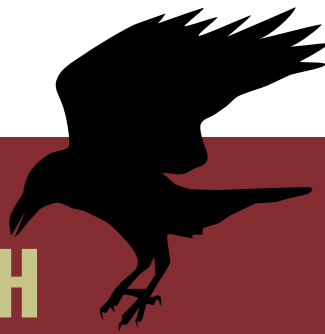


MARCH 2023

THE MARCH OF CRIME

SoCalMWA's monthly newsletter.



Consult Fest at CCWC 2023

DISCUSSION WITH A WORKING EDITOR



CONSULT FEST

Have your work-in-progress reviewed by an editor who makes their living turning manuscripts into books—

best-sellers

ccwconference.org/manuscript-critiques/

For an additional fee, registered attendees can submit up to 2000 words of their work, a brief summary, or even a list of questions they've always wanted to know about the industry, up to one month before CCWC.

Your material will be reviewed by professional editors who make their living from developing, acquiring, and publishing books in today's marketplace. Then, on Sunday, June 11, you will sit, safely, in-person, with that editor and discuss whatever you want to discuss.

This is an opportunity to gauge if your work is ready for publication without the threat of rejection, a chance to see what's working and what could use some work, to make a human connection in an industry that begins with a long line of closed doors.

To stalk our editors, reserve your spot, and get all the important details, [click here](#).

NOTE: To sign up for CCWC 2023 Consult Fest, you must first [register for CCWC](#).

What's inside

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PRESIDENT'S RAP SHEET



March Rain

BY TRAVIS RICHARDSON



Dear Members,

I hope you were able to catch our meeting with historical mystery novelist Louis Bayard. If you missed it, you can catch it [here](#). We are still putting together this month's program, but we are looking at having a few of this year's Edgar nominees talk to us.

Many of us in the Southern California area are dealing with record amounts of rainfall in our drought-stricken state. I love that it is still coming down, but I'm not sure if there will be a point where that joy will turn to hate, much like a crime trope where the protagonist or villain desires something so much that they'll do anything to acquire it (money, power, sex, etc.) and when they finally get that object of desire it leads to their downfall. But for now, until the reservoirs are full or I get swept away, I still love this long, overdue rain.



A quick reminder that if you are in Arizona this weekend (March 4 and 5), check out the SoCalMWA tent at the Tucson Festival of Books. We still have room signings. Also, be on the lookout for messages from us for signing up for the *LA Times* Festival of Books on April 22 and 23.

I hope all of you are staying dry.

Travis

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Bring Your A-Game

BY HOLLY WEST



Some of you might know that I'm the editor for this year's Bouchercon anthology. It was an unexpected honor and one that I'm deeply grateful for.

The finalists have been chosen and we'll be announcing the Table of Contents soon. But today, I'd like to talk about a few things I learned while reading through nearly two hundred blind submissions.

First, choose your judges wisely. In my case, I asked a diverse team of book lovers I've known for awhile whose opinions I knew I could trust even if they differed from mine. I couldn't have completed this project without them.



Second, bring your A-game. Because if you don't, I guarantee there are plenty of writers who did and your story will get lost in the shuffle. As a short story writer myself, I always strive to submit the best work I can, but I was so impressed by some of the stories I read for the anthology that I had to wonder if I was capable of writing one that was good enough to be considered. As an editor, this was humbling, but also, a fantastic thing.

Third, a well-written story isn't always enough. The stories that stood out the most had some kind of hook that made them memorable. Something that made me keep going back, even with so many other great contenders.

So far, editing the Bouchercon anthology has been a lovely experience. I can't wait for everyone to read it.

Holly

The March of Crime

The March of Crime is the newsletter of the Southern Chapter of the Mystery Writers of America.

Editor: Holly West

Opinions expressed herein are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Mystery Writers of America Southern California Chapter.

Contact us at:
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Join the SoCalMWA
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groups.io/g/MWA-SOCAL
(members only)

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t. 212.888.8171
mwa@mysterywriters.org
<http://mysterywriters.org>

FRESH BLOOD



ADAM GORGONI

Adam Gorgoni was born and raised in New York City and graduated from Harvard University. He moved to LA in 1990 and has been a professional film and television composer since then. He's always enjoyed writing fiction and caught the bug again during Covid. His first novel, *HARD WATER*, takes place in and around the dusty beaches of Oxnard, CA. He's currently querying agents.



