



SISTERS in CRIME
CROAK & DAGGER
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume VII, Number 5 — September 2011

†Expert Testimony†

This month's column summarizes some interesting information from Sisters in Crime, our national organization.

Last time, we talked about the demise of Borders, a major retailer. However, a recent study on publishing shows a relatively healthy industry with modest growth.

- The Association of American Publishers and the Book Industry Study Group surveyed 1,953 publishers, including the six largest trade publishers, as well as distributors, wholesalers, and retailers. Over three years (2008 to 2010) net revenue for the industry jumped to \$27.9 billion, a 5.6% increase, on sales of 2.57 billion books in all formats, an increase of 4.1%. Trade books, which were about half of the revenue (\$13.9 billion), were up 5.8%. Higher education books, which were only about 16% of the revenue, were up 18%. All adult fiction was up about 8.8% over the three years, although adult hardcover and paperback sales were essentially flat, growing only 1% over the three years. Sale of mass market paperbacks declined 16%. In 2010, 114 million e-books were sold, about 4.5% of all books, up from 0.6% in 2008. As a whole, the publishing industry seems healthy, although its composition is changing.

- We are seeing a growing phenomenon of new books by dead authors (see the July *Nooseletter*), continuations of best-selling series such as Ludlum's Bourne series, Fleming's Bond series, and Robert Parker's Spencer and Jesse Stone series. Obviously, keeping a series alive generates more revenue, but why would already successful authors, with their own

reputations, do it? In some cases, the original author was a close friend or mentor of the continuing author and wants to keep his memory and characters alive. This was the case with Eric Van Lustbader who continued Ludlum's Bourne series. In other cases, such as with Jeffery Deaver's continuation of Bond, it is a chance to update a favorite character and take him in a different direction. In Parker's case, a different writer is continuing each series.

- Everyone is curious about what real authors make, not the ones who earn advances of multi-hundred thousands of dollars. Robert Rosenwald, the publisher of Poison Pen Press, recently provided a benchmark for a small press. Their authors get a \$1,000 advance, which increases to \$1,500 after two books. On hardcover and trade, the authors get a 9% royalty that jumps to 15% after 6,000 books are sold. A typical print run is 2,500 hardcover and 1,500 paperback, which sell for \$24.95 and \$14.95, respectively. If the entire print run sells out, the author gets about \$7,600. At the 6,000-book level, sell-out of a print run would get the author about \$12,600.

Since almost all of PPP's books are part of a series, sales of different books reinforce each other. Their e-books, which he considers the new mass market, sell for \$6.99 and the author gets half of what PPP gets or 25% of list. At least for small-press authors, these numbers seem to support what we often hear. Most writers write because they want to, not to make a lot of money.

— Olin Bray, President

Don't Miss It!

Tuesday, September 27, at 7 p.m.

Gerald Weinberg has published more than 50 award-winning, best-selling nonfiction books on human behavior, thinking, and leadership. "I've always been interested in helping smart people be happy and productive," he says. "To that end, I try to incorporate my knowledge of science, engineering, and human behavior into all of my writing.

Jerry also writes mysteries, science fiction, and technothrillers about smart people, including *Freshman Murders*, *The Aremac Project*, *Jigglers*, *First Stringers*, *Second Stringers*, *Earth's Endless Effort*, and *Mistress of Molecules*. Links to Jerry's books may be found at <http://www.geraldweinberg.com>.

Jerry is a charter member in the Computing Hall of Fame, but the "award" he is most proud of is the book, *The Gift of Time* (Fiona Charles, ed.) written by his students and readers for his 75th birthday.

The Albuquerque Croak & Dagger chapter of Sisters in Crime welcomes mystery fans, readers, and writers who want to enjoy felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship and sensational speakers.

