

BLOODLETTER

CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES

Chapter News

HALLIE EPHRON'S CRIME-FICTION WRITER'S TOOLBOX

On Saturday, April 13th, chapter members participated in a writing workshop lead by Edgar-nominated author of *Writing and Selling Your Mystery Novel*, four-time Mary Higgins Clark award finalist, book reviewer and journalist, Hallie Ephron. Ephron had conducted a workshop for our chapter in the past, and many members were eager to have her return to share her wisdom.

This full day workshop was extensive and informative, covering the following topics:

- Structuring scenes; structuring the novel
- Building memorable characters
- Writing suspense, action, and reflection
- Writing dialogue
- Harnessing viewpoint

Ephron used real world examples to illustrate her main points, and challenged writers to ask questions like “What in the character’s past drives them in the present?”

While each section of the workshop was extremely informative, this writer’s main takeaways were the in the area of viewpoint. Ephron taught that it is essential to harness the voice of the character, even within the limited third-person perspective or multiple perspectives. the omniscient point-of-view, however, is rarely effective, and head hopping, or a sliding viewpoint, is strongly discouraged.

Writers in the room left excited to return to manuscripts and apply the knowledge that they had gained.

*Nina Haberli is a CT based author and playwright. Her debut YA mystery, **Swimming Alone** was published by Fire & Ice YA in 2015.*



Hallie Ephron poses with outgoing chapter president, Catherine Maiorisi. Photo by Nina Haberli.



Chapter members listen intently as Hallie Ephron teaches. Photo by Nina Haberli.

POLISHING SILVER AND PLANNING FOR GOLD

Beth (Jaden) Terrell was the guest speaker at the New York/Tri-State Sisters in Crime May meeting. Beth is the author of the Jared McKean private detective novels and is a Shamus Award finalist. She is also an instructor, writing coach, and Sisters in Crime National Speaker.

Beth used an interactive, hands-on approach in her workshop on revisions and editing, and her presentation was filled with insights on how to make novels “shine.” She gave an exhaustive overview of the editing process, using a mock storyboard to show members how to troubleshoot basic writing errors and make connections to their own writing. Beth followed that writing exercise with a series of micro- and macro- writing tips that ranged from specific recommendations regarding voice, chapter endings, et al., to more overarching issues that focused on character and plot. One of the many excellent recommendations was also the most surprising: Beth suggested that writers reread their manuscript aloud and backwards. When writers read each sentence in isolation, they have a better chance of catching errors that would otherwise be overlooked.

Beth’s presentation was filled with useful information and practical advice for turning leaden manuscripts into saleable gold.

Lori Robbins’ Lesson Plan for Murder, the first novel in her *Master Class Mystery Series*, won the 2018 Silver Falchion Award for Best Cozy Mystery and was a finalist in the Readers’ Choice Book Award and the Next Generation Indie Book Award.

THE INTERROGATION ROOM An Inquisitor Questions Our Members

In this issue of The Interrogation Room, we’re catching up with another three exceptional Sisters-in-Crime mystery authors to get their take on current issues affecting the industry. Those generous enough to spend some of their time with us include:

Catherine Maiorisi, SIC-New York’s immediate past president, lives in New York City and often writes under the watchful eye of Edgar Allan Poe in Edgar’s Café near her apartment. Catherine has published two books in her NYPD Detective Chiara Corelli mystery series, *A Matter of Blood* and *The Blood Runs Cold*. She has also published three mystery short stories. The latest, “*Love, Secrets, and Lies*” is included in *Murder New York Style: Where Crime Never Sleeps*, a New York/Tri-State Sisters in Crime anthology.

New York Times and *USA Today* bestselling author **Wendy Corsi Staub** has published more than 90 novels over a 27-year career, under her own name and the pseudonym Wendy Markham (among others). This year, she will publish *DEAD SILENCE* (William Morrow, July) and *The Elephant in the Room*, a short story in an upcoming anthology from the Creative Resistance (Nasty Woman Press). She’s been honored five times with the Westchester Library Association Washington Irving Prize for Fiction; has won an RWA Rita Award, an RT Award for Career Achievement in Suspense, and the 2007 RWA-NYC Golden Apple Award for Lifetime Achievement; and is a three-time finalist for the Simon and Schuster Mary Higgins Clark Award. She lives in the New York City suburbs with her family and rescue cats.

