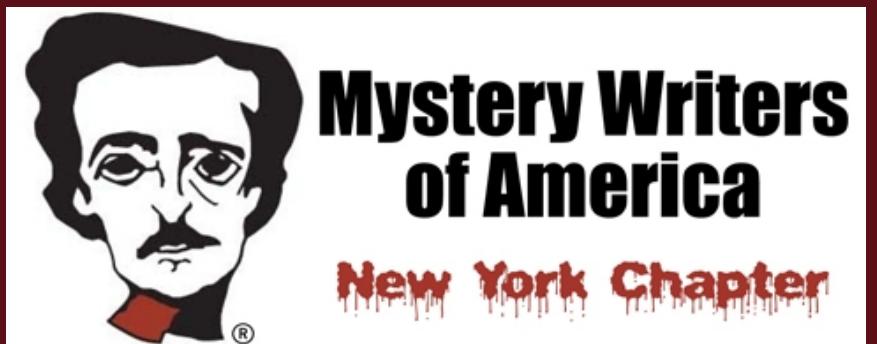


# **THE NOOSE**

Jan/Feb  
Noose 2013



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**President's Letter**

Dear Fellow MWA/NY Chapter Members,

I wish you all a wonderful 2013, especially when it comes to your writing. The New York Chapter is here to help. Here's how:

- Information—The *Noose*, which you have before you. It tells you many helpful things, as do the entertaining and informative lectures at our monthly dinner meetings. We hope you can come in person, but if you can't, don't forget that the talks are podcast over our website.
- Connections—our membership is a huge network in itself and can connect you to many other mystery writers and publishing professionals. The moral support from this group alone is worth the price of membership!
- Opportunities to hone your writing skills—The Best Way: Join the Mentor Program. You will get feedback from one of our published writers that could make all the difference. We will also be looking to institute a workshop to take place on the morning before our Saturday brunch meeting in March.
- Marketing help—our mutually supportive community of writers will help you promote your work. You can announce your good news on our Facebook page. We will tweet your events to all our members. We arrange for our members to present at libraries, sign at book festivals, and read their work in various kinds of venues. We hope to expand these opportunities in the coming year. We also intend to add a Saturday Morning Self-Promotion Workshop before the October brunch meeting.

## **WE NEED YOU!**

### **If we are going to accomplish our goals, we need your help.**

We are a volunteer organization. Our stalwart board members and committee chairs provide all of the services listed above, taking time from their writing, their day jobs, their friends and family. We need more hands. If you will give us your help, I can promise you will get to work with some of the nicest people on the planet. There is a list of our committees on the website. That will be updated after our January meeting to reflect our new board, but you need not wait till then to volunteer. Just email me at [annamaria@annamariaalfieri.com](mailto:annamaria@annamariaalfieri.com) and tell me what committee you would like to work on.

I look forward to hearing from you. We are Mystery Writers of America; we help one another succeed. And that means you. It's time to count yourself IN!

Patricia King  
President, MWA-NY

You can write to me at: [annamaria@annamariaalfieri.com](mailto:annamaria@annamariaalfieri.com).

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Hi all,

We begin 2013 wondering, ever wondering, what will happen in the publishing industry. Perhaps the best thing we can do is focus on doing the best job of writing we can do and remember the importance of what we provide for our readers. Taking a course with one of our excellent members would certainly help us in this goal. Our annual Educational Round-Up contains the details. On the theme of the importance of writing the best genre fiction possible, a report on a talk given by S.J. Rozan at Sleuthfest, the Florida MWA conference, "Why Does Genre Matter?" is a rousing call to action and a great way to start the year. Read on, dear writers.

**I hope to hear from you at: [mhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:mhannanmandel@yahoo.com).**

Marie Hannan-Mandel  
Editor

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## All A-Twitter

Members of MWA are encouraged to contact us for promotion on our new [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) feeds! We are interested in hearing about the following:

- events and signings including library panels, bookstore talks, and radio, web, or TV interviews
- fresh book deals from MWA-approved publishing houses
- book or short story launch dates

- awards and nominations

Please do not include reviews of your material. These can range from comments on a *Goodreads* page to *Library Journal* suggestions, and their wide range sadly prevents us from being able to sort through such recommendations. If your book has been selected for a best-of-the-year list, however, by all means let us know!

Contact either [hcdavidson@yahoo.com](mailto:hcdavidson@yahoo.com) or [lyndsayfaye@hotmail.com](mailto:lyndsayfaye@hotmail.com) with all relevant information, including links.

And don't forget to join the MWA-NY group on Yahoo. To join, go to Groups on the Yahoo email page and request membership in the [MWA-NY group](http://groups.yahoo.com/) (<http://groups.yahoo.com/>).