October's speaker will be Robert Downs. Originally from West Virginia, Robert has lived in Virginia, Massachusetts, and now New Mexico. He aspired to be a writer before he realized how difficult the writing process was. Fortunately, he'd already fallen in love with the craft, otherwise Casey Holden, PI, might never have seen print. *Graceful Immortality*, Casey's next adventure, will be coming soon. To find out more, visit: www.RobertDowns.net.

C&D meetings are held in the police briefing room of the James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Substation, 12700 Montgomery NE (1 block east of Tramway). Unless otherwise noted, programs are free and open to the public.



Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986. *The mission of Sisters in Crime shall be "to promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry."*

Our vision is: "Raising professionalism and achieving equity among crime writers."

And our motto is: "SinC into a good mystery!"

Check Out the Croak & Dagger Website for all your Croak & Dagger information needs.

www.croak-and-dagger.com

- Upcoming Programs
- 2011 Meeting Schedule
- Membership Form
- Speakers Bureau
- Links to Mystery Websites & Websites for Your Favorite Croak & Dagger Authors
- *The Nooseletter* Archive

AND: Remember that all members are invited to join the Croak & Dagger Yahoo group, an online gathering place for mystery writers. Join in! Log on to C&D's web page (www.croak-and-dagger.com) and click on the link to moderator Nancy Varian for instructions. Exchange news and information about mystery books, movies, and TV shows, as well as online courses.

The Line Up

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NOVEMBER ELECTION

The Croak & Dagger chapter works because of the efforts of dedicated volunteers.

Each year, members of Croak & Dagger vote for candidates for the four elective positions on the C&D board who serve 1-year terms. As usual, this year's election will be held at the November meeting. All dues-paying members are eligible to vote. If you cannot attend the November meeting, please e-mail your vote to the current membership chair, Pat Wood, at pwood73@comcast.net **no later than** noon on November 21. Ballots will be distributed and counted at the November 22 meeting and the results announced at the end. The whole board officially takes office in December.

Current board members (see page 2) have expressed a willingness to stay for another term, but we welcome newcomers to the roster. If you are interested in running for any of the positions listed below, contact president Olin Bray at ohbray@nmia.com.

Elective Positions

The **President** presides at all membership meetings and executive committee meetings, sets goals and assigns responsibilities, polls members on major decisions, keeps members informed, and serves as group spokesperson.

The **Vice President** conducts meetings in the President's absence and fills in or assists when needed for any other executive tasks.

The **Secretary** takes minutes at monthly board meetings, sends out notices of board meetings when needed, and keeps members on track as to what matters have been decided.

The **Treasurer** maintains the chapter's checking account and, with the membership chairman, tracks income and outgo.

Appointive Positions:

The **Programs/Publicity Chair** uses chapter resources to come up with speaker ideas and lines up programs for two or three months at a time; also coordinates purchase of gift bookmarks and sends press releases.

The **Nooseletter Editor** collects material from members and the media, edits for length, lays out the bimonthly *Nooseletter*, and delivers it to the membership chair for email distribution.

The **Membership** chairman works with the treasurer to maintain a data base of members, and sends out meeting announcements and the *Nooseletter* to members.

The **Website Technical Support Manager** maintains the chapter's website, renewing contracts with the site host, uploading announcements and other information when directed by the board.

Agatha Christie's Witness for the Prosecution our next theater outing

Croak & Dagger is organizing a theater party for Saturday evening, February 4, 2012, to see *Witness for the Prosecution* at the Albuquerque Little Theatre. Ticket prices (discounted for the group) will be announced later. Reservations for pre-show dinner at a nearby restaurant will be made for those interested.

Witness for the Prosecution is the story of an aging London barrister who takes on the defense of a man suspected in the murder of a wealthy widow. The testimony of the wife of the accused holds the key to solving the case. A classic of courtroom suspense, *Witness for the Prosecution* is one of those Christie specialties with enough double-crossing twists to keep the audience guessing right up to the final twist at the end.

The play was adapted from a Christie short story and opened in London on October 28, 1953. It was subsequently made into a film, released in 1958, starring Charles Laughton, Marlene Dietrich, and Tyrone Power.