Carol Goodman is the author of twenty-one novels, including *The Lake of Dead Languages* and *The Seduction of Water*, which won the 2003 Hammett Prize, and *The Widow’s House*, which won the 2018 Mary Higgins Clark Award. Her books have been translated into sixteen languages. She lives in the Hudson Valley with her family and teaches literature and writing at The New School and SUNY New Paltz. Her latest novel is *The Night Visitors*.

INTERROGATION ROOM CON'T

Ladies, in your view, how has self-publishing affected our industry? Is it something you would consider doing and why or why not?

Catherine: Self-publishing has been good and bad for the industry. It's eliminated the agent/publisher filter and allowed authors who might not have made the cut get their books out there. Unfortunately, it's also allowed authors to publish books that are not ready for publication.

I've published four books with a small press, and I have contracts for two more. I plan to continue publishing my romances and NYPD Chiara Corelli mysteries with them. However, I have other books in mind that wouldn't fit with Bella Books and I would consider self-publishing them, mainly because of my age. That is, I don't want to spend a lot of time trying to get an agent and then a publisher. But if I do self-publish, I will spend the money necessary to get a professionally designed cover and a professional edit.

Wendy: Initially, self-publishing provided a nice opportunity for newcomers to break into print and earned a few of them a whole lot of money and lucrative offers from traditional publishers. Their well-publicized success attracted masses of aspiring writers, not all of whom had learned the craft or been edited, which diluted the market and eventually turned readers away. At this point, I'd say it's all shaken out and while there are exceptions, the rise of Kindle Unlimited has made it more difficult for a self-published newcomer to break out and earn high five-figure sales per month as some people I know were doing back in the day. Personally, I've been traditionally published since 1992 with more than 90 novels to my name(s), so I'm something of a dinosaur--I'd never say never, but my career was well-established by the time the self-publishing boom hit, and I saw no compelling reason to venture in then, or now. I have neither the time nor the desire to take on the necessary editorial, marketing, sales, publicity, art design, etc., all of which traditional publishers provide, and which the self-published author must do largely on his or her own.

Carol: It seems to me that [self-publishing] takes a tremendous amount of self-promotion, and since [that's not my strong suit], I don't think it would ever be my first choice. However, I can see areas where it makes sense. My daughter self-publishes her comics, for instance, and sells them at NYC comic bookstores. There's a lot of vitality in that area that I think can be exciting.

How do you find your sources to verify your facts?

Catherine: Sisters in Crime programs have given me access to many people who are willing and able to answer questions about police procedures and other things. MWA is another source of resources. In addition, I'm active in the online mystery community and through that, I've found lists with professionals willing to answer questions. Of course, I also use Google and the library. For example, right now I'm working on a romance that has a biracial main character (I didn't plan it) and I've been reading books and articles written by and about biracial [persons].

Wendy: Mostly online, a drastic change compared to early in my career, which--I'm dating myself--launched pre-internet. Back then, I relied on the library and my own shelves lined with books on everything from character-naming to police procedural, or I turned to a stable of experts I'd built up from the beginning. I still have all the books and all the experts and a library card for the facts that can't be verified with a few keystrokes in a search engine, but they're few and far between.

Carol: I start with books and internet searches, but if I can find an expert in the field, I will try to consult one. I find this is especially important in finding out about groups that may not have been written about much. For example, while I was writing my middle-grade book *The Metropolitans*, I was concerned that my representation of a young Mohawk boy be accurate and sensitive, so I called the St. Regis Mohawk tribal historian and began a correspondence with the language specialist who works with the tribe. Eventually I paid a visit to the reservation. It was a wonderful experience and I felt more confident about my representation of the character. So, my advice would be to go to the source if at all possible!

What is your biggest challenge as an author and how are you overcoming that challenge?

INTERROGATION ROOM CON'T

Catherine: I started writing late and I have many, many stories in my head. My biggest challenge is to write long enough to get as many of them as possible on paper. I'm overcoming it by writing as fast as I can. I have four books and six short stories in print. I also have two books with my publisher, a romance coming out in December and a general women's fiction coming sometime in 2020. I'm currently working on another romance (40,000 words) and the third NYPD Detective Chiara Corelli mystery (20,000 words) and I hope to get at least one of them published in 2020.

