

From: **Sisters In Crime OC** secretary@ocsistersincrime.org  
Subject: Panel Discussion: Self Publishing vs Small Press  
Date: September 10, 2019 at 3:58 PM  
To: chantillyn@mac.com



Special Article below!  
Writing Noir: The Dark Side By Barbara DeMarco-Barrett

# Sisters in Crime

ORANGE HERRING

## MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to promote the ongoing advancement, recognition and professional development of women crime writers.

We welcome both women and men to our meetings.

## MEETING PLACE

15500 Sand Canyon Avenue Irvine, CA 92618

Irvine Ranch Water District\*

\*"Irvine ranch water district neither supports nor endorses the cause nor activities of organizations that use the district's meeting rooms, which are made available as a public service"

We meet in the Community Affairs meeting room on the northeast side of the parking lot. For directions, visit:

[www.ocsistersincrime.org](http://www.ocsistersincrime.org).

## This Month!

September 22, 2019

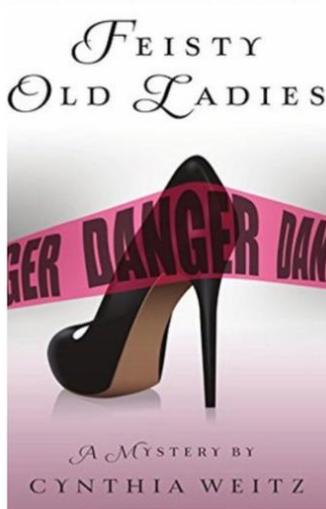
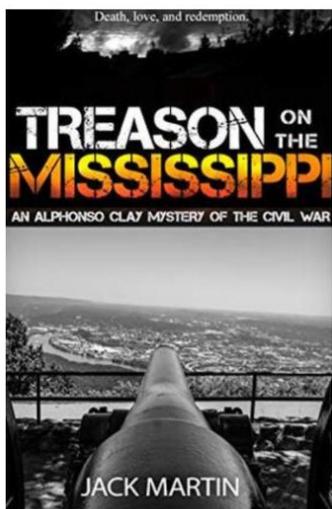
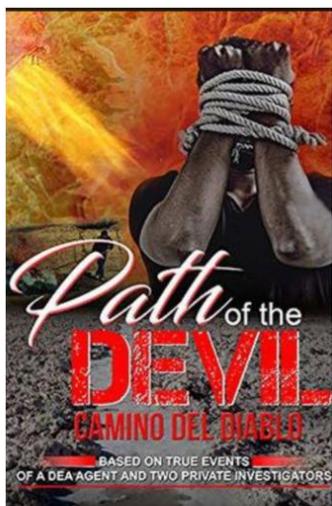
2:00 pm Writers/readers discussion group lead by **Jill Amadio**

3:00 pm Panel Discussion:

Small Press vs Self Published

Trying to decide whether a small publisher or self-publishing is best? Come listen to several of our very own published Sisters in Crime members who have the experience that will help you choose which is best for you. Joining us on the

panel will be SinC members **Dianne DeMille, Donna Kolling Lear, Jack Martin, Karen Sue Walker** and **Cynthia Weitz**. Learn the pros and cons from those who know!



For those members who wish to mark their calendars well ahead of time, the following are the scheduled dates for

**the remaining meetings of the year:  
October 27; November 24. There is no  
meeting in December, but the date of  
the annual holiday gathering will be  
announced at a later date.**

Writing Noir: The Dark Side

By Barbara DeMarco-Barrett

Originally published in The Writer magazine

When my short story, “Crazy for You,” was published in *Orange County Noir* (Akashic), my mother in law asked: “What *is* noir, anyway?”

She reads mysteries in which light triumphs over darkness and good wins out in the end.

“Well,” I began, “in noir, the main characters want better things for themselves, but try as they might, they just keep making wrong choices and things go from bad to worse.”

“Oh, like real life,” she said, and we both began laughing.

There was more than a little bit of truth in her response. While most of us manage to stumble at times down paths of wrong choices, finding ourselves in messes we never imagined, the combination of sex, greed, and murder—the main ingredients of noir—does not color our daily lives.

