

H.E.A.R.T.

Happily. Ever. After. Readers. Together.

Bumper input this month from contributors - thanks so much for heeding our plea!! Enjoy a reader review, an expose on the rewards of redemptive storytelling, and a HUGE continuance of the history of romance.

AUGUST IS ROMANCE MONTH!!!! And it's bigger than Ben Hur! Check out the last page - there's heaps happening, so forget doing ANYTHING else next month, you won't have time...

A reminder there is no book group meeting in August - there won't be any time for *reading* romance - *you'll be living it!*

Kate's History of the Romance Novel Part 4

So you'll remember from last time that we left off just as Harlequin had acquired Mills&Boon and began publishing under both labels. Up until this time, romance fiction was dominated by the British. The writers, characters, and settings were, for the most part, British, as were the conventions, beliefs, and social mores. The market was dominated by Harlequin novels, which were formulaic love stories drawing on a fairly narrow range of conventions.

The 70s, however, would see a shift. American authors struggled to join the Harlequin hoardes, but were often rejected. In the late 1970s, when super-writers Jayne Ann Krentz and Nora Roberts began writing, Harlequin was not interested in recruiting writers from outside the Commonwealth, or in expanding their settings to include North American locales. However, this narrow-mindedness caused problems. Krentz says: "Harlequin was both right and wrong to reject most of the American authors. They were right in that the vast majority of us did not craft romance with the same 'feel' as that of the very successful British authors. Our voices were very different. The publisher obviously saw no reason to fix something that was not broken.

The Americans also provided other changes to the romance genre. Because the Americans were not bound to the conventions set out by both the British model and Harlequin Mills&Boon publishing, they were free to

experiment with the genre. This experimentation led to romance hybrids: time-travel love stories, science fiction/fantasy romances, romantic suspense, western romances. It should be noted, however, that romance novelists expanded into these areas without abandoning the genre's roots. The basic expectations of the readers were still being fulfilled.

But in the long run, Harlequin was wrong to reject us because ultimately the American writers' voices proved to be extraordinarily successful in the North American market and around the world."

The American writers started a romantic revolution. They created the adventurous, sexy novels coined as Bodice Rippers which came to prominence in the late 70s. In these novels, the heroine became more adventurous, both physically and sexually. She engaged in pre-marital sex without fear of censure. Women no longer hid their inner strength, but gloried in it. However, these new, stronger heroines demanded even stronger and more dangerous heroes. Coupled with the sexual descriptiveness that defined the Bodice Rippers, these characters gave rise to the rape fantasies, those written descriptions where sex and violence are inextricably linked that feminists and critics seize upon.

By the end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s, the romance market became almost completely overshadowed by the writings of

American novelists, and a number of publishers leapt at the chance to challenge Harlequin's dominance—most notably Silhouette, a publishing house that recruited almost exclusively from the United States under the label 'Loveswept'. Harlequin responded in kind, launching 'American Romances'. However, in 1984, Harlequin found that buying Silhouette was more effective than competing. This brief period of competition, however, showed Harlequin it could no longer rest on its reputation. First, it responded to the Bodice Rippers sexual appeal: Harlequin Mills & Boon novels began to include more sex more explicitly. However, they still fell far short of the Bodice Rippers. These changes appeased the American readers, but afraid of alienating their more conservative readers, Harlequin decided to split their labels, giving rise to different labels under the general heading of Harlequin. These labels included sweet, historical, erotic, romantic, and suspense. Different labels also provided room for more changes: Harlequin introduced a new generation of authors and opened their novels up to new settings, both contemporary and historical. They also surveyed romance readers to determine what they liked in romance novels. Surprisingly, in 1982, they found that most readers wanted a well-developed hero point of view. By 1985, a mixed hero-heroine point of view was at the top of the list of the 5 most wanted story attributes.

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What Are We Reading?

