



ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER — SISTERS IN CRIME

# THE NOOSELETTER

Volume X, Number 6 — November/December 2016

## †The President's Corner†

Hi, Fellow Croak & Daggers: (I searched for a female equivalent to fellow but apparently there isn't one!)

Welcome to this, my final message to you as president of this august group. I must say I've had an amazing two years. I really didn't know what to expect at the beginning, and I was pleasantly surprised to discover how fulfilling it can be. I give enormous credit to the wonderful board of directors we have, and to all of you faithful members. I'll never forget the fear and thrill of my christening into the presidency when we decided to put on a one-day Mystery Roundup that first year. It was, by all accounts, a huge success, and I was so proud of all of you for supporting the event and working so hard to make it happen so beautifully!

We will face many challenges in the coming year, and I hope all of you will continue to support the chapter and its board of directors. What I've found in working with this group is that every one of them does this because they want to see Croak & Dagger succeed and to attract more mystery writers and readers to become members.

Since the outset, we've been an official chapter affiliated with Sisters in Crime. I enthusiastically want us to continue that relationship because I think it's in our best interest (as a group and individually) to do so. The rules of Sisters in Crime require all our members to also be paid members of the national group. You'll be hearing more about

that in the coming months, but in the meantime, I'd encourage all of you to go to the Sisters in Crime website and sign up—either as a Professional Member (\$50 per year) or as an Active Member (\$40 per year.)

I'll still be sending you notices each month as Membership Chair, so it's not like you're getting rid of me permanently! But I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your many kindnesses, and for the wonderful support and sense of purpose you gave me. I'd like to hug you all, but instead I'll just say, "Thanks, and let's keep on working to make this an awesome Sisters in Crime chapter! See you at the meeting in November."

Virtual Hugs,

— Pat Wood, President

### **Don't Miss It!** **Tuesday, November 27, at 7 p.m.**

Our November speaker, **Jennifer Allen Noyer**, has been both a contemporary dance choreographer and an author. She was given the 2002 Arts Achievement Award by Wayne State University, has become an award-winning sculptor in New Mexico and was the dance critic for *The Albuquerque Journal* for 26 years.

Jennifer's lifelong concerns for the destructive effects of racism and slavery in America led to the writing of her historical novel, *Plateye*. She currently is working on a sequel. Jennifer and her husband Albert live in the East Mountains; both participated in the October 1 Author Festival at the Albuquerque Museum.



Michelle Adam was C&D's October speaker. Her novel, *Child of Duende: A Journey of the Spirit*, is available on Amazon.

In Spain, the dead are more alive than the dead of any other country in the world. Read more at:  
[http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/f/federico\\_garcia\\_lorca.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/f/federico_garcia_lorca.html)

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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. C&D meetings are held in the North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center at 7521 Carmel Avenue NE, north of Paseo del Norte and west of Wyoming. Unless otherwise noted in the Nooseletter or our website, 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 ([www.croak-and-dagger.com](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com)) for all your Croak & Dagger information needs:

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

REMEMBER: All the above provide opportunities for free publicity for members. Contact our website maven, Sue Zates (address below) for more information or with an idea for a blog article. Get your name out there wherever you can!

AND: 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](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com)) and click on the link to moderator Nancy Varian for instructions. Exchange news and information about mystery books, movies, etc., as well as online courses.

### ***The Line Up***

President – Pat Wood –  
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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](mailto:pwood73@comcast.net) **no later than** noon on November 21. Ballots will be distributed and counted at the November 22 meeting and results announced at the end. The new board officially takes office in January 2017.

Many current board members 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 Pat Wood or Ann Zeigler at [annzl@centurylink.net](mailto:annzl@centurylink.net).

### ***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 Chair** works with the treasurer to maintain a database 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.

The **Hospitality Chair** greets meeting attendees at the door and performs any hospitality tasks the president may assign.

The **Member at Large** is available to fill in for absent board members as required.

### ***Slate of candidates for 2017:***

#### ***Elected positions to be voted on by members:***

President — Ann Zeigler

Vice President — Patricia Smith Wood

Treasurer — Joan Taitte

Secretary — Margaret Tessler

#### ***Volunteer positions not voted on by members: (Attending board meetings, voting privileges)***

Programming — Rita Herther

Hospitality — Janet Greger

Website Manager — Susan Zates

Nooseletter Editor — Linda Triegel

Membership Chair — Patricia Smith Wood

Member at Large — Joan Saberhagen

## *The Mother of Sisters*

In the *Haycraft-Queen Definitive Library of Detective-Crime-Mystery Fiction*, she ranks as the “the mother of the American Detective Novel.” Born in Brooklyn, raised in New England, Mrs. Charles Rohlf’s was a best-selling mystery author for 25 years.

Her pen name was Anna Katharine Green. “Who?” you say?

The following is excerpted from a 1901 newspaper account (available in full on [www.OLDANDSOLD.com/articles2/7/women-authors-6](http://www.OLDANDSOLD.com/articles2/7/women-authors-6)), Wikipedia, and *Mystery Scene* magazine.

It is related that when *The Leavenworth Case* was published in 1878, the Pennsylvania Legislature turned from politics to discuss the identity of its author. There was the name on the title page—Anna Katharine Green—as distinct as the city of Harrisburgh [sic] itself. But it must be a nom de plume, some protested. A man wrote the story—maybe a man already famous—and signed a woman’s name to it. The story was manifestly beyond a woman’s powers.