Noose News

Rob Kresge to Teach Workshop

On October 16, from 2-4 p.m., Rob Kresge, a founding member of Croak & Dagger and a finalist for the 2011 Bruce Alexander Award for Best Historical Mystery for his *Murder for Greenhorns*, will teach a workshop to help beginning mystery writers increase their chances of getting published. He will trace the legacy of Edgar Allan Poe through later American mystery authors and provide exercises and handouts. The workshop will be at the Taylor Ranch Library, 5000 Bogart NW. There is no charge to attend the class.

The [2011 SinC Summit Report: How Readers Find Books](#) is now available online/

As the publishing industry undergoes enormous changes, and each year more books jostle for attention in a fragmented marketplace, a key question emerges: How do readers find the books they want to read? Sisters in Crime took that question to the American Library Association (ALA) annual convention in New Orleans to learn how librarians, publishers, reviewers, marketing reps, distributors, and electronic delivery help readers find books.

Go to www.sistersincrime.org for the report or [Click here](#) to be taken to the Members Only webpage (you will be prompted to enter your username and password) where this latest report and previous years' reports reside. Enjoy!

The schedule for the **2011 Hillerman Conference**, November 10-12, is shaping up, and workshops so far include a pre-conference writing workshop, "A Writer's Toolkit: 7 Essentials for Success" with Sandi Ault; "A Spy's Guide to Santa Fe" with author Edward Held, Director of Intelligence and Counter-intelligence at the Department of Energy in Washington, DC; "The Plot Thickens: Keep Readers Turning Those Pages" with best-selling author Douglas Preston; "The Art and Craft of Narrative Nonfiction" with Hampton Sides; Creating GOOD Bad Guys: with Joe Badal,

Steve Havill, John Vorhaus and Sandi Ault; and "The Changing Face of Publishing" with Edgar nominee David Morrell. Click here for the complete [conference schedule](#).

The conference will also feature flash critiques, panel discussions, and book signings by each day's speaker, as well as a luncheon conversation with Editor Peter Joseph and Tricia Fields, 2010 Tony Hillerman Prize Winner. The 2011 Tony Hillerman/*New Mexico Magazine* Short Story Prize will be presented at a dinner with keynote speaker Douglas Preston (*The Monster of Florence*, or How I Fell into One of My Novels).

The conference will also offer one-on-one critique sessions for first chapters, short fiction, synopses, and non-fiction essays. Conference registrants receive a discount on critiques and on the pre-conference workshop.

The conference welcomes beginners and experienced writers.

There's still time to sign up for two of the following conferences as well:

The 17th annual *Magna cum Murder* Crime Writing Festival, sponsored by Ball State University, takes place October 28-30 at the Horizon Convention Center, Muncie, Indiana. Guests of honor: Parnell Hall. Banquet Keynote Speaker: Bob Brier. Register by October 15 at www.magnacummurder.com.

The tenth annual *New England Crime Bake* in Massachusetts November 11-13 is sold out!

Lawrence Block and William Kent Krueger headline the *Men of Mystery* conference in Irvine, California, on November 19. A Grand Master of the Mystery Writers of America, Block is the author of the Bernie Rhodenbarr and Matthew Scudder mystery series, as well as several books on the craft of writing. Krueger's mysteries are set in the north woods of Minnesota and include the Northwest Angle series. Sign up at www.menofmystery.org.

More News...

On Friday, Sept 23, 7-8pm, Alamosa Books is hosting an event for **Heather Brewer**. She's a New York Times bestselling author whose series of YA books count over one million in print.

In her new book, *The Slayer Chronicles: First Kill*, Joss McMillan's perfect life crashes down the night he witnesses his sister's murder — at the hands of a vampire. He then finds out his family's secret heritage: They are part of the Slayer Society, a group whose mission is to rid the world of vampires. Joss is their new recruit. As Joss trains, bent on seeking revenge for his sister, he discovers powers that could make him the youngest, strongest Slayer in history. But there is a traitor in the Society, one whose identity would shake Joss to the core . . . if the traitor doesn't kill him first.