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Friday 25th July 2008 'WALLBANGERS!' Bring the romance novel you love to hate!
All attendees will be asked to vent (ooh, sorry, EXPLAIN) their aversion to their least favourite read!

August is Romance Month at Dymocks Melbourne! See the last page of the newsletter for some of the fabulous happenings this month! Who will have time to READ? You'll be LIVING it instead!!

History of the Romance Novel Part 4 - continued.

The changes in the authors also gave way to changes in the novels. Heroines became stronger and more outspoken, feisty. They had careers, marriage, and families. Scared by the implications of the rape fantasies prevalent through the 1970s, editors and publishers began to push for a new hero. He became less silent, more emotional, and more overtly tender and caring. Perceived 'masculine' strengths like autonomy and reserve, and lack of emotion are shown more and more to be a product of the hero's lack of mastery of the social world, rather than his power over it. Plots became more complex. Families and outside relationships became more complicated. The characters lost ties to wealth, privilege, and power. The novels became everyday stories about everyday people. Almost all featured pre-marital sex and explicit details of the hero and heroine's sexual relationship. Settings lost the exoticism, but became more varied. Most importantly, however, is the way the definition of the romance novel began to change. Authors took the experimentation in the 70s and built on it, stretching and flexing the boundaries of what a romance could be.

Two more important developments happened in the 80s. First, romance novelists

formed RWA, the Romance Writers' Association, which legitimised the work done by romance authors, and created a support network that allowed authors a sense of security and position of power when dealing with publishing houses. Further, RWA created its own annual awards, the RITAs, and its own industry newspaper, the Romance Writers Report.

The second important development was the interest feminist criticism began to take in the romance genre. The first half of the decade saw the research and publication of Janice Radway's seminal text *Reading the Romance* and Kay Mussell's important *Fantasy and Reconciliation*. Both authors saw romance novels as a dangerous pastime for women, one that led to a complacency and acceptance of the problems in society, limiting the lives of the women who read them. However, these readings caused hostile reactions from romance readers and writers, who saw romance as texts of female empowerment. It must be noted that these scholars were working on novels written and published in the 1970s, as well as those published under the more conservative Harlequin labels. However, the scorn for romance novels, and their readers, became more and more apparent through the decade.

Next up: The Naughty Nineties!

Kate Cuthbert



Hellen's OOP Pick

Dangerous to Love.

Rexanne Becnel

Sorry! I just can't seem to help myself - there are so many out of print books I love! This month's choice is Rexanne Becnel's *Dangerous To Love*.

Known as the Gypsy Earl, Ivan Thornton was renounced by his family as a child because of his Gypsy mother. Now an entitled nobleman, Ivan wants to punish the family who did so much to hurt him as a young man.

But his grandmother may be more clever than he is: she wants an heir and she knows that her rake grandson won't fall in love with just anyone.

And he certainly won't marry--just to spite her. Ivan's mastermind grandmother finds Lucy Drysdale for her grandson. Lucy is a bluestocking, an intelligent and passionate woman who proves to be just the match for the Earl who will not bend for love.

Another emotionally scarred hero who I just want to hug.

3 and a half cookies!

Hellen Maniatis.



Three Cheers for Redemption...

I'm a sucker for redemption stories. It was one of the things I loved about the TV series "Angel" - how everyone who went to that series from "Buffy" was in need of redemption of some kind. Some of them found it, but even the ones who didn't learned that redemption isn't about a single act, but about making a new decision about how to live your life.

The theme of redemption is at the heart of what I love about Lois McMaster Bujold's books too - the way her characters are flawed and screw up so spectacularly and then have to find the courage and strength to go out there, knowing they may never be able to set it right, yet knowing that they have to at least start to try.

It's also one of the themes I treasure most in Lord of the Rings. Gandalf's gentle chiding of Frodo about the latter's wish that Bilbo had killed the wretched Gollum struck me as fundamental to the possibility of redemption. Even Boromir can make the last moments of his life a choice to reclaim responsibility for his actions and to *do better*.