Anna Katharine Green, the woman in question, was born in Brooklyn, NY, on November 11, 1846. She was 32, therefore, when the story that made her famous was published. Her father was a well-known lawyer; indeed, the Greens, we have been told, were a family of lawyers. This may account for the skill with which the daughter has tied and cut Gordian knots. It unquestionably accounts for her nimble imagination, her skill in producing subtle hypotheses and her strength in handling the most intricate psychological problems.

Green was college educated—rare for a woman of that time—and initially embarked on a career as a poet, but found no success. She began working on *The Leavenworth Case: A Lawyer’s Story* in secret and spent six years on the manuscript, an effort that resulted in overnight fame upon its publication by G.P. Putnam’s Sons.

Green would marry and ultimately support a struggling young actor named Charles Rohlf’s, who would later appear in a stage production of *The Leavenworth Case*. Green raised a family, but still managed to turn out more than three dozen more books over the next 45 years. None of them would have the impact of *The Leavenworth Case*, which was so highly regarded for its insight into legal matters that it was used in Yale University law classes as an example of the perils of trusting circumstantial evidence.

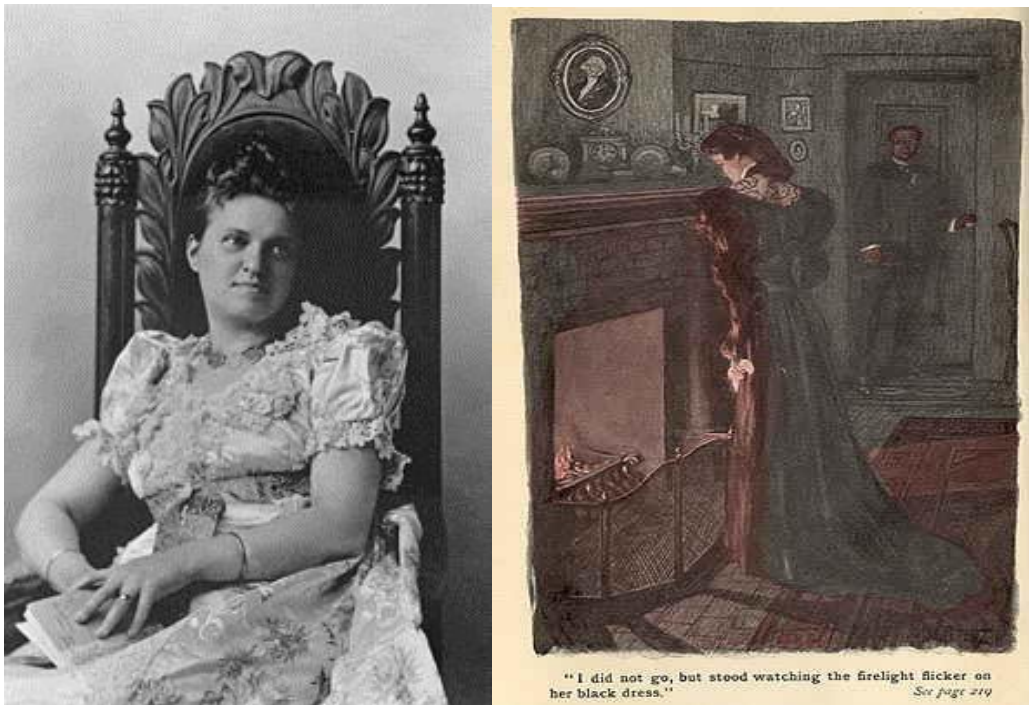
Green is credited with shaping detective fiction into its classic form, and developing the series detective. Her main character was detective Ebenezer Gryce of the New York Metropolitan Police Force, but in 3 novels he is assisted by the nosy society spinster Amelia Butterworth, the prototype for Miss Marple, Miss Silver, and other creations. She also invented the “girl detective” in the character of Violet Strange, a debutante with a secret life as a sleuth.

It is sometimes tempting to fault *The Leavenworth Case* as a clichéd work...until one realizes that this is the book that established the situations and lines that would later become clichés (for instance, when asked whom he suspects of the murder, Gryce cryptically replies: “Every one and nobody”).

The author died at the age of 88 in 1935, well into the era of the Golden Age. By then a new Queen of Crime had arrived upon the scene, England’s Agatha Christie, who in later years would reveal that she turned to writing mysteries after having been influenced by the work of Anna Katharine Green.

While *The Leavenworth Case* is not officially in print at present, it is not that difficult to find a copy. (*Ed note: The Bernalillo Library system has some of Green’s work in e-book form; see also online.*) For devotees of the mystery genre, reading the book can be likened to finding a photo of an ancestor: while it is obviously dated, perhaps even a bit dusty, the charming face is still immediately recognizable and it is quite clearly part of the family.

If any American writer is due for a major rediscovery, even if only on the basis of historical importance, it is Anna Katharine Green. While largely forgotten today, her novels paved the way for...well, for just about everybody working in the mystery genre.



From Chapter 1 of *The Leavenworth Case*:

But just as I set foot on the stairs I heard the jury descending, so, drawing back with Mr. Gryce into a recess between the reception room and the parlor, I had time to remark:

"The young man says it could not have been the work of a burglar."