With over a million copies already in print, *The Chronicles of Vladimir Tod* is still sinking its fangs into new readers every day. Now, bestselling author Heather Brewer brings us the other side of the story, from the perspective of Vlad's former friend turned mortal enemy: vampire slayer Joss McMillan. This is the first in a series of five books that can be read

alongside Vlad Tod or entirely on their own. For more, go to Heather's website:

<http://heatherbrewer.com/>

Alamosa Books is at 8810 Holly Ave NE, Ste D. Albuquerque NM 87122

From www.ubergizmo.com:

There seems to be a vending machine for just about everything nowadays. From one that dispenses wedding rings, to another that dispenses USB cables to LCD displays, so it's really not surprising to see another vending machine that has the ability to dispense ebooks.

You might be asking, "How do you dispense ebooks since they're not physical?" Well, in this case, all the user has to do is insert money into the machine, and the machine will then dispense a receipt with a QR code on it along with other information. The user can then scan the QR code with their ebook reader or smartphone and redeem it.

A Japanese company called Glory made the machine, which they debuted last week at the Tokyo Ebook Fair last week. Currently the machine remains a prototype, although it is a pretty interesting concept that we hope will be made into reality, and also be available outside of Japan.

MWA University



Mystery Writers of America University (MWA-U) is a full-day, low-cost writing seminar designed to teach participants the essential skills needed to write a novel, from the idea stage to the final editing. The focus is on the craft of writing, and the college-level courses are taught by published writers and experienced teachers. The core curriculum includes: After the idea; Dramatic structure and plot; Setting and description; Character; and Editing.

MWA-U is offered throughout the country, initiated by MWA chapter presidents who contact MWA national to request a session in their region. The full-day writing seminar is primarily designed as a member benefit but is open to the general public and applicable to all genres of fiction writing. Sessions are schedule around the country, around the year. For a registration form and list of other sites, go to www.mysterywriters.org but here's one in everyone's favorite city:

MWA's NorCal chapter is holding a seminar on October 15, 2011, at San Francisco State University's Downtown campus, Westfield San Francisco Centre, 835 Market Street, Room 609 in the City by the Bay (need an excuse to go?—here it is).

A Crime Wave in Publishing

The following is excerpted from by Alexandra Alter in the Wall Street Journal. For more, go to: www.online.wsj.com.

Crime often spikes when the economy sputters, but does demand for crime fiction surge as well?

Publishers hope so. This year, as print sales continue to plummet, several publishing houses are launching mystery imprints in hopes of gaining a toehold in the thriving crime-fiction market. Newcomers range from big publishers like Little, Brown, which has rolled out the suspense imprint Mulholland, to smaller independent publishers. Amazon and digital media company Open Road are entering the fray with new digital crime imprints.

Mulholland has several splashy books in the works, including a new Sherlock Holmes novel by best-selling author and screenwriter Anthony Horowitz, sanctioned by the Arthur Conan Doyle estate, out in November. In October, it plans to publish a horror novel about an occult investigator by the writers of the *Saw* movie franchise. And set for a 2012 release is a novel jointly written by *Lost* co-creator J.J. Abrams and novelist Doug Dorst. Little, Brown publisher Michael Pietsch says Mr. Abrams' book "will do for the form of the novel what the show *Lost* did for narrative TV."

Mulholland editor John Schoenfelder has been soliciting works and ideas not just from literary agents but from Hollywood producers, TV and film writers, graphic novelists and even videogame creators. In June, Mulholland published a digital collection of short stories based on characters and crimes depicted in the videogame "L.A. Noire," by Rockstar Games.

Mr. Schoenfelder says he plans to release 24 titles a year, including supernatural thrillers, hard-boiled detective fiction, espionage, horror, dystopian thrillers and high-concept adventure fiction. So far, Mulholland has bought more than 40 books, plus the digital rights to 25 books by pulp novelist Jim Thompson.