Wendy: I've spent almost three decades very deliberately and consciously building a successful suspense brand--my publishers count on me to deliver a specific kind of novel, my readers know what to expect in my books, and booksellers know how to sell them. I work hard not to disappoint anyone and stay true to the brand. But I've published in various genres over the years, occasionally under pseudonyms or as a ghostwriter, and sometimes I crave that old change of pace. Until this year, I was juggling at least two publishers at a time and publishing at least two novels a year, under constant deadline pressure. But I decided to take a step back, cut down to one publisher and

one book a year, and free myself up to write something different, something I've had backburnered for a while. That should happen later this year, but in the meantime, I'm on the brink of another venture that might make me busier than ever--albeit in a good way. I'll be announcing it soon!

Carol: Staying fresh while also responding to the demands of the marketplace. As an author making my living by writing--writing one, sometimes two, books a year--I want to make sure that I'm not repeating myself or depending on formulas in my work. That means I need to try different kinds of writing once in a while. This can be difficult when readers have come to expect a certain kind of book from me. Shifting gears and writing different kinds of books (fantasy and young adult, for instance) hasn't always been commercially successful for me, but I think that when I came back to suspense writing, I had a fresh take on the genre that I wouldn't have had otherwise. I like to think that I'll always be willing to take risks like that to keep my writing genuine and fresh even if it's not always the advisable thing to do commercially.

SIC Inquisitor, aka D.M. Barr, is an award-winning non-fiction writer, and fiction author of mysteries such as Slashing Mona Lisa and Expired Listings. Her solo attempt at erotica, written under a different pseudonym, won the Golden Flogger Award for best BDSM novella 2017. She is currently working on her fourth novel from her home in the Hudson Valley.



The Inquisitor, aka author
D.M. Barr.



Author Catherine Maiorisi



Author Carol Goodman



Author Wendy Corsi Staub

Year-End Party

Once again, our chapter convened at Cowgirl in the West Village for our year-end party. Thank you to Elizabeth Mannion for the photos. In the first photo you'll spot our outgoing chapter president Catherine Maiorisi (R) saying some parting words after handing the tiara over to incoming chapter president Allison von Roseninge (L).



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Our new board has been elected. Please welcome:

President: Allison von Roseninge

Co-Vice Presidents: Lori Robbins and Nina Mansfield

Secretary: Laura Joh Rowland

Treasurer: Stephanie Flaherty

Members at Large: Dawn Barclay, Cynthia Benjamin, Mariah Fredericks, Elizabeth Mannion, Ellen Quint and Cathi Stoler

Thank you to our outgoing president Catherine Maiorisi for her years of service!

THE POLICE BLOTTER

Member News

D.M. Barr was elected president of her local RWA chapter (which is ironic since she's written erotic suspense and romantic suspense but never a true romance). The audiobook of *Slashing Mona Lisa* recently came out, narrated by Stephanie Murphy. If any members would like review copies, Dawn would be happy to send them a free Audible download code. She currently editing her fourth book, *Saving Grace*, and hopes to have it out on submission by July.

Terrie Farley Moran's "Flamingo Bingo" is the cover story of the May/June issue of *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, while "Squeezer and Bongo" graces the cover of the June issue of *Mystery Weekly*.

Bev Thompson is the 2nd Place winner in the 2019 Whodunit Writing Competition, for her manuscript, "Dog-eared For Death." The judging was done "blind" with no names attached to the manuscripts. The judges were unanimous in their finalist selections, which were narrowed down to twenty finalists from many entries – and then to the top three. The Mystery Fest Conference will be held in Key West, Florida from June 28th-30th. As 2nd place winner, Bev will read the first 3-pages of her murder mystery. She will also receive a Whodunit 2nd Place Award Plaque, free registration, publication with a 2nd place seal, and publicity as a winner.

Liz Zelvin's short story, "A Work in Progress," appeared in the May/June issue of *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*.

DISTURBING THE PEACE

Upcoming Chapter Events

Save the date! Our next chapter meetings are scheduled for:

September 19

October 17

November 21

Meet & Greet at 6pm; Program 6:30-7:45

BROOKLYN BOOK FESTIVAL

Sunday, September 22nd

We will have a table! Stay tuned to sign up for featured author timeslots.

We have some exciting new programs in development! Check our website for more news.

NY/TRI-STATE SISTERS IN CRIME MEMBERS:

TO HAVE YOUR NEWS LISTED IN THE POLICE BLOTTER, OR TO JOIN THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF *BLOODLETTER*, PLEASE CONTACT NINA MANSFIELD AT NINA@NINAMANSFIELD.COM. PLEASE INCLUDE "BLOODLETTER" IN THE SUBJECT LINE.