

## YA – Young Adult Stories for a New Generation - Part III

By Dianna Love Snell

If you haven't read Part I & II of this series, please go to the archived Galleys and read the May and June 2007 issues. Thanks to the following new YA authors and agents you'll know more about this quickly evolving market:

### AUTHORS:

**Kelly Parra**– GRAFFITI GIRL (MTV/Pocket Books) May 2007

**Jennifer Echols**– THE BOYS NEXT DOOR (Simon Pulse) June 2007

**Caridad Ferrer** - IT'S NOT ABOUT THE ACCENT (MTV Books/Pocket) August 2007

Berta Platas and Michelle Roper writing as **Gillian Summers**– THE TREE SHEPHERD'S DAUGHTER (Flux) September, 2007

**Tina Ferraro** - TOP TEN USES FOR AN UNWORN PROM DRESS, Delacorte Press, March, 2007.

### AGENTS:

**Caren Johnson**, Caren Johnson Literary Agency - [www.cjla.squarespace.com](http://www.cjla.squarespace.com)

**Kristin Nelson**, Nelson Literary Agency- [www.nelsonagency.com](http://www.nelsonagency.com)

### Author interviews:

What is your approach to marketing a YA novel (what are you doing)?

**Kelly** - I believe marketing a YA novel is just like marketing fiction for adults--find your audience and let them know about your novel. I have a website – [www.KellyParra.com](http://www.KellyParra.com) – and a myspace page where I've connected with writers, readers, and reviewers. I also co-host a YA blog with YA author, Tina Ferraro (Top Ten Uses for an Unworn Prom Dress), called YA Fresh ([yafresh.blogspot.com](http://yafresh.blogspot.com)). At YA Fresh, we chat about YA books, authors, and lots of fresh stuff. :)

**Jennifer** - I have a 5-year-old, so my travel time is limited. I maintain a strong web presence with a web site ([www.jennifer-echols.com](http://www.jennifer-echols.com)) and a MySpace page. I also run the Simon Pulse Romantic Comedies blog ([www.simonpulseromanticcomedies.blogspot.com](http://www.simonpulseromanticcomedies.blogspot.com)), a joint blog for authors in the series.

**Caridad** - MTV was great about getting the line authors exposure with television commercials and placements in a few magazine giveaways. Personally, for me, the obvious was establishing an Internet presence – [www.CaridadFerrer.com](http://www.CaridadFerrer.com). I have a MySpace page, although it's not quite as popular with teens as it was say a year ago (and that's one thing that makes marketing to teens a pain—they are the epitome of Short Attention Span Theatre, always on to the next new thing). But the MySpace page is also valuable as a networking tool between YA authors

and reaching fans of books similar to your own—so it's a great cross-promotional tool that way. And thing is, with so many teens being so Internet savvy, if they want to find your presence on the web, they will. Of course, I have a web site and a blog and an amazon plog and I've created iMixes for iTunes. However, for ACCENT I want to broaden my horizons, get a little more exposure in print magazines and now that I'll have two books out, I'd like get out more and actually meet more readers. To that end, I've hired an outside publicist to help me with ACCENT; my publicist at MTV is wonderful, but she's one person with many authors' needs to see to. I want someone who will be focused on what's best for me, as an individual author, and getting me exposure in key markets.

**Berta and Michelle** - Website, MySpace page, blogging, book signings, school visits and Ren Faire appearances. Considering a book trailer, too. Websites are a necessity these days, MySpace and blogging because that's where the YA audience lives. Ditto for school visits, and for this series, the Renaissance Faires. The book trailer is just plain cool.

**Tina** - I have been lucky enough to have the Random House marketing department behind me, and that included scores of books sent out to magazines and reviewers, and an ad in Teen Vogue. On the personal front, in addition to a big book signing, I am going around to stores, introducing myself and signing their stock--what is sometimes called "Drive-By Signing". I also have a website – [www.TinaFerraro.com](http://www.TinaFerraro.com) – a blog and Myspace.

Do you write a series and, if so, how are the books connected (one character or related characters from different books)?

**Kelly** – Not yet - *Graffiti Girl* is not part of a series. But I do have an interest to write one in the future and MTV/Pocket has my next YA in hand.

**Jennifer** - Both THE BOYS NEXT DOOR and MAJOR CRUSH (2006) are part of the Simon Pulse Romantic Comedies series. Most of these books aren't connected, but they're "branded" like a Harlequin line with similar covers, and they're marketed together.

**Berta and Michelle** - THE TREE SHEPHERD'S DAUGHTER is the first in a trilogy. The next two books follow our heroine deeper into the heart of her father's world.

What piece of advice would you give new writers wanting to break into the YA market?

**Kelly** - Be true to your voice. When I began writing *Graffiti Girl*, I was unsure of my YA tone. Did I have to speak teen slang? Did I have to write in a way that was not me? No. Give teens the credit they deserve and don't write down to them. YA readers want memorable characters and good stories, and that's exactly what you want to give them in your own voice.

**Jennifer** - A new hook would be great. For instance, MAJOR CRUSH was set in a high school marching band, which hadn't been done before to my knowledge. And just like adult romance, you need to write the book you want to read.

**Caridad** - Same thing I was told when I first sold and was freaking out about actually having to write the whole book—whatever you do, don't write down to

your audience. Try to be as genuine and honest as you possibly can—do whatever it takes to tap into your inner seventeen or fifteen or twelve year-old to achieve a genuine voice, but if you force it, they'll see it from a mile away and your book will be a wallbanger before they've hit page five.

**Berta:** Learn your craft, surround yourself with young people, stay in touch with your goofy/earnest/inquisitive/indignant/intense kid self, and write, write, write. Be persistent, thicken your skin to criticism, learn from it, and never give up.

**Michelle:** Don't give up. Get in touch with your inner teen. Really think back to when you were a teenager and remember the issues and the obstacles you faced in school, like the glaring pimple breaking out on the end of your nose on the first day of high school, and knowing that everyone is going to be looking at you. And don't write down to teens or they'll throw the book against the wall. ☺

**Tina** - This sounds sort of funny, but what works for me is to write for my teenage self. I try to tap back into those days, to remember what I felt and what I wanted, and to try to write a book that I would have enjoyed reading.

Agent interviews:

What types of YAs are you not seeing that you'd like to receive?

**Caren** - I'd love to receive more literary/commercial YA a la Laura Wiess' Such a Pretty Girl, Scott Westerfeld's Uglies trilogy (this is sci fi, but I adore his writing), Caridad Ferrer's Adios to My Old Life, Kevin Brook's Kissing the Rain and Tracy Lynn's RX. The main theme here is that I'm looking for writing with a strong voice, not necessarily genre writers (though they're certainly welcome to query me too!)

**Kristen** - Anything literary. I've seen lots of chick lit submissions (and I still love them) but I wouldn't mind seeing writers tackle some meaty stuff with gorgeous writing.

What piece of advice would you give new writers wanting to break into the YA market?

**Caren** - Read what's out there first. That brilliantly original idea you may have had has almost certainly been done before. Then figure out how you can do it better and distinctively.

**Kristen** - Get savvy about the genre (so research current sales, what titles make it big and why, what would be an original story idea) and then write well. There's a place for you.

Thanks to all these authors and agents who took the time to share their valuable knowledge and insights!

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