"Indeed!" fixing his eye on a door-knob near by.

"That nothing has been found missing--"

"And that the fastenings to the house were all found secure this morning; just so."

"He did not tell me that. In that case" — and I shuddered — "the murderer must have been in the house all night."

Mr. Gryce smiled darkly at the door-knob.

"It has a dreadful look!" I exclaimed.

Mr. Gryce immediately frowned at the door-knob.

And here let me say that Mr. Gryce, the detective, was not the thin, wiry individual with the piercing eye you are doubtless expecting to see. On the contrary, Mr. Gryce was a portly, comfortable personage with an eye that never pierced, that did not even rest on you. If it rested anywhere, it was always on some insignificant object in the vicinity, some vase, inkstand, book, or button. These things he would seem to take into his confidence, make the repositories of his conclusions; but as for you—you might as well be the steeple on Trinity Church, for all connection you ever appeared to have with him or his thoughts. At present, then, Mr. Gryce was, as I have already suggested, on intimate terms with the door-knob.

"A dreadful look," I repeated.

His eye shifted to the button on my sleeve.

"Come," he said, "the coast is clear at last."



# ***We All Lose When a Bookstore Closes***

by Michael McGarrity

Reprinted with permission from his blog ([www.michaelmcgarrityauthor.blogspot.com](http://www.michaelmcgarrityauthor.blogspot.com))

Hastings Books & Music, a regional retail chain headquartered in Amarillo, Texas, is bankrupt and shutting down. Unlike the dissolution of Borders, a national bookstore chain, the news of the demise of Hastings has caused hardly a ripple of broadcast or print media attention, except in those small markets where it was the only bookstore in town.

Over twenty years ago, in April, 1996, when my publisher at the time, W.W. Norton, sent me on a book tour for my debut novel, *Tularosa*, one of my first signings was at the old Hastings store in a strip mall on 10th Street in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Because my novel was set mostly on the nearby White Sands Missile Range, my editor at the time, Hilary Hinzmann, figured it would be a sure-fire hit in that small city. Indeed he was right, and I've been back to Alamogordo to sign every one of my books since.

The citizens of Alamogordo have embraced me over the years, turning out in droves for each new novel, to the point that I like to brag that I'm the best-selling writer in that city of some 30,000. The folks I personally know down there don't disagree, especially after the publication of my American West historical trilogy, set squarely on their turf, which had them singing my praises.

Several years ago, the company moved to a brand new store on the main drag through town, White Sands Boulevard, and it was by far one of the nicest, neatest, best organized Hastings store I'd ever been in, unlike the dingy, messy Santa Fe store that I always left feeling an urgent need to wash my hands. (My guess is the Alamogordo store stood out because a number of the employees were military dependents from nearby Holloman Air Force Base, and nobody does "neat and tidy" better than the armed services.)

I was there this last May, for the release of the final book in my trilogy, *The Last Ranch*, and the line stretched almost out the door with over a hundred smiling, eager people wanting to say hello and have me sign their books. It's the kind of event every writer dreams about.

Now, their only bookstore is about to close. So what's the big deal, you may ask. There's always the Internet. Or if they really need to go to an actual bookstore, they can travel up to Becky Ewings' Books Etcetera in Ruidoso, or Mike Beckett's COAS Bookstore in Las Cruces, or Ed Woten's Imaginary Books in Cloudcroft, all no more than an hour drive away.

Well, the big deal is that when a town loses its only bookstore, it also forfeits a significant amount of cultural enrichment. No longer will parents be able to take their young children to find the perfect, new bedtime story. No longer will students be able to browse for that special book they need to finish a term paper or school report. No longer will readers be able to dive into the mystery, romance, or science fiction section looking to discover a new author or to grab the latest release of a favorite writer.

Some modern classics that are unavailable at the public library won't be stacked on those empty shelves. The enjoyable pastime of randomly looking for an interesting title will have ended. That wonderful dialogue between book lovers and booksellers who love books, will have fallen silent. Finally, all the writers who appeared at the store to talk about and sign their latest book, will be there no more. The excitement in the community about books and reading, literacy and learning—perceived or not—will have waned.

That is how we all lose. Every town that sees their last bookstore close ripples like a wave that diminishes us all. For one, I am personally sad for Alamogordo, New Mexico.

# A Day Off

by J.A. Jance

Reprinted with permission from her blog (<http://www.jajance.com/jajance.com/blog.html>)

It's Wednesday morning in Tucson—sunny but quiet and still cool—and I'm having a day off. Why? Because the book tour for *Downfall* is over, and last night I sent the manuscript for the next Ali Reynolds book, *Man Overboard*, to my editors and agent.

Let's just say that finishing a book and being on tour at the same time is NOT RECOMMENDED. As that old Helen Reddy song said, "Hasn't it been a long hard climb." And that would definitely be a yes. It's a little daunting to know that the publisher has already created the cover long before the manuscript showed up on anyone's desk to say nothing of on the screen in my computer.

Let's say a word here about publishers being unreasonable. They are not! The editor has not been hounding me to finish. I think there's a general belief out in the world that editors are somehow slave drivers inflicting unrealistic requirements on hapless writers, not only in terms of delivering manuscripts but also in terms of what's inside them. In my experience, that's just not so.