Mr. Pietsch says he created Mulholland to capitalize on the strong mystery market. Mysteries and thrillers accounted for nearly 30% of fiction sales in 2010, a study by industry analyst Bowker found. Mystery became the top-selling genre in 2010, up five spots from the previous year, according to Simba Information, which tracks the publishing industry.

Mulholland faces competition from established imprints like Minotaur Books, as well as from other newcomers to the genre. Pegasus Books' new crime imprint, Pegasus Crime, is carving out a more precise niche: literary crime fiction and mysteries in translation, with 20 titles landing this fall. In August, the imprint will release "Call Me Princess," from the "Danish crime queen" Sara Blaedel. Meanwhile, Amazon is staking out territory in the suspense market, signing up best-selling novelists Barry Eisler and Kyle Mills. Its Thomas & Mercer line of thrillers will publish digital, print and audio editions, beginning with six books this fall.

Longtime mystery publisher Otto Penzler, owner of New York's Mysterious Bookshop, is teaming up with Open Road Media to digitally publish out of print and backlisted books of iconic writers such as James Ellroy and Donald Westlake. The digital imprint, MysteriousPress.com, will also publish some original works. Mr. Penzler plans to release 250 books a year, with the first titles landing in August.

Whodunit?

Croak & Dagger has a Facebook page! A board member discovered this by accident recently, but no one knows where it came from. If you are the perpetrator, or can ID a suspect so that we can make use of this resource, contact our president at ohbray@nmia.com

Reviews

Rob's Random Shots

September Case File Number 1

One of Our Thursdays Is Missing by Jasper Fforde, Viking, 2011, 362 pp (HB)

If there's a common thread running through my reviews for this issue, it must be disappointment. Jasper Fforde is one of my favorite authors since J.R.R. Tolkien. His incredibly popular original four-volume Thursday Next series was the best modern-day and literary alternate history fantasy I will ever read.

In installments, he takes his Literary Spec Ops Agent Thursday Next first inside the book *Jane Eyre* in *The Eyre Affair*, then into the Book World itself as an agent of Jurisdiction in *Lost in a Good Book*, on to hiding out in the Book World in *The Well of Lost Plots*, and finally in book four, *Something Rotten*, Thursday dies twice, but is still alive at the end of the book.

After a lukewarm reception of Fforde's two-book Nursery Crimes series, he brought back the popular Thursday (think Gwyneth Paltrow with a ponytail, in a T-shirt, jeans, and a leather jacket) in *First Among Sequels*. That was a noble attempt to rekindle the flame of the original series and is on the whole a better book.

This latest volume has an interesting starting point: the real world. Thursday Next is missing and the written Thursday, an actress in the books, is forced to take her place in an investigation into a murder and as an emissary to an upcoming war in the Book World between the "countries" of Women's Fiction and Racy Novel.

Fforde has ingeniously provided a map of Fiction Island in the Book World in which every conceivable genre and subgenre and many familiar titles and characters have places. But alas, the plot doesn't live up to the original premise. Thursday encounters difficulties with her temporary stand-in, acquires a cog-driven butler named Sprocket (no robots or even

electronics in the Book World), and makes often unfathomable moves that we are meant to take as detecting or, at the very least, progress to solve a murder, find the missing real Thursday, and prevent a genre war in which clowns from the comedy genre are used as soldiers in battalions.

To be sure, there are a few saving graces in this volume: Sprocket is an engaging character. We do get scenes with some favorite characters from the previous novels, but they're so short as to make readers think they were only shoved out from the wings of a theater so we would know they still lived. The climax is engaging—a voyage up the Great Metaphoric River aboard a seedy steamer—and all does end well. We get to see a Book World character visit our real world and be amazed at the level of detail all around her—details authors don't include in scene setting.

