these elements in a scene, I make note of it. Chances are I don't need the scene. If I need to cull thousands of words from the manuscript, I often remove the scene. If I need to flesh out a storyline or character and I'm not worried about increasing the word count, I rewrite the scene until it meets these three criteria.

When writing my latest book, I was nowhere near finishing the story when I hit 90k on word count. Anyone who writes contemporary YA knows that's the high side of a young adult book. But since I have a bad habit of rushing the story ending to fit word count, I decided to keep writing until the story was finished. No short cuts. I finished at 107,000+ words. Um...yikes.

Time to prepare for serious edits.

After deleting scenes that didn't meet the above criteria and expanding others, I managed to cut 15k from the manuscript. I do realize that deleting that many words would make some writers cry, hyperventilate or break out in hives. These books are our babies and I feel no differently about mine. But cutting is a necessary evil in this biz, and to get through this massive culling, I try to remember that every word was necessary, at least for a while, to help me flesh out the story and characters.

Part I of the process usually takes me 2-4 weeks to get through. Part II takes me much

longer. If you're interested in round II of this editing process, please visit my website blog at <http://calliejamesbooks.com/musings.html>.

You may need aspirin.

*Callie James*

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## **A Note from the Newsletter Editor:**

Please note photos included in the newsletter are provided by the members. Any photos you'd like to include can be sent to [newsletter@ntrwa.org](mailto:newsletter@ntrwa.org). It is at the discretion of the newsletter editor as to which photos will be included in the newsletter. Thank you.

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## **August 2014 Meeting Minutes:**

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, August 15, 2014 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President-Elect and Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:47 a.m. The minutes for the July 12, 2014 meeting were approved.

### **OFFICER REPORTS:**

**President: Clover Autrey was not present: Angi Morgan reported.**

- Dakota Byrd has agreed to act as PRO Liaison Committee Chair. Jeanne Guzman is unable to continue in that

role. The Board nominated and approved the appointment at the last Board meeting.

- Requesting volunteers for our contests, The Carolyn and Great Expectations.
  - Lisa Fenley will chair the Great Expectations Contest

**President-Elect: Angi Morgan reported:**

- Please consider running for a board position for next year.

**Secretary: Lisa Fenley reported:**

- No Report.

**Treasurer: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- The Treasurer's report was presented and filed for audit.

**Program Director: Lara Lacombe was not present:**

- Today's program is a report from attendees from the RWA National Conference in San Antonio.

**Membership Director: Gina Nelson reported.**

- 64 Members to date. Amanda McMurrey is our newest member.
- Guests at meeting: None.

**Communications Director: Kim Miller reported:**

- Send information / articles for inclusion in the newsletter to [newsletter@NTRWA.org](mailto:newsletter@NTRWA.org) by August 28.

**Website Director:**

**COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:**

**PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek reported:**

- Pencils presented to members present:
  - Suzan Butler: *Wounded Courage, Dying Commitment, Once Upon a Seal*
  - Audra Lewandowski: *Life to the Max*
  - Mary Beth Lee: *Angel Eyes*
  - Sydney Bristol: *Proposition*
  - Chris Keniston: *Mai Tai Marriage, Shell Game*
  - Chrissy Szarek: *The Parchment Scroll*

**PRO Liaison: Jeanne Guzman was not present.**

- No report.

**Great Expectations: Angi Morgan reported:**

- No report

**Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- No report

**Hospitality: Michelle Welsh reported:**

- No report.

**Audio Librarian: Debra Owens was not present:**

**Writing Incentives: Christine Crocker was not present. Chrissy Szarek reported:**

- Distributed writing incentives.

**Texas Two-Step: Lara Lacombe was not present:**

- No report.

**Bylaws: Angi Morgan reported:**

- No Report.

**Spotlights: Regina Richards reported:**

- Eve Cole is our spotlight for August.

**Unfinished Business:**

- No unfinished business to report.

**New Business:**

- No new business to report.
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