For one thing, I'm the one who volunteered and signed up to write two books a year for two different publishers. I've also said yes to book tours twice a year. In other words, the fact that my literary life is complicated is entirely on me. A few minutes ago, also on my day off, I completed my registration to attend ThrillerFest in NYC next July. That means that, once again, I've just said yes when saying no might have been a: easier and b: less complicated. And if I start whining about the schedule next summer, please feel free to remind me of what I wrote in this paragraph!

Earlier this week a fan wrote something to the effect that she was tired of reading books containing too many "publisher-dictated" sex scenes. With a thirty-year history of writing more than fifty books, I can say quite honestly that no editor has ever demanded that a sex scene be included or dropped. Writing is an art, after all, and what goes in or is left out of a work of art is up to ... well ... the artist. My personal decision to write books that are generally considered to be PG-13, is based on my own personal preference and on the knowledge that my kids and grand-kids would be reading my books. My stories are the way they are because of who I am rather than due to requirements imposed on me by others.

So now that I'm almost finished writing this blog, what am I going to do with the remainder of my day off? Read a book, that's what! I started Dan Silva's new book on the way back from our cruise, but the complications of writing a book and being on tour meant that I haven't been able to look at it since. But now I can, and today's the day.

As a child going to school and later, both as a student and a teacher, that's what summer vacations were all about—reading books—preferably one right after another. Having the school library open one day a week back then was a real blessing for me, and I dragged wagon loads of books back and forth in the family Radio Flyer.

Occasionally, some young person who is longing to write—someone still in grade school or high school—will ask me what they should do to get published. I tell them that what they need to do first is become readers. Readers become writers, not the other way around.

And today, on my day off, that's what I'm going to be—a reader not a writer.

Enjoy.

# Reviews

## Rob's Random Shots

*Note: Rob has been running his "Case Files" since the first Nooseletter around 10 years ago, starting with just one book by a female author and one by a male. He even sent reviews during his 6 months in Australia in 2009 and his 4½ months in Europe in 2013.*

### November Case File Number 1

***The Cuckoo's Calling*** by Robert Galbraith, Mulholland Books, 2014, 480 pp (HC)

This is the much anticipated and much reviewed British PI novel by J.K. Rowling, who wanted to see if she could write and be well received in another genre besides the Harry Potter books. You will probably have seen some of those reviews. I got this book after Rowling's hand had been tipped by the media, so I had high hopes for it.

Sorry to report I couldn't get much beyond halfway, and I had to force myself to slog that far. I found the characters memorable and well-drawn, but the multiplicity of names was confusing and I thought the PI spent entirely too much time on what seemed like tangents. And I couldn't keep all the relatives' names and relationships straight either. Eventually I lost interest.

One of the telling flaws I found aggravating was that it took me half the book to find out who the cuckoo referred to. It refers to the murder victim. And I never did determine whether the title was meant to indicate the Cuckoo's career choice or *The Cuckoo Is Calling*. Since the victim is already dead when the book begins, I feel Rowling could have made a clearer title choice. ♦

**(On the other hand...see page 10 – Ed.)**

### November Case File Number 2

***His Majesty's Hope*** by Susan Elia MacNeal. Bantam Books, 2013, 354 pp (PB)

I jumped into this well-reviewed series about a female spy in WWII at the wrong place, third in a series of (so far) three. Maggie Hope has been a spy for British intelligence for a number of years and in two previous books foiled Nazi plots to kidnap a

member of the royal family and another plot to blow up the Tower of London. You'd have to read those books to learn why the Tower would be targeted instead of Buckingham Palace. Her previous exploits are mentioned several times in this book.

Anyway, she's quite well regarded in British intel circles, having risen from the ranks of typists and being noticed when she was Churchill's typist. Coincidentally, Maggie's mother Clara works for the Nazis in Berlin, much to the chagrin of the family.

This book revolves around sending well-trained Maggie into Berlin to link up with the German resistance. The feel of Berlin and the atmosphere of terror among Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, and other "undesirables" is well drawn and in this period (1940—no American participation yet), and the Nazis are still perpetrating the fiction that those sent to death camps are just being relocated. Defective children are killed and their deaths reported to families as pneumonia.

After many scrapes and close calls, Maggie is able to get near her mother, now disgraced by the regime and certain to be eliminated. In a suspenseful flight from Berlin, Maggie, Clara, and some refugees flee from Germany and make it back to Britain. Maggie's sister Elise stays behind in Berlin as an unsuspected agent in place, possibly setting the stage for a fourth novel in the series.

This was an expertly drawn portrayal of Germany under the Reich and I found it chilling, if not exactly enjoyable. More a suspense thriller than a mystery, I believe many of our chapter's readers might enjoy it. ♦

### November Case File Number 3

***Huntress Moon*** by Alexandra Sokoloff. Thomas & Mercer, 2014, 373 pp (TP).

This is the best of the three books so far in this series. FBI San Francisco Assistant Special Agent in Charge Matthew Roarke witnesses the murder of one of his men, pushed in front of a truck by a blond woman incongruously dressed in a black turtleneck in the middle of summer. There are no other witnesses and nothing in the FBI office's or the SF police's mug books help him determine who the killer may have been.