In the end, even an uneven Thursday Next story is better than contemplating no more Thursdays. I hope Fforde's next foray does his character and us readers justice. ♦

September Case File Number 2

Hard Truth by Nevada Barr, E.P. Putnam's Sons, 2005, 324 pp (HB)

Nevada Barr is another of my never-fail favorite mystery writers, a group headed by Michael Connelly and which includes, in no particular order, Robert Crais, Margaret Coel, Craig Johnson, and Sue Grafton. I regard Barr's *Blind Descent*, which takes place in New Mexico's Lechuguilla Cave, as her very best work.

Hard Truth is not Barr's latest work, but it has a lot going for it. It's the sequel to her two previous mysteries set along the Natchez Trace, follows protagonist Park Ranger Anna Pigeon's marriage to a sheriff there, and involves one of my half dozen favorite national parks, Rocky Mountain. And the premise is more than engaging: Two campers, one of them a young paraplegic woman in a wheelchair, encounter two young girls who run out of the woods, dirty,

bruised, incoherent, and clad only in their underwear. They turn out to be two of three girls who've been missing for months from a church outing and who were the object of an intensive manhunt before Anna's arrival to be district ranger.

The reader gets an intriguing cast of supporting characters, beginning with the paraplegic woman, Heath Jarrod, who suffered spinal injuries in an ice climb. There are several chapters from her point of view, an unusual circumstance, since Barr's novels usually feature only Anna's first person perspective. On several occasions, this divided POV increases suspense by telling us things before Anna learns of them. The cast also includes various park rangers, a sleazy breakaway Mormon *paterfamilias* à la Warren Jeffs, his several wives, and their children, who include the two returnees.

Despite the above advantages, this book has several liabilities. Anna has to leave behind her new husband of three days in order to take this sudden and unexpected promotion, an obvious plot device to put her on her own against an unknown adversary. Barr also overuses an unfortunate literary device that has every line of dialogue Anna or Heath uses preceded by one or more paragraphs of internal monologue, followed immediately by more of the speaker's thoughts before the person queried answers. Then the answers are followed by yet more internal exposition.

Julie and I listened to this book on a library CD on a recent car trip. These ceaseless digressions into and interruptions of interesting conversations held the plot back and reduced our sympathy for the two POV characters. I wondered if Barr did this in all her previous works, a point I have yet to check. Because of this device, we actually stopped listening to the story at about the 80 percent mark. I got a library copy to finish it.

The second turn-off was Anna's encounter with the serial killer at the heart of the mystery. First, the identity was totally unexpected, and not very believable. Unwilling to let things lie there, Anna recognizes the killer from a series of murders near the Natchez Trace while she'd

been stationed there—another unrealistic coincidence.

But the final turnoff for us was having Anna's sadistic treatment at the hands of the killer go on for 60 pages, an unremitting multichapter scene that unnerved both of us

If you like Nevada Barr's other novels as much as I do and disagree with this review, please let me know.♦

—Rob Kresge (www.robertkresge.com)

Tell Me, Pretty Maiden by Rhys Bowen. St. Martin's Minotaur, 2008, 293 pp (HC).

This is the seventh installment of the Molly Murphy mystery series, set in New York City in the first decade of the 20th century. It helps to have read the earlier books (I'd read only the first two, some time ago), as frequent reference is made to events in those books. However, once you get into it, the plot of *Tell Me, Pretty Maiden* is absorbing and fast-moving.

Molly is a detective struggling to grow her business in the face of social disapproval in general and male disbelief in particular. But since she takes cases that the boys aren't interested in, she succeeds. In this book, she takes on almost more than she can handle without the help of several friends when she investigates a young man for the family of the daughter who wants to marry him; searches for another young man who went missing from Yale University and whose aunt, his guardian, is frantic; and goes ghost-hunting for an actress who is convinced her theater is haunted. Molly, of course, believes the manifestations have a human cause, and so it proves—although getting her fee out of the blasé actress involves trickery of another kind.