STEVE MEDCROFT

Steve Medcroft is the author of the supernatural thrillers *SUCCUBUS* and *THE SINGER*. His most recent novel, *NOAH*, is on submission to agents and publishers. His current work-in-progress, which picks up the foundation laid in *NOAH*, will be completed in 2023. Prior to turning his focus to fiction, Steve was a freelance writer for newspapers, magazines, and websites, an advertising copywriter, and the author of two non-fiction books for small businesses. He's based in Waddell, Arizona, with his wife of 31 years and is an avid cyclist.



ALEXANDER NEMSER

Alexander Nemser is a writer, poet, and performer. His poetry and essays have been published in *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Paris Review*, among others. He is working on his first novel, a cross-genre mystery about an angel detective inspired by Jewish mysticism, and would love to talk shop. He is enthralled by esoteric lore, revelations in dreams, and the subterranean murmurings of words. And also pinball.

California Crime Writers Conference

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

The California Crime Writers Conference is a joint production of the Sisters in Crime/Los Angeles and SoCalMWA and has been presented every other year since 2009.

The 2023 conference will take place Saturday, June 10– Sunday, June 11.

GUESTS OF HONOR



Rachel Howzell Hall



Deborah Crombie



FRESH BLOOD



PATRICK ROSS

Patrick Ross is a professional storyteller. For over a decade, he was an award-winning investigative reporter covering Capitol Hill and the White House. He later wrote persuasive nonfiction as a think tank senior fellow and policy influencer before serving in a senior communications position in the Obama Administration. Patrick earned an MFA in Writing from the Vermont College of Fine Arts and has been published in several literary journals. He now works in corporate communications in San Diego and is writing a fish-out-of-water/whodunit set there, a place locals call (without irony) America's Finest City.



STEVEN STEWART

Steven Stewart graduated from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. He's a member of Sag-AFTRA and the Palm Springs Writers Guild. He's been a lead actor in several movies and has appeared in many TV shows. He's the author of WHO SHOT THE MAN IN THE BLACK COAT and TO KILL A PUBLIC CROOK (Archway Publishing).

CALL FOR CONTENT

SHORT PIECES & ARTICLES

Do you have a resource, method, or tip for anything that pertains to writing? (Plotting, drafting, editing, etc). Share what works for you with your fellow members.

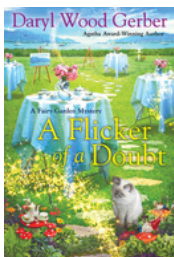
Pitch your article ideas—we're looking for articles of 500–750 words on topics of interest to our members. Send all content to themarchofcrime@gmail.com.



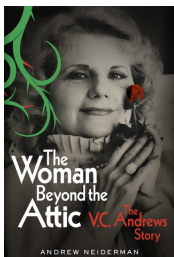
OVER THE TRANSOM



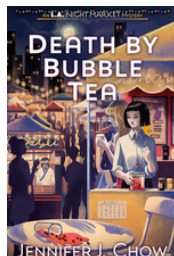
William Burton McCormick's short story "Locked-In" (*Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* January/February 2022), is a finalist for the Edgar Award in the Best Short Story category. Also, his novelette, **AN ALIAS FOR THE ANGEL** is in the March/April 2023 issue of *AHMM*.



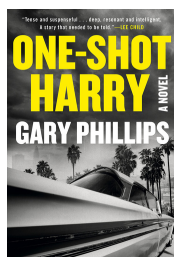
New from Agatha Award-winning author, **Daryl Wood Gerber**, the 4th in the Fairy Garden Mysteries, **A FLICKER OF A DOUBT**, to be released March 28. "Plenty of suspects, gardening tips, and fairy lore combine for a sweet treat."—*Kirkus Reviews*



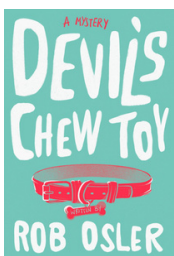
Andrew Neiderman's **THE WOMAN BEYOND THE ATTIC** is a finalist for an Edgar Award in the Best Critical/Biographical category.



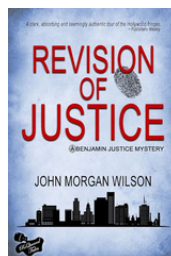
Jennifer J. Chow's **DEATH BY BUBBLE TEA** is nominated for the Agatha Award for Best Contemporary Novel.