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## PODCASTS

MAKE SURE TO CHECK OUT OUR PODCASTS OF CHAPTER MEETINGS  
AVAILABLE ON THE MWA-NY WEBSITE IN THE [\*\*MEMBER'S SECTION\*\*](#)

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## IMPORTANT DATES

**NOTE NEW LOCATION** for chapter meetings:

**Salmagundi Club**

47 Fifth Avenue

212-255-7740

\$42 per person

6 p.m. Cash Bar (One drink included)

7 p.m. Dinner | 8 p.m. Program

**Chapter meeting:**

**JAN 9 — *Ripped from the Headlines*.** Salmagundi Club.

See [\*\*FLYER\*\*](#) for reservation details.

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## WHAT'S NOOSE?

### Short Stories

- Erik Arneson**, "Swing and a Miss." *Near to the Knuckle*, (online) August 2012.
- Erik Arneson**, "American Beauty." *Off the Record 2: At the Movies*, (online) September 2012.
- Erik Arneson**, "Twitter and Coke." *Shotgun Honey*, October 2012.
- Erik Arneson**, "Mess With Me." *Needle: A Magazine of Noir*, Fall-Winter 2012.
- Kevin Egan**, "Reconciliation." *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, January/February 2013.
- G. Miki Hayden**, "The Cantor and the Ghost." *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine*, publication date, T.B.A.
- G. Miki Hayden**, "In God We Trust." *Cyber Substitution*, December 2012.
- Gigi Vernon**, "Wampum." *Adirondack Mysteries & Other Mountain Tales*, volume 2, North Country Books, July 2012.

Send items (publications, nominations, and awards) for "What's Noose?" to the *Noose* Editor [atmhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:atmhannanmandel@yahoo.com). Please use the format you see in the entries above. *Italicize* book and magazine titles and put "quotes" around the titles of short stories and articles.

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## EDUCATION ROUNDUP

Fancy spending time honing your craft?

Our members offer a variety of courses in 2013.

### Writing the Novel at Hofstra

July 8 – July 19 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM with 4 additional hour long presentations from 1 PM - 2:00 PM  
5 days a week, 2 weeks consecutively

### CRWR 184V

### WRITING THE NOVEL

*Reed Farrel Coleman*

A novel is more than thoughts and feelings loosely strung together. It is more than a series of stories linked end to end. A novel is about characters, setting, theme, tone, point of view, dramatic structure, narrative, pacing, entertainment value, and a thousand other things. A good novel is a test of more than the author's talent or vision. Mostly, a novel is about questions and choices. Through lectures, in-class exercises, and daily writing, students will develop their editorial ears and authorial muscles. They will come to understand how each choice a writer makes has a cascading effect on the work at hand. By the end of the term, the student will have gained a sense of competence and confidence in their process and routine.

**Bio:**

Reed Farrel Coleman has been called a hard-boiled poet by NPR's Maureen Corrigan and the Noir Poet Laureate in the Huffington Post. He has published fourteen novels. Mr. Coleman is a three-time recipient of the Shamus Award for Best Detective Novel of the Year and is a two-time Edgar® Award nominee. He has also won the Macavity, Anthony, and Barry Awards. He was co-editor of the poetry journals *Poetry Bone* and *The Lineup*. Reed was the editor of the short story anthology *Hard Boiled Brooklyn*. His essays, poetry, and short fiction have appeared in *The Long Island Quarterly*, *Wall Street Noir*, *The Darker Mask*, *Brooklyn Noir 3*, and several other publications. He is also the former executive vice president of Mystery Writers of America.

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**CRWR 136D**  
**SCREENWRITING**  
*Paul Zimmerman*

Explore the process of writing a screenplay from the initial inspiration to the final draft. Examine the elements of successful screenplays: effective story structures, vibrant characters, sharp dialogue, compelling beginnings, and persuasive climaxes. Watch and analyze movies to see what works and what doesn't. Students' story concepts are discussed, outlines are constructed, and screenplays are written. Overall, this class emphasizes developing the tools necessary to most effectively craft rough ideas into polished works.

**Bio:**

Paul Zimmerman currently teaches creative writing at Hofstra University and NYC's Gotham Writers' Workshop. He wrote the screenplay for *A Modern Affair* (Audience Award winner at the Long Island Film Festival). As well as spending several years as writer-in-residence for Tribe Pictures, he has written screenplays for many other production companies, and is a contributor to Gotham's book "Writing Movies" (Bloomsbury Press). As a playwright, he is a grant winner from the New York Public Theater. His play *Pigs and Bugs* has been produced by the Echo Theater Company in Los Angeles and the Phantom Theater in Vermont. His plays *Reno* and *The Founder* have been seen in NYC, LA, and at colleges and performance spaces nationwide. His fiction has recently appeared in the journal "Confrontation."