On a hunch, Roarke searches law enforcement online unsolved murder files for a blonde in a turtleneck or high collar. He finds two other instances, both in the West, one in Utah. Travelling



to check on the victims and whatever local investigators turned up, he comes to realize that the killer is likely a grown-up CR Lindstrom, who as a 5-year-old child was the sole surviving member of a family slaughtered nearly 20 years before by an unidentified serial killer who was never caught. Her trademark collar hides a healed throat cut.

Unlike many police and FBI novels (and *like* those of C&D chapter president and mystery author Pat Wood), national and local law enforcement professionals actually get along, share information, and cooperate. Through many twists and turns in this well-written series, the law gets ever closer to this vigilante, but she just slips through the fingers at the end of book, thus setting up the sequels. ♦

**Key:**

PB = Mass Market Paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover

**November Case File Number 4&5**

***Blood Moon*** by Alexandra Sokoloff. Thomas & Mercer, 2015, 313 pp (TP).

Sorry I can't spend as much time on these other two excellent novels, but we're packing and preparing to move to Fort Collins before you'll read these. The second volume in this series is nearly as good as the first. It takes place mostly in San Francisco, and it looks like the Huntress, as she's become known, has returned to the city and may be responsible for killings of a pimp and human traffickers there. Again, the efforts of the FBI and police, though coordinated, cannot anticipate the Huntress' individual targets before she acts and fail to catch her, though they come close. ♦

***Cold Moon*** by Alexandra Sokoloff, Thomas & Mercer, Jul 2015, 401 pp (TP)

Members of the FBI and police strike forces dig deeper into human trafficking and prostitution as a string of apparent copycat murders indicates that victims of these sex crimes, inspired by publicity for the Huntress, have begun to turn on their abductors. In a snowy climax in the California Sierras, law enforcement closes in on the presumed Huntress, only to have her and most of her copycats cleverly evade them at the last minute.

*Bitter Moon*, the fourth in the series, is due out in November 2016. I urge all Croak & Dagger readers to read these books in proper order. ♦

Reviewer's Additional Note: As a bonus, I urge readers to find copies of *Cold Grave* by Scots author Craig Robertson, which I reviewed in an issue 4 or 5 years ago. He turns out to be married to Ms. Sokoloff and I thought his cited work the best cold-case novel I would ever read. So far, that is still the case. As an added bonus, that series may have been the inspiration for the *Castle* TV series, since the woman is the police detective and the man the amateur, a la Beckett and Castle. ♦

(Note: Ye Editor is also a detective. The following was unearthed from the November 2013 *Nooseletter*, written by Bob while on his European jaunt.)

**Craig Robertson**, a Scots author whose Glasgow mysteries I encountered when I sat with him on a panel at Left Coast Crime in Colorado Springs last March, caught my attention with *Cold Grave*, a cold case novel about a 20-year-old murder on an empty island isolated by winter and a frozen lake. In Europe, I read two more of his novels that feature Glasgow police detective Rachel Narey and police photographer Tony Winter. Think "Castle" and you'll understand the relationship between the two. I enjoyed *Witness the Dead*, about another cold-case series of murders being re-enacted by a new killer, and *Snapshot*, his latest, about a sniper who begins to take out crime figures and drug lords, but then switches to shooting apparently corrupt police officers. The latter case strains the Tony-Rachel relationship.

I also had a chance to read Craig's first novel, *Random*, perhaps the most unusual mystery you and I will ever encounter—a serial killer story told from the killer's point of view. These non-sexual killings of mostly criminals are meant to mask a revenge murder of one for the drunk-driving death of the killer's daughter. I was in awe of Robertson's ability to make his killer a sympathetic protagonist, and we get an introduction to Detective Rachel Narey, whose early removal from the case may have saved her life.

Rob Kresge's new novel, *Over the Brink*, is available now on Amazon or by ordering at a bookstore. It takes place almost entirely in Kate's home town of Buffalo, NY, and Anna Katherine Green (page 4) makes a cameo appearance.

The following review first appeared in the March 2014 *Nooseletter*:

***The Cuckoo's Calling*** by Robert Galbraith, first published in Great Britain in 2013 by Sphere (read in the Kindle edition).

By now everyone knows that the actual author going by the name Robert Galbraith is J.K. Rowling. It must be tough breaking away from what you're most famous for, not just because of high "what's next" expectations, but because people being what they are, their resentment at having something put over on them can lead to skepticism, even contempt—and a not-so-well-concealed desire to see a successful celebrity fall on her face.

Forget all that, and just take *The Cuckoo's Calling* as the entertaining read it is, with principal characters you really like. The writing is as smooth and as professional as you'd expect, and while the plot may not be strikingly original, it's solid, and the usual suspects are interesting too. The murderer revealed at the end was a surprise to me (admittedly, I didn't have a favorite anyway and was willing to just go along for the ride). The London setting is brightly visual as well as aural and almost tactile (yes, it rains a lot).

The protagonist is Cormoran Strike, a struggling private detective (they don't seem to call them PI's in England). He's struggling not only with his lack of money and clients, but with having broken up with his longtime girlfriend and, not incidentally, with being the son of a pop star. People keep saying, "I know you, you're Jonny Rokeby's son." That can get tiresome. Strike is a big, burly, wounded ex-soldier and couldn't care less what anyone thinks of him. When he starts sleeping in his office because he can't bring himself to tell anyone about the breakup with Charlotte (boo, hiss!) he gets even scruffier.