Gary Phillips is pleased to note the tradepaperback version of his Golden Poppy nominated novel **One-Shot Harry** drops March 14.



In addition to his recent Lefty nomination, **Rob Osler** is an Agatha Awards Best First Novel nominee.



ReQueered Tales has published a 25th anniversary edition of **REVISION OF JUSTICE**, the second novel in **John Morgan Wilson's** Benjamin Justice series. The novel revolves around a murder in the cutthroat world of Hollywood screenwriting and is infused with reflections on the writing life, while the preface explores the challenges John faced as he labored through his second novel.



Marco Carocari's debut novel, **BLACKOUT**, is coming to audio via **Tantor Media**, read by actor Daniel Henning, on March 28. Also, his short story, "Grace," was selected as one of twenty new stories for the 2023 Saints & Sinners anthology, coming from Rebel Satori Press in March.



Ashley Gardner will release the third book in her Leonidas the Gladiator historical mystery series on March 21. **THE RING THAT CAESAR WORE** takes place in the time of Nero, and features a freed gladiator and a female scribe who assists him. Jennifer also recently signed a contract for two more Below Stairs mysteries she writes as Jennifer Ashley with Berkley Prime Crime. [More information.](#)

Wendall Thomas's **Cyd Redondo Mysteries** were featured, along with 18 other international projects, in Film London's annual UPstream IP Market for producers and studios.

GILLESPIE FIELD GROOVE, the fifth novel in **Corey Lynn Fayman's** award-winning Rolly Waters mysteries will be released on March 15. The guitar-playing private detective contends with an aging rock'n'roll impresario, his trophy wife, Russian gangsters, the FBI, and a reclusive pop star as he searches for a prized Jimi Hendrix guitar once owned by his client's father, an infamous rock'n'roll roadie.

APPEARANCES & EVENTS



Toastmasters 4 Writers
is hosting a virtual **Authors' Panel**
March 4, 2023, 10AM PT to noon!



Public Speaking:
An Essential Element of a Successful Writer's Toolkit



Shannon Muir Broden, Moderator
Author of the brand new jazz mystery *Charles Boeckman Presents Doc and Sally in "The Death of Buddy Turner"* from Pro Se Press.

Panelists:



Ellen Byron



Wined and Died in New Orleans
A Crime Novel
ELLEN BYRON



Matt Coyle



MATT COYLE
DOOMED LEGACY
A Crime Novel
MATT COYLE

Panelists provided courtesy of:


Zoom meeting
ID: 650 941 6494
Passcode: tm4wrocks

Mystery Ink March 2023 Events:
(7552 Warner Avenue #101, Huntington Beach)

Friday, March 10, 5 p.m.: Cara Black, **NIGHT FLIGHT TO PARIS**—Talk & Signing + Wine & Cheese
Off-site location: Fernhill Country Club, 5472 Diamond, Huntington Beach. About the book: In this follow-up to her National Bestseller, **THREE HOURS IN PARIS**, "Black vividly evokes the sights, sounds, and smells of Paris under Nazi occupation. The gritty, determined Kate is a heroine for the ages." —*Publisher's Weekly*



lithub.com
Jeri Westerson on Being a Productive Writer: "Get It All Out"

Jeri Westerson was video interviewed by **Ona Russell** for "Authors in the Tent," sponsored by LitHub. On Thursday, March 2, Jeri will be at the Ridge Writers of Ridgecrest "Read the Book, Meet the Author" event featuring tea, scones, and a discussion of **OSWALD THE THIEF**, a Medieval Caper. To attend the discussion, purchase the book at Red Rock Books (206 W. Ridgecrest Blvd., Ridgecrest) and ask them to issue you a ticket for the event at The Pizza Factory (1601 Triangle Drive, Ridgecrest). No walk-ins and seats are limited. At 7 p.m., walk-ins ARE welcome to attend Jeri's presentation: "From Medieval Mysteries to Modern Marketing" at the Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church (633 W. Las Flores Ave., Ridgecrest, CA).

Jennifer J. Chow will appear on the "Lefty Humorous Nominees" and "Animals" panels at Left Coast Crime (March 16–19).

Judith Mathison (writing as Judith Ayn) is featured on Ben Shepherd's website for **5 Best Crime Solvers and their Dogs**. She's written reviews of a book by each of her five favorite authors, each of which are linked to her own novel, **MURDER AT THE NO-KILL SHELTER**.