In addition, Molly and her beau, Daniel Sullivan, discover a young girl nearly frozen to death in Central Park, and Molly, ever a soft touch, takes her under her wing. Finding out where she belongs involves Molly in her most dangerous pursuits, including a climactic stint in an insane asylum—a stunt inspired by a friend of Molly's neighbors named Elizabeth Seaman—aka investigative journalist Nelly Bly.

Molly is a sympathetic character—unsure but fearless, clever but not always wise—but the secondary characters are just as much fun. Daniel is a policeman, laid off because of a false accusation of misconduct (in book #5, apparently, which I must read) and so champing at the bit to get back to work that he even condescends to help Molly. The neighbors, Gus and Sid (both female), are series regulars too, and the jolly and efficient Mrs. Goodwin, the housekeeper they recommend to look after Annie, the ice maiden, may well become one.

All the plot strings are interesting, although in the book's Postscript, the author seems to have realized that she left a few loose ones lying around with not enough pages left to sum up. I had expected the dubious fiancé to be connected somehow with the missing nephew, as they were both Yalies, but nothing came of that.

The setting is well drawn, especially for those of us who grew up around New York and can imagine what the marshes north of the Bronx and other sites Molly travels to must have looked like in 1902. She's a great walker, our Molly, but she does condescend to take the train to Connecticut.

The author has a lovely website describing all her series books: www.rhysbowen.com. ♦

Key:

PB = Paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover

Shadow Dancer and *The Story Teller* by Margaret Coel. Berkeley Prime Crime, 2003 and 1999 (PB).

I'm reviewing these together only because I picked both up from the exchange table at about the same time and read them while traveling in August. However, it turns out that, according to the author's website (www.margaretcoel.com) both are "based on events in history—old crimes that have a way of haunting the present, refusing to be forgotten, still demanding justice." A third title, *The Spirit Woman*, also

falls in this category, so that's next on my reading list.

In the earlier book, Arapaho lawyer Vicky Holden is asked by her tribe's story teller to investigate a lost treasure—a one-of-a-kind record of the part Arapahos played in the infamous 1864 Sand Creek Massacre. The quest takes Vicky to Denver at the same time that Father John O'Malley is there to try to convince his superiors to fund an Arapaho museum on mission grounds on the Wind River reservation. Someone doesn't want the ledger book in question to surface, even to the point of murder, and Vicky and Father John join forces to solve the riddle.

Shadow Dancer comes later chronologically, but as both these novels are early in the Wind River series, it will come as no surprise to readers that Vicky's ex-husband, Ben, is murdered and Vicky accused of the crime. She's determined to find out what really happened, but equally determined not be reduced to defending herself to the families, both Ben's and her own children. This can drive a reader crazy, but it's understandable, and the story is an exciting one, also involving a local cult leader who Vicky believes is sheltering the killer. Meanwhile, Father John searches for a young man who has disappeared from the reservation and eventually comes to believe that his disappearance and Ben's murder are connected.

Both books are well worth reading and may hook you on Coel's other mysteries too. ♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

The Fleet Street Murders by Charles Finch (2009)

Third book in the Charles Lenox series, *The Fleet Street Murders* is set in 1866 London at Christmas. It's a thoroughly enjoyable whodunit as well as a fascinating look at historical London, including a brief mention of Dickens.

Charles is torn between important priorities: his fiancée Jane, his friends Thomas & Toto, his campaign for Parliament requiring weeks far

from home, and a murder case involving two Fleet Street journalists. Just as we juggle commitments in our modern everyday lives, Charles does as much as he can (when he can) for each of his most important priorities.

Authentic historical context and a wealth of minute detail makes the settings come to life and provide a pivotal clue. Favorite characters Graham (butler) and Dallinger (apprentice) return in important support roles. A light touch of foreshadowing effectively hints at the final resolutions. Highly recommend the series. ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com)

A Formidable Female Detective: PW Talks with Lynda La Plante

by Jordan Foster
May 16, 2011



An imprisoned serial killer helps London Det. Insp. Anna Travis track a serial killer on the loose in Lynda La Plante's *Blind Fury*.