For me, one of the joys of books has always been the window into other lives. I love to get into the heads of strangers, who may or may not be like me, and to experience life through their eyes. I am captivated by how

they confront their dilemmas and demons, wondering what choice they will make, and why. I might consider what I would do in their position, or at least consider the advice I would give them (if only they could hear this enthusiastic reader shouting at the page "Oh no! Not that!")

Then the decision is made, for good or bad (and sometimes I downright despair of their choices) and wait with bated breath to see which of their bad (or good!) choices will come back to bite them. I weep for them, or rejoice with them, and sometimes wish very much to smack them on the back of the head for being such utter dopes.

In the end, redemption isn't just about righting past wrongs - it's about characters confronting those problems and instead of letting events sweep them along, they take a deep breath and make a *choice*. They become active in their own lives, taking responsibility for themselves and what they do, and accepting the consequences.

This is why reading is important, as well as fun and enriching. It offers us templates on how to be real people in the every day world we inhabit, by witnessing how other people deal with their problems and the consequences of their actions. It gives us a chance to be in someone else's skin for a

little while, and see why they make choices that can seem unfathomable, and maybe that can help us see another flesh-and-blood person's perspective in the complicated Real World.

Our favourite fictions can help us learn how to be better real life people, and that's what I love about books.

Narrelle Harris

Narrelle Harris is the author of the *Opposite of Life*, and is a guest panellist at our paranormal fiction forum on Wednesday August 13th.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jayne Anne Krentz now writes under three different pen names - the other two are Amanda Quick, and her birth name Jayne Castle.

"I am often asked why I use a variety of pen names," she says.

"The answer is that this way readers always know which of my three worlds they will be entering when they pick up one of my books."

All three of her 'worlds' are fabulous.

Try *Wildest Hearts* if you love contemporary, *Deception* if you love historical and her *World of St. Helen's* series if you like paranormal futuristic!

Spotlight on Series

Dante Valentine Series

Lilith Saintcrow

A necromancer, an assassin and the Devil himself - interested yet? You should be!

A hot-tempered bounty hunter, hell-bent (excuse the pun!) on being a loner, is summoned by the Devil to hunt and catch a rogue demon.

She can't refuse or she'll die. If she takes the job, she'll probably die.

Non stop action with a dark sense of humour - and that's just the first book! I can't wait to get through them all!

Hellen.



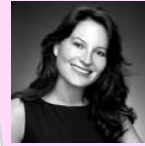
Kate's Picks

If you're anything like me, you like to laugh. If, however, you're anything like me, you get annoyed quickly with contrived situations, stupid decisions and silly characters designed solely to elicit laughs, as opposed to genuine humour. That's okay. We're not picky. We're selective. The difference is slight, but it's there.

So who do I go to for laugh out loud funny? There's a couple of different authors that tend to tickle my fancy but this month, I thought I'd put a spotlight on **Meg Cabot**. I find her YA novels irresistible, and I really enjoyed her office set romances of a couple of years back, but I loved her Heather Wells mysteries. Starting with *Size 12 is Not Fat*, followed up with *Size 14 isn't Fat Either*, and finishing with *Big Boned*, this trilogy follows ex-pop star Heather Wells as she tries to establish a new life as a resident hall director. Easy-to-read, amusing, gentle and very witty, like chewing bubblegum, these books are just too darned fun.

Kate Cuthbert.

(Note: Big Boned is released in Australia under the title of *Size Doesn't Matter*)



Hellen's IP Pick!

Pleasure Seekers

Melanie George

(Yes - it's in print!)

For those of you who like a very sexy historical, I would recommend trying Melanie George's *Pleasure Seekers*. Not at all a traditional romance with her storylines (Except for the corny names of her characters. I mean... 'Bliss'? Uhg!), she tells a bold, sensual story with likeable characters.

3 and a half cookies!

Hellen Maniatis.



DID YOU KNOW?