In March, **Donis Casey's** "Tell Me Your Story" column features **Dharma Kelleher**, one of the only openly transgender authors in the crime fiction genre. Dharma writes action-driven thrillers that explore the complexities of social and criminal justice in a world that favors the privileged. Her latest release is **RED MARKET**, featuring bounty hunter Jinx Ballou. Read Dharma's story beginning on March 20 and learn more about Dharma here. Donis will also be on the "Why We Love Research" panel at Left Coast Crime on March 17 at 10:15 a.m. in Tucson, AZ.

Gary Phillips is digging he's among the invited guests to WonderCon in late March in Anaheim. A 3-day convention about comic books and related forms of pop culture.



Pitching a Grand Slam

BY ANDREW NEIDERMAN

Nowadays, few authors, unless they are well-established, sell anything to film or television producers on a personal pitch. In-person contact is difficult because of the pandemic and cutbacks in the industry. Most people “in the game” depend on agents to attract a publisher or producer to their novels.

However, a writer who has the opportunity to approach a producer [or agent] must develop a new skill, for the pitch is a special kind of writing which, in Hollywood especially, translates into an oral skill that is limited by the recipient’s attention span or the “slot” allotted for you to be heard.

Where can you get the most bang for your buck—or, in this case—minute?

No one will have as much passion for your story as you will. Agents are usually effective, but they are still an intermediary. Good agents have many clients and know what they’re doing—they don’t want to waste their time and effort. They have to know how to shop your work, which means having an awareness of what’s the flavor of the month and which publisher or studio would want it.

If you go for a personal pitch, you must likewise study the market. Even then, you’ll be surprised at what you hear. I have had successful novels about vampires, but instantly at the movie pitch, the producer or studio might say, “We already have our vampire movie.”

So how do you do this?

Look at your story. Is there something about it that makes it bigger than horror, mystery, romance, or another genre? This is what your pitch should convey. Where can you get the most bang for your buck—or, in this case—minute?

I sold “The Devil’s Advocate” to a producer involved with Warner Bros. I sold it on this line: “This is a novel about a law firm in New York that defends only guilty people and never loses.” Two essential parts were “law firm” and “New York.” They instantly describe potential characters and location. The last part was unusual: “only guilty people and never loses.”

The obvious questions I established in the producer’s mind were how and why? That instantly led to an intriguing answer: It’s a law firm run by Satan.

Novelists dreaming of a film or series deal must craft a description that succinctly tells the story’s who, when, and where. Contemporary settings are less expensive to make, but don’t let that be the driver. Just be aware that producers have to worry about budgets as well as story. Most important, consider the elements in your story that will get someone to want to know more: What happens and why? If you can suggest the possibility of a sequel as well, you have hit a grand slam. It’s just a matter of offering a few good thoughts about where or how your story could be continued and why the main character should continue.

Remember: you probably only have five minutes to summarize your novel and make it attractive. Producers want star vehicles and low cost. How would you have sold GONE WITH THE WIND in five minutes? Answer that and you might have a pitch for your own novel.

Andrew Neiderman is the author of 46 thrillers and has been and is the author of V.C. Andrews for over 35 years. Besides THE DEVIL’S ADVOCATE, he has had dozens of his novels and V.C. Andrews novels adapted to film; the Cutler Series is now being produced for Lifetime to air July 2023. Most recently, the biography he wrote of V.C. Andrews, THE WOMAN BEYOND THE ATTIC, was nominated for the Edgar award.

CRIME CALENDER



- March 16–19: Left Coast Crime, Tucson, AZ
- April 22–23: LA Times Festival of Books, Los Angeles, CA
- April 27: 77th Annual Edgar® Awards, New York, NY
- April 28–30: Malice Domestic, Bethesda, MD
- May 30–June 3: Thrillerfest XVIII, New York, NY
- June 10–11: California Crime Writers Conference, Los Angeles, CA
- August 30–September 3: Bouchercon, San Diego, CA

If you know of an event that belongs on the Crime Calendar, email themarchofcrime@gmail.com with the info.

THE LAST WORD



"I slouched behind the wheel of my old Mustang, winding up the narrow roads of Beachwood Canyon, toward a party I had no interest in, on a night, like most, when I preferred to be left alone."

REVISION OF JUSTICE
by John Morgan Wilson