The second nifty character is Robin Ellacot, a looker and newly engaged as well as new to London. She's star-struck all around, but when she takes a temp job at Strike's office, we learn that she also harbors a not-so-secret desire to be a PI herself. She's also amazingly resourceful and efficient, and when Strike regretfully informs her that he can't afford her for another week, she offers to work cheap and not tell the temp agency boss that they've gone behind his back. (Come to recall, I got two of my "permanent" jobs starting as a temp; maybe that's why I identify with Robin).

Strike has one client and a host of debtors, but hopes for a turnaround in his deplorable financial situation when John Bristow asks him to investigate

the death of his adoptive sister. Bristow is willing to put a considerable sum toward proving that she was murdered and didn't commit suicide. Since Lula Landry was a super-model and a press magnet, the case was covered extensively, and Strike doesn't see how he can find anything the newshounds might have missed, but he keeps his doubts to himself and takes the retainer.

In the course of his seemingly lackadaisical investigation, Strike interviews a number of Lula's "known associates," most of them not very likeable—except the supposed loser of the lot, Lula's friend Rochelle. The rest are mostly self-obsessed, hypocritical, or just annoying. Rowling's picture of the celebrity culture indicates all-too-personal experience with paparazzi and other nosy parkers.

Although Lula is sometimes referred to as "Cuckoo," the title actually comes from a Christina Rossetti poem about untimely births and deaths. ♦

—Linda Triage ([ljt23@earthlink.net](mailto:ljt23@earthlink.net))

***Black Out*** by John Lawton. Grove Press, 1995, 342 pp (TP)

This is Lawton's first novel in his Inspector Frederick Troy series, which is to say it was the first written and published (which may explain a few things, but more on that in a minute). It is not the first chronologically, however, taking place in 1944, during the tail end of the Blitz, while later-written novels go back to the 1930s. I recommend reading them in order of fictional events.

But do read them. They're terrific. They're not only richly written, but one of their best features is a totally convincing sense of time and place. I admit, I occasionally lose track of the plot, but the dialogue and characters are wonderful too, so who cares whodunit.

At the start of *Black Out*, a group of children playing at an East End bomb site find a severed arm. When Troy comes to investigate, he realizes the arm was not severed by an exploding bomb, but is part of a murdered corpse, the rest of which is nowhere to be seen. He later discovered that this victim, and others he unearths (sometimes literally), was a refugee scientist smuggled out of Nazi Germany. As Troy digs deeper, a plot reveals itself, which involves too many higher-ups to worry about a couple of refugees.

Another, earlier, refugee, a Polish doctor, is Troy's department M.E. and one of the wilder, and funnier, characters. He nicknames the arm Herr Cufflink and helps Troy, sometimes behind their

superiors' backs, to investigate the succeeding murder victims that turn up. Along the way, Troy manages to get bombed in an underground shelter, beat up by mysterious hired toughs, shot at or stabbed (several times), and recuperates by having sex with two different gorgeous dames.

I don't recall things being quite so hot and heavy in the other novels I read, so maybe Lawton was figuring on this being a one-off and wanted to get everything in, including a jump ahead three years in the last 50 pages to the Berlin Blockade to clean up some bodies, which produces a couple of nifty plot twists. ♦

—Linda Triegel ([ljt23@earthlink.net](mailto:ljt23@earthlink.net))

***Night Ferry to Death* and *A Six-Letter Word for Death*** by Patricia Moyes. Both an Owl Book (Henry Holt & Co), 1983 & 1985, 181 & 241 pp (PB)

These compelling classic mysteries are but two of the author's Inspector Henry Tibbett series. They're classics in the sense of old-fashioned sleuthing, with little violence (and hardly any guns), with a number of possible suspects and the true culprit revealed at the end. Despite having been written little more than 30 years ago, they're also free of cell phones and the like, adding to the Agatha Christie ambience.

By the time of these stories, Tibbett is a now chief superintendant with Scotland Yard, presumably having been promoted along the way of the previous dozen or more books. He's happily married to Emmy, his wife of many years who, fortunately for the reader, takes a more active part in the plots than just baking scones and providing comfort when needed.

In *Night Ferry*, Henry and Emmy are coming back from a continental holiday via the Harwich-Hook ferry between England and the Netherlands. The ferry is more crowded than usual, much to the dismay of a passenger named Smith (he says), who insists he must have a cabin. He doesn't get one, and the next morning is found dead in the public "sleep chair" lounge. Tibbett later learns that he was a courier for an Amsterdam diamond merchant and was carrying jewels, which have gone missing.

Much of the subsequent investigation takes place in southern England, throughout which the suspects have dispersed themselves. They include a rich young couple, the Hartford-Browns (the wife is Dutch), a mother (Mrs. van der Molen) and young daughter (Susan), a shady gems dealer (Rosenberg), a mystery woman who claims acquaintance with Emmy's sister, and a newsstand proprietor. Even

Emmy's comfortable life in London is put in danger when the jewels continue to be missing—at least so the murderer thinks.