Teresa Medeiros, writer of many wonderful historical novels, published her first novel

when she was just 21!

She now lives in Kentucky with her husband and her cats Willow and Buffy the Mouse Slayer.

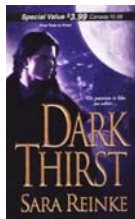
(I just fell a little more in love!!)

READER REVIEW!

Dark Thirst

Sara Reinke

Dark Thirst begins with a cruel introduction to a secret vampire culture, presenting to the outside world as a lucrative thoroughbred horse farming community, with a well-respected bourbon brewery brand to boot. These enterprises are run by trusted overseers, who maintain an illegal workforce no one will miss, should they disappear. They serve a multigenerational family led by a mysterious and harsh Grandfather with a mormon like career path for their females, and a slightly freer existence allowed to their males. When one of their own is injured and disabled a more sinister side to the Bretherin is seen.



Here we meet our hero Brandon Noble, whose promise is tainted by the horrible disfigurement he suffered when a band of human robbers slipped into the main house one night. He barely survived the encounter and has to deal with learning to cope with his inability to speak and hear in an unsupportive environment. He is tormented by his older brother Caine and is soon separated from his twin Tessa when she partakes in their ceremony of killing and drinking blood - something he steadfastly refuses to do. The experience changes her and she is lost to him when

she is married off to an older male from another clan.

His only solace is his brother Daniel and a human teacher called Jackson, who teaches him how to communicate in sign language; a gift that opens him up to a whole new level of being. He meets and is smitten by Jackson's sister Lina, but his lessons are eventually stopped leaving Brandon on his own. He is prevented from using the telepathy his kind use at the Grandfathers mysterious whim, and years pass. He leaves when things become unbearable, a choice with lethal consequences, but staying has become equally precarious. He goes to the only soul who has ever treated him well- to Jackson.

His former teacher is absent however and Angelina is looking after his apartment while he's gone. Lina's first encounter with Brandon is memorable and in the aftermath she agrees to look out for him for her brother's peace of mind. She is left to navigate watching over the silent gorgeous man Brandon has become, her police duties, and checking in with her former partner who has been discharged from the force after a shooting renders him unfit for duty. Lina is also facing bridesmaid duty at a friends wedding and is dreading the unavoidable contact with her former boyfriend who dumped her for a busty white woman. Ms Reinke navigates the politics

of interracial couples and the issues it stirs up very well. Needless to say Brandon fights his attraction to Lina, and his bloodlust while trying to survive in a world he doesn't know. He attends the wedding as Lina's date while he tries to second guess what the Bretherin will do. Their relationship grows and deepens, their communication effortless as Lina has grown up with Jackson's own deafness, and accepts him as he is.

She's smart with a good upbringing and she stands strong, an anchor for Brandon who shows real growth, now he's away from his family. He seems so young in this story and in a lot of ways he is, but it was refreshing to find a male hero who wasn't an overbearing alpha. I felt I knew him better than Lina by the end of the book, although I did appreciate how capable and tough she was, barring one TSTL moment near the end. I could see *how* she might have taken the risk she took, but with what she had learned, other choices were available. That said, I really enjoyed this book and felt swept into another world by this new author. The story is set up to continue so I assume this will be a series. Our cute but battered couple are together and I give this 4/5 with the chillies scale of hotness at 4/5 too. I eagerly await the sequel.

(TSTL= Too Stupid To Live)

Sandra R.



AUGUST IS ROMANCE MONTH!!!

Don't forget to put these dates in your diary!

ARR Website Launch

Thursday 7 Aug

Designed to be the go-to resource for the romance genre in Australia, **The Australian Romance Reader** website (online address www.romancereaders.com.au) has been created by a romance reader, for romance readers, with sections offering all the information that any reader could want!