In noir, the main characters are on a path to doom and destruction, motivated by their narcissistic personality quirks. Think *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity* by James Cain (two of my favorite noir books and movies). In both, the main characters don’t intend to commit murder, but what drives them (lust, desire for a better life, money) is what leads to their ultimate demise.

“There are two essential ingredients that separate noir fiction from the rest of the mystery-crime genre: a protagonist lacking a moral center and an unhappy ending. It’s definitely an acquired taste,” says Dick Lochte, award-winning author and president of the Private Eye Writers of America.

### **Noir vs. Mystery or Suspense**

Simplified, a mystery is a whodunit: Someone’s been murdered and it’s the protagonist’s job to learn who the killer is. Fit the pieces together; mystery solved. We

identify with the detective, whether a professional or amateur. Think Sue Grafton, Agatha Christie, Nancy Drew.

A suspense novel is more difficult to define. We identify with the victim (who may be a cop or detective, but isn't necessarily). The victim is caught up in her own personal nightmare and needs to come up with new ways to survive—and fast. Think T. Jefferson Parker, Michael Crichton, Laura Lippman.

Noir can incorporate either simple detection or active suspense,” says author Noreen Ayres, whose story “Rust” is included in *the Best American Mystery Stories 2009*. “Its distinguishing feature is an alienated protagonist, a person on the edge of moral breakdown or has completed it, even though his or her actions may be understandable. The setting may be shoddy or upscale, but the internal conversation is bleak.”

Most of us are able to rise above our baser instincts, but not so for the main characters in noir fiction. “Noir is about us acting on our baser instincts, so we can't help but be fascinated,” says crime writer Gary Phillips. “There's a vicarious thrill that reminds us we could be one of the principals in a noir story, but we know we'd get burned.”

## **Elements of Noir**

Like all good fiction, noir incorporates fictional techniques including metaphor, simile and narrative. But two elements that are perhaps more noticeable, and important, in noir: dialogue and plot. In noir, dialogue is terse, snappy and is vital for moving along the story.

Setting, too: The well-chosen word or phrase does much to paint a scene, create a mood. The best noir writers make us feel the sun's heat, smell the beer-washed bar, see the dark, musty basement.

Susan Straight, whose noir story “The Golden Gopher” won the Edgar Award in 2008, says, “What I love about noir is how the plot moves things along, allowing the author to examine a society or landscape or family in ways that stay vitally adhered to the plot.”

Storyline is a biggie. “Writing noir mirrors the storyline; you are totally in the moment,” says Naomi Hirahara, author of the award-winning Mas Arai mystery series. “In contrast, when I tackle my mystery series, I have to pay attention to inserting red herrings and effectively braiding the problem-solving elements of the plot.”

## **Getting started**

For fiction writers plot is challenging to say the least. On my radio show crime

...of fiction writers, prove challenging, to say the least. On my radio show, crime writers have said time and again that they turned from literary fiction to mystery fiction because in their novels, nothing ever happened, but in crime fiction plot is inherent.

When I was encouraged to write a story for *Orange County Noir*, it was anything but easy coming up with a plot. As I brainstormed, an old favorite movie, *Days of Heaven*, came to mind. At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a couple pretend to be brother and sister to scam a wealthy landowner, but the pretend sister falls in love with the landowner.

I moved the setting to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to Orange County, California, where I live, and I made the wealthy landowner into a wealthy land developer, a type so prevalent in my area. While I culled from people and places I had known, it was truly a fictional story. (Still, my mother-in-law couldn't read it—she kept seeing me. "But it's fiction! I swear!" I said.)

Other writers use their personal experiences. Hirahara used an experience at a Koreatown spa in Los Angeles to write her short story, "Number 19," published in *Los Angeles Noir*.

"I had heard so much about the salt scrub and was looking forward to soaking in the tubs and getting a scrub down," says Hirahara. "But the assembly-line nature, with the masseuses wearing black bras and underpants, haunted me, their anonymity in a place where the rest of us were totally naked. I felt for the workers and attempted to engage in conversations. I even had a nightmare about the experience! I knew that I would have to eventually write about the spa, and the noir format worked perfectly."

## The market

Noir appeared in the 1920s as a reaction to the cozy mysteries the popular. It soon distinguished itself from detective stories with its fast-paced storytelling, gritty scenarios, and use of sex as a means of advancing the plot. In the 1940s, film noir emerged, and in the 1950s noir fiction saw its heyday. It died down but is now popular once again, due in part to online publishing venues.