*A Six-Letter Word for Death* has a clever premise in a crossword puzzle sent to Henry by someone in a group of mystery writers known as the Guess Who Club (because they all write under pseudonyms). The writers invite him to speak at their next meeting—and, he assumes, to reveal whether he has solved the puzzle. Fortunately, he has a brainy friend who's a whiz at crosswords—the British ones are very tricky, and I personally never mastered more than the simpler ones in the *Telegraph*—and he shows up knowing the answer.

What he doesn't know is what the clues mean. The names in the puzzle belong to people who died under suspicious circumstances, and no sooner has Henry arrived at the Isle of Wight venue but another death, by drowning, occurs.

Emmy gets to come along on this trip too, while Henry's deputy, Derek Reynolds (a series regular) stays behind to do the leg work. Henry himself is an unprepossessing type, whose mild manner hides a dogged determination and a shrewd mind for puzzles of all kinds. The author is skilled at keeping the suspense level high, not even having to resort to cliff-hanger chapter endings. You'll keep reading anyway. ♦

—Linda Triegel ([ljt23@earthlink.net](mailto:ljt23@earthlink.net))

#### Series mysteries:

##### All reviews by Susan Zates

**NOTE:** Print publisher noted; most also available (and/or read by the reviewer) in e-format.

***The Return of Captain John Emmett*** by Elizabeth Speller. Mariner Books, 2012, 448 pp (PB)  
(First book of the Laurence Bartram historical mystery series set in post-WWI England.)

The mood is somber, the complex characters melancholy. Laurence Bartram served in the war. His wife died giving birth as he was off fighting. He leads a quiet life in London without joy or hope, listlessly working on a book about church architecture.

He receives a letter from Mary Emmett, asking him to share memories of her brother. She's trying to reconcile her brother's suicide. John had served in the war, returned home shell-shocked and was institutionalized, but had seemed to be making progress toward recovery.

Laurence is eager for a distraction from writing his book, and hopes to rekindle his long-ago attraction to Mary, when Laurence and John were schoolmates together. Laurence begins researching what has happened to each veteran in a photograph Mary found among John's effects. Laurence's friend Charles is enthralled with Agatha Christie mysteries, and enthusiastically begins sleuthing 'the case'. Was the apparent suicide actually foul play?

Laurence meets almost all of the people who received bequests from John's estate, and questions them to learn their connection to John. Not all are willing to share details, and his certainty that part of the truth is being withheld increases Laurence's interest. He persists with his investigation and eventually uncovers the event at the heart of the story: a court martial and firing squad.

Rich in period detail and mood; clearly extensively researched, as historical figures mix with fictional characters. Be sure to read the epilogue—it will surprise you. ♦

***Buried in a Book*** by Lucy Arlington. Berkley, 2012, 304 pp (PB)

(First book of the Novel Idea cozy mystery series set in a contemporary small town in the mountains of North Carolina.)

Series protagonist Lila Wilkins unexpectedly loses her long-standing job as a newspaper reporter. She needs a new job right away, to put her teenage son through college, and applies for a job reading query letters for literary agents. She dreams of becoming a successful literary agent representing best-selling authors. Reality is an office full of literary agents who all act phony, an impossible workload and a remote ice-queen boss.

On her first day a man dies in the office, and no one but Lila cares. In addition to sticking it out at the new job, Lila investigates the victim and tries to find his killer. Lila moves in with her mother to be closer to work, somehow juggles all her responsibilities and solves the case. Meanwhile her son falls for a pretty girl in a commune and drops his college plans.

The story often strains credibility. Mostly the prose is trite, and it tends to be overly melodramatic, but the occasional sentence or paragraph is delightful. Worth another try; next book in the series is *Every Trick in the Book*. ♦

***A Spoonful of Murder*** by Connie Archer. Berkley, 2012, 304 pp (PB)

(First book of the Soup Lover's Mystery series; recipes included).

*Winter is big business in small-town Snowflake, Vermont. Tourists arrive to hit the ski slopes—and what could be more satisfying after a chilly day of carving powder than a steaming bowl of soup?*

When Lucky Jamieson inherits her parents' soup shop, By the Spoonful, she realizes it's time to take stock of her life. Should she sell her parents' house or move in herself? Does she really want to run a restaurant business? And what about her grandfather Jack, who seems to be showing signs of Alzheimer's?

But her life decisions are moved to the back burner after an icy blond tourist is found frozen to death behind the soup shop, and Lucky is bowled over when her soup chef, Sage DuBois, is led out of the kitchen by the police. As suspicion and speculations snowball, Lucky decides that the only way to save her employee and her business is to find out herself who iced the tourist—and landed her chef in the soup. ♦

***Murder in Burnt Orange*** by Jeanne M. Dams.

Perseverance Press, 2011, 256 pp (PB).

(7th book of the Hilda Johansson historical mystery series set in 1905 South Bend, Indiana.) Hilda is a married lady now, Mrs. Patrick Cavanaugh, with servants of her own. Soon she will bear her and Patrick's first child. She's struggling with the size and lethargy of late pregnancy, during a record heat wave that makes life nearly unbearable for everyone.

A series of train wrecks is the latest news, along with arson and strikes.

When the violence reaches close to home—Uncle Dan's store—Hilda is glad to put her mind to work looking for a pattern to the crimes. Society's rules forbid her to leave home except for church, due to her advanced

pregnancy, so she must rely on her network of friends, family, and contacts from previous sleuthing efforts.