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**CRWR 136A**  
**WRITING FICTION**  
*Janice Levy*

Explore the world of mainstream literary fiction, the foundation upon which all other narrative forms stand. A writer begins with a notion of a scene or a character and asks "what if?" until the secrets of the story are revealed. This course addresses key components of fiction, including character, scene, plot, theme, dialogue, structure, style, and language. In-class exercises, outside readings, and supportive but honest evaluations aid all participants. A writer's life can be a solitary one, but by participating in a writing workshop, an author can be both fueled and grounded by helpful feedback.

**Bio:**

Janice Levy has written many children's books, including: *The Man Who Lived in a Hat*; *Finding the Right Spot: When Kids Can't Live With Their Parents*; *Alley Oops! Totally Uncool*; and *Gonzalo Grabs the Good Life*. She has also written four books written in Spanish: *Abuelito Eats With His Fingers*; *The Spirit of Tío Fernando: A Day of the Dead Story*/*El espíritu de tío Fernando: Una historia del Día de los*

*Muertos; Celebrate! It's Cinco De Mayo!/Celebremos! Es El Cinco De Mayo!; and I Remember Abuelito/Yo Recuerdo A Abuelito.* She has also been published in *Glimmer Train, StoryQuarterly, Iowa Review, Alaska Quarterly, Quarterly West, Chattahoochee Review, The Sun, New York Stories, Mid-American Review, North Dakota Quarterly, Confrontation, American Voice, Hawaii Review, Prism International, Saint Anne's Review, Literal Latté, Portland Review, Madison Review, Kalliope, and Belletrist Review.*

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### **Art Workshop International**

July 30-Aug 10, 2012, Assisi, Italy  
"Crime Writing and Genre Fiction"

S.J. Rozan will be leading a 10-day workshop in Assisi, Italy, from July 30-Aug 10, 2012, called "Crime Writing and Genre Fiction", which is open to writers in any genre. Genre writers often don't feel comfortable in mainstream workshops, where genre writing is dismissed as "commercial." All novelists work with the same building blocks: character, setting, dialogue, plot, theme, and pace. Genre novels must satisfy criteria unique to their forms in addition to the above, not as substitutes for them. For ten days in Assisi, writers in any (or no!) genre will meet in a supportive, non-competitive workshop to work on manuscripts-in-progress as well as in-class exercises and homework, focusing on various aspects of craft. Accommodation in a four-star hotel in the center of Assisi, breakfast and dinner, and instruction are included in the workshop fee. Hope to see everyone there! Art Workshop International website link is included here.

-- SJ Rozan

[www.artworkshopintl.com](http://www.artworkshopintl.com)

[www.sjrozan.com](http://www.sjrozan.com)

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### **SEASCAPE: ESCAPE TO WRITE Weekend**

Chester, CT  
September 27-29, 2013  
Taught by Hallie Ephron and Roberta Isleib, with guest speaker Hank Phillipi Ryan

Tune out distractions from the outside world as you spend time brainstorming, critiquing, revising and setting goals with other talented, committed crime fiction writers. Authors Hallie Ephron and Roberta Isleib will guide you in assessing and improving two essential components of your writing. Writer and TV investigative reporter Hank Phillipi Ryan will join the group Saturday afternoon and evening. This is not a conventional lecture-style conference. Each participant will submit in advance the first 20 pages from a work-in-progress. In the course of the weekend, you will rotate through two focus groups, which will examine this sample of your work-in-progress from two different perspectives.

[www.robertaisleib.com/seascape.html](http://www.robertaisleib.com/seascape.html)

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## **WHY GENRE MATTERS**

### **A Presentation at Sleuthfest 2011**

#### **By S.J. Rozan**

Reported by Marie Hannan-Mandel

As a genre fiction writer, S.J. Rozan has been faced with two strands of "doubters". The first announce that they don't read crime novels because they only read "good" books. The second group ask her why she writes "this stuff" when she's clearly a good writer and could write "good" books.

In answer to the "only read good books" brigade she answers: We all try to write good books. The building blocks of fiction are all the same – character, plot, pacing, etc. Literary, or as some might say, "good" fiction and genre fiction are both created from the same raw materials, yet the genre fiction writer has an additional burden to follow the "laws" of the genre.

For "laws" don't read "formulas". Nobody would say basketball players play to a formula. All sportsmen and women have to do the training, and depending on what sport they play, they have to do other things as well in order to fulfill the requirements of their particular sport. Every game is different, but they play by their own set of rules. The genre fiction writer must do everything the literary fiction writer must while also satisfying the requirements of the genre. Just as Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did but backwards and in high heels, a genre writer trying to write well must do all the things the literary writer does, while fulfilling the demands of the genre or sub-genre. It doesn't mean a genre writer can coast; in reality, a genre writer has to work twice as hard to produce a "good" book.