- News will feature a rundown of the latest on-dit in the genre, both in Australia and abroad.
- Views will feature a collection of columns and editorials on Romance, updated fortnightly.
- Readers will be your touchstone for everything romance - author databases, websites and book releases, a calendar of romance-related events in your area and Australia-wide, booksellers, readers groups (so you can share your obsession), web resources, chat, gossip, and much more!



In early August, **The Australian Romance Reader** will go live for all romance aficionados, and we'd love to see YOU at the launch on **Thursday August 7th, at 6pm.**

Come along and share a glass of bubbles with website creator **Kate Cuthbert**, special guest **Anne Gracie** (RITA nominated romance author) and other romance authors and readers.

Kate Cuthbert is a writer and book editor, and writes a regular romance column for The Courier-Mail Newspaper. She is also a co-founder of BRRAddicts (Brisbane Romance Reading Addicts), an online romance readers group, and is, of course, the liaison for our very HEART group.

For bookings and enquiries, contact levents@dymocks.com.au or phone 9660 8500.

To stay informed about any of these events:

email levents@dymocks.com.au, or phone (03) 9660 8500.

Breaking Dawn Release Party

Sunday 3 Aug & Monday 4

Latest news is that the all day event on Sunday 3 August to celebrate the release of *Breaking Dawn* has solidly booked! Attendees will enjoy a day of activities, games, competitions, and everything 'Twilight', including costumes, displays and 'Twilight' snacks! There are still some spaces on **Monday 4 August at 9am** for the 'Breaking Dawn' Breakfast as we await the arrival of the book in store. Both days of the event will be held in the cafe of Dymocks Melbourne 234 Collins St, and you can also register for **BD EMAIL ALERTS** to keep you informed about developments for the event! **For more details email levents@dymocks.com.au, or phone (03) 9660 8500.**

Bronwyn Parry Book Launch

Thursday 21st Aug

In 2007 Australian author **Bronwyn Parry** was awarded the Golden Heart Award by the Romance Writers of America for a manuscript entitled 'Falling into Darkness', which had also won the Romance Writers of Australia's Single and Loving It! Contest in 2005.

Now Bronwyn debuts her first novel *As Darkness Falls*, published by the Headline division of **Hachette Livre Australia**.

As Darkness Falls will be launched by international best selling author **Valerie Parv** in the cafe of Dymocks Melbourne 234 Collins Street, on **Thursday the 21st August 2008, 5.30-7.30pm.** HEART group members have a special invitation to attend Bronwyn's launch - **bookings are essential, and need to be forwarded to Louisa Dear at Hachette Livre Australia Phone (02) 8248 0839, or book through Dymocks at levents@dymocks.com.au or by phone 9660 8500.**



Paranormal Fiction and Romance Forum - Wed 13th August

The paranormal fiction phenomenon has quietly merged with many writing styles and reading preferences, and is now solidly entrenched particularly as sub-genre within romance fiction. Love it or hate it, it is undeniably one of the fastest increasing areas of publishing worldwide. Growth within the Australian market alone has large publishers clamouring for Australian rights, and Australian readers calling for novels set in their own environment.

This forum, discussing both paranormal fiction and paranormal romance gives participants the chance to meet authors doing just that, and to have the benefit of academic input on the subject.

Dymocks Melbourne is excited and pleased to welcome authors Keri Arthur and Narrelle Harris, and Dr Rebecca Do Rozario to engage with mediator Kate Cuthbert, and our audience of readers in a discussion about paranormal fiction - it's growth, it's future, and our outstanding passion for the genre. Please come along and join in what promises to be an evening of spirited discussion and debate at 6.30pm on Wednesday 13th August!



Keri Arthur is a local author with an international following of her sensational literary creation - *Riley Jenson* - a rare vampire/werewolf hybrid working for Melbourne's Directorate of Other Races: an organization created to police the supernatural races and protect humans from their depredations.



Narrelle Harris is a Melbourne author whose latest book 'The Opposite of Life' explores the seedy and isolated vampiric underworld of Melbourne from the perspective of *Lissa Wilson*, who has already seen more than enough death.