Hilda is a generous, kind, and compassionate woman. Her interactions with servants, friends and acquaintances as she puzzles out the solution are a pleasure to read, of much more interest than the eventual revelation of the crime spree organizers and their motivation. ♦



**Golden Years** by Andrew M. Greeley. Forge Books, 2005, 304 pp (PB)

(7th book of the O'Malley Family series.)

Set in 1981 Chicago, *Golden Years* chronicles the family adventures and misadventures in a most eventful year. It begins with the death of the family patriarch while Chucky and Rosemarie are in Russia. The family gathers in Chicago sharing their grief as well as their deep, abiding love.

Chucky's oldest sibling, Jane, shocks them all with previously undetected mental instability and violence. Family and friends' romantic relationships blossom or fade, as in other books of the series. Interspersed with family crises are political visits, laced with barbed comment. Chucky and Rosemarie unravel a sinister plot to solve a kidnapping kept secret at highest government levels. Babies born into the family prove the cycle of life continues. The book (and possibly the series) ends with the passing of the family matriarch. ♦

**Dangerous Undertaking** by Mark de Castrique.

Poisoned Penn Press, 2006. 223 pp (TP)

(First book of the Buryin' Barry mystery series set in contemporary Gainesboro, North Carolina.)

Barry Clayton, formerly on Charlotte's police force, has returned to his family's business, the town's funeral home. Barry's awkward as an undertaker, but his father has Alzheimer's and can no longer run the business.

At a graveside service, one of the heirs arrives late, with a shotgun. He murders his siblings, shoots Barry, then takes off. Barry can't rest to recuperate; he must help with the manhunt. As Barry works with the sheriff to figure out the motive for the shooting, uncover shady real estate deals, and investigate yet another murder, he meets many "mountaineers" (long-time residents of Appalachia). He learns their love of the land and their animals, as well as the clannish family ties and feuds.

My favorite part of the book is a dramatic description: "Dallas Willard, lips drawn tight across his expressionless face, strode stiff-legged out of the mist, his head uncovered, his body shrouded in a long gray coat that brushed the ground, and his hands buried in his pockets. He materialized like some Civil War soldier snatched from a Matthew Brady photograph. I wouldn't have been surprised if a ghostly cavalry horse had trailed him."

Unfortunately the rest of the book didn't capture my imagination nearly as much as those evocative sentences. My interest waned as I read. ♦

## **Happy (20th) Anniversary, Sisters!**

by Margaret Tessler

(first published in the September 2006 *Nooseletter*)

Sisters in Crime has made amazing strides in its brief history. I had no idea of the obstacles our founding mothers had to overcome.

It's hard to believe that discrimination against women writers was so rampant in this country as recently as 1986. But at the very first conference on Women in Mystery, Sara Paretsky spoke out against the demeaning way women were being depicted in mysteries. An overwhelming response led to—among other things—reports of discrimination in other areas affecting women mystery authors. For example, up until then, they weren't even being nominated for awards by the prestigious Mystery Writers of America. Furthermore, women mystery writers were getting only a paltry percentage of reviews.

The momentum initiated by that first meeting catapulted SinC into existence. At first, Sara Paretsky ran the organization out of her 8-by 10-foot office. Margaret Maron contributed the stamps, and others donated funds, time, and energy to the fledgling organization. Nancy Pickard recalls that it was not only exciting and fun, but also a little frightening, because they were being intimidated and attacked by the mystery press at every turn.

We haven't completely "arrived," but through continued involvement with the organization, we can make progress toward the day when women authors are granted the same respect as their male counterparts.

I hope all Croak and Dagger members will choose to belong to the national organization too. Besides enjoying our own chapter's *Nooseletter*, you'll have access to *InSinC*, the national newsletter. In addition to the eye-opening history I've mentioned above, you'll find a number of pertinent articles in each issue.

Happy reading!

(*SinC* celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year! See the article on our history in the July *Nooseletter*.)



## 2016-17 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, November 22, 7:00 p.m.

December – no meeting

Tuesday, January 24, 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 28, 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 28, 7:00 p.m.

### 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 North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center at 7521 Carmel Avenue NE, north of Paseo del Norte and west of Wyoming. Check our Web site, [www.croak-and-dagger.com](http://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 and ideas for sources are also welcome.

**Deadlines:** Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the last day of the month *prior* to publication: Feb 29, April 30, June 30, Aug 31, Oct 31, and Dec 31.

**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](mailto:newsette@earthlink.net), with "Nooseletter" in the subject line. The *Nooseletter* is distributed to all members electronically. ♦

—Linda Triage

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## *Still not a member of Sisters in Crime?*

\$20/year brings mystery to your life! The Albuquerque *Croak & Dagger* chapter welcomes mystery fans who want to enjoy felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship, and sensational speakers.

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. Come hear our next program speaker and meet the gang. We promise to bring mayhem and murder into your life!

*Croak & Dagger* members must also be members of the national organization of Sisters in Crime. For information about your local chapter, contact our membership chair at [contact@croak-and-dagger.com](mailto:contact@croak-and-dagger.com).

For information on joining SinC, go to <http://www.sistersincrime.org>.