The assumption is that genre writing is sub-standard and full of crap. That word is relevant because when someone asked Theodore Sturgeon why he wrote science fiction because 90% of it is crap, he said, "90% of everything is crap." That perception of genre as being "crap" is why some people have the "I only read good books" and others ask "why do you write that stuff?"

So, why do genre fiction writers write it, and why do people read it? Genres – crime, science fiction, westerns, coming-of-age, the whatever- you've- seen- before – that's genre fiction. Each genre is based upon ur-stories, that is, the stories that explain the reason for the thing and what lies behind it. As in good versus evil, chaos versus order. The western is people versus the wild. Romance is the possibility of connection. And the same holds for the sub-genres. Genre fiction tells the ur-stories about things that are important to us, and readers want to hear the story over and over again. Just like fairy tales, readers long to have somebody who could come save them.

Crime writers and crime readers want to believe that evil can be defeated. And even more than that, in all the sub-genres of crime, people read to find the reason, because in real life, there often is no reason. We want things to mean something. And that's why it doesn't really matter if the writer doesn't bring the bad guy to justice as long as the reader knows why he committed the crime. In real life you don't get that. That is the ur-story of crime fiction. That's why we read it, and why we write it. Each of the genres has its own ur-story. A lot of genre readers read across the genres and read literary fiction, too.

Literary fiction has no ur-story. There are those who stand around the fringes of what we do, such as, *Motherless Brooklyn* by Jonathan Lethem or *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. These are genre books but written by writers who already had a reputation as literary writers. There are writers like Margaret Atwood, who calls herself a genre writer, and is told "no, you're better than that." There are genre books

that the literary snobs are not afraid to read, and then there are the rest of us that they don't read.

That's because a literary novel that doesn't have merit won't be published because there's no ur-story. In the genres, the readers want the ur-story. They're voracious and are willing to put up with a lot to get it, and publishers know this. Why should the publishers cultivate writers who might take time to develop when they can get all these others? And the snobs look and see the crap. Readers don't want bad books, but they will take bad books over no books at all. Then the snobs skim the cream off the top – claiming that neither Margaret Atwood nor Jonathan Lethem write genre books. They skim the cream off the top and then complain about the skim milk that is left.

Genre writers don't have to put up with it. Genre doesn't contain crap because it's genre; it contains crap because the demand allows crap to be published. It's not that crappy literary novels aren't written. They don't find publishers because nobody's going to take a chance because there is no audience to point it at.

Publishers have always wanted to make money. Used to be a writer could publish more books with fewer sales, but now each must be a blockbuster. The existence of crap in the genre market is proof that there is a demand for the ur-stories we are telling. Which is good news for genre writers.

So, what about the "why do you write this stuff?" group?

Why did S.J. sit down to write this stuff? This has to do with the ur-story and apolitical approach. Why do the snobs feel they have to make this distinction in the first place? Why not read the book, and if it's a good book, it's a good book, and if it's a bad book, it's a bad book? There are countries where this distinction isn't made, Japan, for instance. The reason it happens here, in the United States, S.J. opines, is that, in theory we are a democratic, class-less society, so people don't know their place. One way to establish a place in society is in relation to other people. However, here there is little or no in-bred social hierarchy to guide the way. In Japan, there is a clear hierarchy; therefore, there is no need to establish one's place because it is already determined. It doesn't matter all that much what one does. Therefore, salary men are regularly seen on the subway reading comic books.

Here you have to be one of those educated superior beings who "get" fine art. This can be seen in all the arts. This is the level of snobbery where one can dismiss a whole bunch of people who are below the superior educated elite. But, by definition, a person can't do that if discussing a work of art, book, that a gazillion people love. In order to be part of the elite, one has to be one of the very few people who "get" that work. This is why there are inexplicable paintings. It works with books, too. If a million people like it, it must be crap. Every now and again something will break through and – "transcend the genre." It doesn't transcend the genre at all; it's right in the middle of the genre, but is acclaimed by the elite.

In Japan there is no snobbery at all. In France there is no snobbery about crime but there is about the other genres. This lack of snobbery is because there are other ways to establish oneself. Here one has to claw one's way to the top while denying there is a top at all. This is how we do it. And it's been going on since the foundation of this republic.

The only advice S.J. offers writers is to write good books and not take the easy way that genre writing offers of writing crap because it will be published. Write good books just as if you were Margaret Atwood and forget it, because you're never going to prove they're wrong. Or they might say it "transcends the genre" or is a "guilty pleasure".

What you need to do is keep writing the good books, and remember Ginger Rogers didn't get the respect Fred Astaire got, but she continued to practice. And she was great.

**Marie Hannan-Mandel is the editor of the *Noose*. An assistant professor at Corning Community College, Marie is also editor of *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*.**

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