"Now with e-books, websites and e-zines for short stories and serialized novellas, it seems there's some lively venues for the stuff," Phillips says. "And some of this material eventually gets collected or rediscovered and sees print as well."

*Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, one of the leading mystery magazines, publishes roughly 25 percent noir, editor Janet Hutchings says. "A few years ago, EQMM brought back its Black Mask Department, which is exclusively for noir stories. Black Mask was the most famous magazine of its time for that area of the genre."

The magazine is also open to new writers. "EQMM has a Department of First Stories, too, and we try to publish at least one story by a previously unpublished

writer in each issue.”

At a time when book publishers feel the overwhelming need to categorize, it can be difficult finding a place for your noir novel.

“I don't think traditional publishing outlets know how to find a large audience for noir or dark fiction,” Hirahara says. “This is where new imprints and small presses have filled this gap. Some enterprising writers have also joined together to create their own exclusive e-book imprints. Once a noir writer is known and has a large following, a big publisher can then come in and successfully widen the author's readership.”

One publisher that *has* helped get noir back on the literary map is the Brooklyn-based publisher Akashic Books. Its noir anthologies based on specific cities started with *Brooklyn Noir* in 2004 and have expanded to more than 40 titles.

“Mystery bookstores, publications, and readers are a very enthusiastic bunch,” says managing editor Johanna Ingalls, “and have been very supportive of the series from the start. For us the market for our noir books has been quite strong and it has often been a bit easier to sell mystery/crime fiction than some of our literary fiction.”

### **Are noir writers gloomy?**

What sort of personality do you have to have to write noir? As Ayres says: “Noir is a perspective on the world. One can be a cheery-enough person in daily life yet hold a grim view of it. Those who see a noir slant on the world are bifurcated souls: grateful and happy, yet owning a full supply of regret and sadness. Noir fiction stamps the world as a risky, quickly changing place and we'd better be ready for it. Comedy recognizes absurdity and failure. Noir confirms and alerts. Two sides of the same coin.”

Consider giving noir a chance. As you lurk in the shadows, you may be surprised at how much you like it.

### **SIDEBAR OF AUTHORS/TITLES**

#### ***Classic noir***

The works of James Cain, especially *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Double Indemnity*

The short stories of Cornell Woolrich

The works of Charles Willeford

*In a Lonely Place* by Dorothy Hughes

The works of Frederic Brown

*Howard Street* by Nathan Heard

*They Shoot Horses, Don't They* by Horace McCoy

*They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* by Horace McCoy

*Street of No Return* by David Goodis

*No Beast So Fierce* by Edward Bunker

### ***Contemporary***

The works of Daniel Woodrell

The works of Thomas H. Cook

The works of James Ellroy

The works of Megan Abbot

The works of Ken Bruen

The works of Christa Faust

Any of the novels Donald Westlake wrote under the pen name Richard Stark

*Mystic River* by Dennis Lehane

*In the Cut* by Susanna Moore

*One Good Turn* by Kate Atkinson

*Damn Near Dead: An Anthology Of Geezer Noir*

The noir anthologies of Akashic Books

### ***Magazines/eZines***

Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine [www.themysteryplace.com/ahmm](http://www.themysteryplace.com/ahmm)

Beat to a Pulp [www.beattoapulp.com](http://www.beattoapulp.com)

Cemetery Dance Magazine [www.cemeterydance.com](http://www.cemeterydance.com)

The Criminal Element [www.criminalelement.com](http://www.criminalelement.com)

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine [www.themysteryplace.com/eqmm](http://www.themysteryplace.com/eqmm)

Features Mystery Anthology Magazine [www.fmam.biz](http://www.fmam.biz)

Mulholland Books [www.mulhollandbooks.com](http://www.mulhollandbooks.com)

Strand Magazine [www.strandmag.com](http://www.strandmag.com)

Barbara DeMarco-Barrett, past president (2018) of Sisters in Crime's Orange County chapter, has stories in Orange County Noir (Akashic) and USA Noir: Best of Akashic's Noir Series. Her book, *Pen on Fire: A Busy Woman's Guide to Igniting the Fire Within* (Harcourt; reissued by Mars Street Press) was a Los Angeles Times bestseller. She teaches at Gotham Writers Workshop, Saddleback Emeritus Institute, and holds private workshops in her Corona del Mar studio. She hosts Writers on Writing, KUCI-FM 88.9 Wednesday mornings at 9 a.m. PT.