What appealed to you about having a dual killer story line?

The appeal came from a meeting with a category "A" prisoner [a violent offender in the U.K.], who expressed his own hopes of writing a novel. He said he would be a perfect candidate to put down what a real killer felt as he'd committed murders. In the end, he began to give me tips about my own previous published works and how he would have written something different. His ego and extraordinary obsessions fueled my imagination for *Blind Fury*.

The relationship—both intimate and professional—between Anna Travis and Det. Chief Supt. James Langton is a driving force in every book. Was it something you envisioned from the start?

Bringing the characters of Anna Travis and James Langton together was never plotted to be a continuing theme. However, the more I wrote about them, the more I enjoyed exploring these two complex people. It helps to have running alongside the novels the U.K. television series with Ciarán Hinds and Kelly Reilly playing the roles of Langton and Travis. It makes for even more enjoyment in writing their continued stories.

Comparisons are inevitable between Anna Travis and your most famous creation, Prime Suspect's Jane Tennison. What similarities and differences do you see between them, and why did you choose to write about another female police detective?

Anna Travis is really a young Jane Tennison, but with very marked differences. We first met Jane Tennison when she was a detective chief inspector in her 40s. She had come through the ranks, from uniform to flying squad to murder team. She was facing strong discrimination and was tough and hardened to deal with it. Anna Travis is a fast-track detective, never having been in uniform, and without the discrimination level that Tennison had to deal with.

What interested me was that Travis has a university background as opposed to street experience. Gradually, we also see how Anna Travis grows into a formidable female detective and becomes as tough as Tennison.

Since you also write for television, what differences have you found between writing for the screen and the page?

The difference between writing for the screen and writing a novel is always cost. In a novel, I can have 70 characters, I can have helicopters, I can move to wherever I want, but on the screen I am writing for a specific time slot and I have to keep in mind the budget.

2011 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, September 27, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, October 25, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, November 22, 7:00 p.m.
December - TBA

*Chapter bookmarks list meetings through
year's end—pick one up!*

Meetings are free to the public.

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held every fourth Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m., at the James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Police Substation, 12700 Montgomery Blvd. NE, one block east of Tramway.

(If the substation lot is full, there is more parking available just below the substation, accessed via a driveway below the substation on the right.)

Check our Web site, www.croak-and-dagger.com, for schedule changes and upcoming programs.

Summary of Findings

The *Nooseletter* is the internal organ of the Croak & Dagger chapter, Albuquerque, of Sisters in Crime (SinC). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and editors. ♦

†**Nooseletter Submissions**†

Croak & Dagger friends are encouraged to contribute articles, reviews, and essays on aspects of mystery writing *and* reading for publication consideration. Information on relevant conferences or events is also welcome. Especially let us know if you have published a new book or story, or have an upcoming local author event. (Unbridled enthusiasm for your own mystery book is encouraged here.)

Length: Articles should average 500 words, but short items are also welcome.

Deadlines: Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to publication: Feb 15, April 15, June 15, Aug 15, Oct 15, and Dec 15.

The Living and the Dead: As a general policy, articles and information should focus on living authors rather than dead ones, but that's not set in concrete shoes. Articles about specific historical development of the crime-mystery writing genre, for example, would be welcome.

Submissions: Please submit via e-mail to newsette@earthlink.net, with "Nooseletter" in the subject line.

The *Nooseletter* is distributed to all members electronically. ♦ —Linda Triegel

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Benefits of membership in the *Croak & Dagger* chapter include a subscription to our *Nooseletter*, close contact with local mystery writers, and fun events with other mystery fans.

You do *not* have to be a member of the national organization to join us. Come hear our next program speaker and meet the gang. We promise to bring mayhem and murder into your life.

Contact our membership chair, at contact@croak-and-dagger.com.