Dr Rebecca Do Rozario has a Doctorate of Philosophy, is a member of the Sidhe Literary Collective and has numerous academic publications to her name.



Kate Cuthbert is a writer and book editor, and writes a regular romance column for The Courier-Mail Newspaper. She is also a co-founder of BRRAddicts (Brisbane Romance Reading Addicts), an online romance readers group.

For bookings and enquiries, contact levents@dymocks.com.au or phone 9660 8500.

Jo Beverley & Barbara Samuel

Tuesday 26th Aug

We're absolutely delighted that international best selling romance authors **Jo Beverley** and **Barbara Samuel** will join us on the 26th August in a panel discussion with romance columnist **Kate Cuthbert**.



Winner of five RITA awards, member of the Romance Writers of America Hall of Fame, and author of over thirty novels, **Jo Beverley** has been hearkened as '...one of the great names of the genre'. Jo is an accomplished writer of historical romance, and is a New York Times bestselling author. Her most recent title 'A Lady's Secret' was reviewed as mixing '...witty repartee, danger and simmering sensuality with her strong and engaging characters, ... in this delightful, delicious gem of a book.' Romantic Times.



Barbara Samuel is also a multiple RITA award-winning author with more than thirty books to her credit, writing both women's fiction and historical and contemporary romances. Beginning with novels produced under the name Ruth Wind, Barbara has involved many contemporary social issues within her writing, and as Barbara Samuel (her real name) she has written a number of historical romances and fantasy novellas. Barbara's recent book 'Madame Mirabou's School of Love' was reviewed as 'Beautifully written... emotional and touching. This is a book to devour, one of Samuel's best to date.' Romantic Times.

This 'in conversation' style event will prove most entertaining and informative to readers of Jo and Barbara's many novels! Don't miss this opportunity to rub shoulders with two your favourite authors, and, of course, enjoy a glass of bubbles! **For bookings and enquiries, contact levents@dymocks.com.au or phone 9660 8500.**

A LITTLE EXTRA: VAMPIRE FICTION SYMPOSIUM

In August, Dr Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario of the Sidhe Literary Collective will join authors Keri Arthur and Narrelle Harris with columnist Kate Cuthbert at our Paranormal Fiction and Romance Forum.

Then, in September, the Sidhe Literary Collective hosts their own symposium on Vampire romance including many topics of interest to both the reader and writer of paranormal and vampire fiction and romance.



Vampires, Vamps and Va Va Voom: A Critical Engagement with Paranormal Romance



A two-day symposium organised by the Sidhe Literary Collective, Monash University, 19 & 20 September 2008.

Despite the rise of academic interest in vampires in popular culture, vampire romance has been largely ignored. From *Dracula* (1897) to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), romance themes have been inextricably linked to vampire narratives and the image of the vampire more broadly. Due to the commercial success of the emerging sub-genre ‘Paranormal Romance’, there has been increasing utilisation of vampire romance and related themes in other genres (such as contemporary fiction, young adult fiction and horror). Contemporary feminist scholars have not reflected upon this recent phenomenon despite the pioneering studies of Tania Modleski (1982), Janice Radway (1987) and Linda Christian-Smith (1990). The two-day symposium is an opportunity for scholars to discuss and critically examine the impact of the Undead upon the romance genre and the burgeoning industry created in its wake.

Topics of interest include:

- Vampires in Gothic and Romantic literature
- Vampire Romance and the reader
- Vampire ‘chick lit’
- Vampires in film and television
- Representations of the Slayer
- Vampires, sex and gender
- Vampires and violence
- Vampires, fashion and aesthetics
- Vampires and consumption (food, fashion and capitalism)



This event is funded by the School of English, Communications and Performance Studies, Monash University



For more information or to register for the symposium, the following link will take you to the symposium site:

<http://arts.monash.edu.au/english/news-and-events/2008/vampires.php>