# **MEETING ROUNDUP**

Our August joint meeting with Mystery Writers of America Los Angeles was a great success! We had delicious food, wonderful companionship and entertaining speakers.

**Michael Brandman**, acclaimed motion picture and TV producer, screenwriter, and best-selling author, regaled us with his many exploits in the motion picture industry. Brandman was interviewed by Edgar & Emmy-nominated screenwriter, novelist, and playwright, **Thomas B. Sawyer**.

We were so pleased to welcome many members of Mystery Writers of America, Los Angeles, including Terri Nolan, who introduced our illustrious speakers. We were also pleased to welcome our many Sisters in Crime members, both local and other Southern California chapters, as well as many other distinguished guests from SoCal literary groups.



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**Upcoming Events for Sisters in Crime  
Orange County**

**Sunday, October 27, 2019**

Halloween Meeting

2:00 pm Our discussion group will be led by Pat Broeske. Join us as we explore Paranormal Elements in Mysteries.

3:00 pm Our guest speaker will be **SinC Member Lisa Morton**, a screenwriter, author of non-fiction books, and award-winning prose writer whose work was described by the American Library Association's *Readers' Advisory Guide to Horror* as "consistently dark, unsettling, and frightening". She is the author of four novels and nearly 150 short stories, a six-time winner of the Bram Stoker Award®, and a world-class Halloween expert. Her most recent book, *Ghost Stories: Classic Tales of Horror and Suspense* (co-edited with Leslie Klinger) received a starred review in *Publishers Weekly*, who called it "a work of art"; forthcoming in 2020 is *Calling the Spirits: A History of Seances*. Lisa lives in the San Fernando Valley and online at [www.lisamorton.com](http://www.lisamorton.com).



Orange County Sisters in Crime

6<sup>th</sup> Annual

**Ladies of Intrigue**

Featuring Remarkable Women Mystery Writers

Sunday, November 10, 2019  
Mesa Verde Country Club  
8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Our 2019 Headliners



J.A. Jance & Laurie R. King

## Panelists:

Barbara DeMarco Barrett, Greta Boris, Steph Cha, Mary Anna Evans, Rachel Howzell Hall, Kaira Rouda, Laurie Stevens, Betty Webb, others TBA

Readers and mystery lovers alike will enjoy this day-long conference featuring female authors from the mystery-crime genre.

Hosted by Orange County Sisters in Crime (a non-profit organization)

Location: Mesa Verde Country Club, Costa Mesa, CA

Registration is \$65 per person

Register at [www.ocsistersincrime.org](http://www.ocsistersincrime.org) / [www.mysteryink.com](http://www.mysteryink.com) or mail registration to:

O.C. Sisters in Crime, P.O. Box 53132, Irvine, CA 92618

For additional information: contact Debbie at Mystery Ink, (714) 743-6127

FREE PARKING - LUNCHEON INCLUDED

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## MEMBER NEWS

### Send us notices of your news or upcoming events!

Email to [thenanette@aol.com](mailto:thenanette@aol.com) no later than the 5th of each month

Mystery or literary events/news must be by or for Sisters in Crime members only

Former SinC OC chapter president, **Barbara DeMarco Barrett** hosts Writers on Writing every Wednesday at 9:00 am on KUCI-FM 88.9.

<https://www.barbarademarcobarrett.com/writersonwriting/>.

*Also*, on October 22, Barbara's monthly salon for writers and readers in the know will feature Susan Straight, a novelist who has visited us before will visit us again, now with her memoir, *In the Country of Women*.

For more info or to register, [click here](#). Seats are \$20 and include nibbles and sips. The event will take place at Lido Village Books, on the bay near the Lido Theatre. Free parking in the parking structure nearby; remember to ask for a voucher at the bookstore.

Seats have been selling out so please register sooner than later as seating is limited.

AND Barbara wants us to know that she is editor of the upcoming anthology: *Palm Springs Noir*, due out in late 2020/early 2021.

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**Maddie Margarita**, OC SinC member, leads her monthly Lit Up: A Conversation with Orange County Readers and Writers. The meeting on Tuesday, Sept 24th features Kathy Porter, Joe De Ladurantey and SinC members **Will Zeilinger** with **Janet Elizabeth Lynn**. Each will read from their work.

7:00 pm

Bardot Bars & Chocolate

662 El Camino Real

Tustin, CA 92780

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**Southern California Writers Association**. On September 21, SCWA will feature

**SinC** member **Naomi Hirahara**, the author of the Edgar Award-winning Mas Arai Mystery Series and the Officer Ellie Rush Series. Luncheon. For price and more info, go to their website <http://ocwriter.com>

**Claim Jumper** Restaurant  
18050 Brookhurst Street  
Fountain Valley, CA

## **MYSTERY INK BOOKSTORE EVENTS**

Mystery Ink, a local bookstore owned by OC Sisters in Crime member **Debbie Mitsch**, takes great pride in supporting our local chapter and our events.

### **September Events & Store Signings**

**Wednesday, Sept. 11, 5:30 p.m. - Literary Guild Salon – Dinner w/Speakers Meredith Mays & Amy Stewart**

**at Mesa Verde Country Club, Mission Viejo. RSVP: [lgoc.org](http://lgoc.org)**

**Saturday, September 14, 3:00 p.m. – Ellen Byron (FATAL CAJUN FESTIVAL) & Nancy Cole Silverman**

**(THE HOUSE ON HALLOWED GROUND) – Talk & Signing**

**Saturday, September 21, 2:00 p.m. – Naomi Hirahara (ICED IN PARADISE) New series debut**

**Sunday, September 29, 1:00 p.m. – Dianne DeMille (PATH OF THE DEVIL-Camino del Diablo)**

**Talk & Signing w/Dianne Demille plus detectives, Jeff Pearce and Randy Torderson**

**Sunday, September 29, 3:00 p.m. – Casey Dorman (THE OEDIPUS MURDERS) -Talk & Signing**

**Mystery Ink Bookstore  
8907 Warner Avenue, #135  
Huntington Beach, CA 92647  
714 960-4000**

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**Important Reminder to all members!**

If you haven't already paid your dues for this year, now is the time to do so for both the Orange County Chapter and to National. A convenient way to do so would be to bring your checks to the next meeting to give to one of our officers. It will save you postage in mailing in your National dues individually.



Support your local SinC chapter. Buy a mug at the next meeting, and donate books for our upcoming raffle.

If you have future events or announcements, send your contributions and suggestions to: [thenanette@aol.com](mailto:thenanette@aol.com). The deadline is the 5th of each month.

**Sisters in Crime**  **orange County**

**Print and complete this form.** NOTE: YOU MUST ALSO JOIN SISTERS IN CRIME NATIONAL TO BE A MEMBER OF THE ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER.

To become a member of SinC National (\$40 **ACTIVE\***, or \$50 **PROFESSIONAL\*\***) go to: <http://www.sistersincrime.org>; See "Become a Member" at the top of the opening page.

To join SinC O.C., send the completed form, below, with a \$25 check, payable to Sisters in Crime, to: Membership, Sisters in Crime O.C., P.O. Box 53132, Irvine, CA 92619-3132.

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### MEMBERSHIP FORM

Pls. print all information and list your name as you want it listed in the Membership Directory.

**New**       **Renewal**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Day Phone:**

**Evening Phone:**

**Email:**

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**I am a (check all that apply):**

**Mystery Writer**     Published     Unpublished

**Writer in other fields**     Published     Unpublished

**Screenwriter**

--Produced:     Features     TV/Cable     Other

**Reviewer**     **Agent**     **Bookseller**     **Librarian**     **Reader**

**I would like to help with (check all that apply):**

**Publicity**     **Refreshments**     **Speakers**     **Raffle**     **Other:**

\*An **ACTIVE** member is a paid-up Sisters in Crime, Inc. member who does not have a business interest in promoting the purposes of Sisters in Crime, Inc. This includes, but is not limited to, fans and readers.

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## Find Out More

**Our emailing address is:**  
secretary@ocsistersincrime.org

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.

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