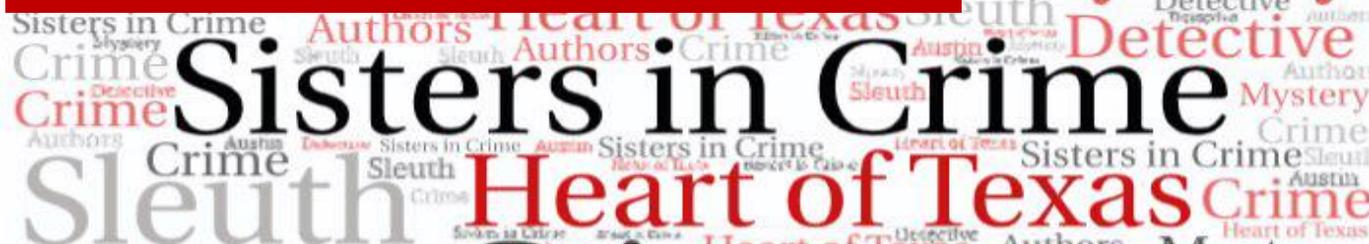


HOTSHOTS!

sinc-heartoftexas.com



MAY*AND JUNE MEETINGS – VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM!

“WRITING THE HISTORICAL MYSTERY NOVEL”

Join us May 16, 2021 @2 pm when Anna Castle, author of the *Francis Bacon mystery series* and the *Professor & Mrs. Moriarty mystery series* will talk about meeting the challenges of writing historical mysteries, how to choose place and time, and researching.



www.annacastle.com

[JOIN THE MEETING!](#)

" Writing: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly, and The Funny "



Join us June 13, 2021 @2 pm when Kaye George, national-best-selling, multiple-award-winning author of pre-history, traditional, and cozy mysteries will join us for a lively and entertaining walk through her storied career!

[JOIN THE MEETING!](#)

For details on past meetings, visit our website's [Past Meetings](#) section

CONTENTS

- Letter from President - 2
- Meet our Members – 3
- What’s that Smell? - 4
- Conferences – 7
- What’s Happening - 8

OFFICERS & CHAIRS

- K.P. Gresham – President
- Kelly Manfredini – Vice President
- Fran Paino -Secretary
- Dave Ciambone – Treasurer
- Kelly Cochran – Communications Chair

IMPORTANT - ACTION REQUIRED

Members: Please check your email! All members should have received an email explaining our move to Mailer Lite, an email platform that allows us to more effectively communicate with our members. The move to MailerLite requires that you sign up to receive emails from our chapter. If you have not already signed up, please contact us at chapter@sistersincrimeaustin.com for information on how to ensure you continue to receive communications from us. **If you do not sign up, you will no longer receive emails from our chapter, including emails about upcoming meetings, speakers, and events.**

Non-Members: If you are interested in receiving non-member communications, and informaton about our chapter benefits, you may also contact us at our chapter email adress mentioned above.

Letter from the Chapter President

Dear HoTSinC Members,

We are expanding our "**Members Only**" benefits. Besides the **bi-monthly newsletter**, and access to selling your books at our **Members-Only Texas Book Festival Table**, your Sisters in Crime, Heart of Texas Chapter is adding two additional opportunities for our members to participate in.

The first is a monthly "**Members-Only Marketing Happy Hour**" which (for now--we need your feedback on this!) will meet the first Thursday of the month at 4:00 pm via zoom to discuss marketing news and share ideas. Do you want to learn more about Kindle Vella that was just released? Guess what we're gonna be talking about! Our first happy hour will take place on Thursday, May 6th at 4:00 p.m. If you'd like to join us (with a beverage of your choice!) here is the Zoom link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85238919089>

The second benefit for your \$25.00 annual membership is our "**Get to Know the Writer Book Club.**" This is an opportunity for member authors to have their books read and reviewed. It's **not** a normal book club where every reader gives **their** opinion of the book. It's a chance for the readers to ask the authors how they put their book together. Why did you do this? Where did this idea come from? What was your biggest challenge in writing this? We are looking for member authors who are willing to choose the book they would like the group to read, and then we'll get the ball rolling. Please contact me at chapter@sistersincrimeaustin.com to get this party started!

Finally, as you've heard a hundred times, we are updating our email system and newsletter distribution system. We need YOUR permission to send you these items to keep the internet gods happy.

If you are a member and have not yet received your email with instructions on how to make sure you continue receiving emails from our chapter, please contact us at chapter@sistersincrimeaustin.com

If you are not a member and want to learn about what's happening with the Sisters in Crime, Heart of Texas Chapter, you can also email us at chapter@sistersincrimeaustin.com or you can sign up [here](#). This link is for non-members only, please do not use this link if you are already a member.

Finally, we hope to resume our In-Person meetings sometime this summer. We are coordinating these efforts with the Laura Bush Community Library as we speak.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and keep those mystery book pages flying!

KP Gresham
President
Sisters in Crime, Heart of Texas Chapter

*A pleasure to
meet you!*

Meet Our Members

Our members are a great bunch of people, from mystery fans, to aspiring authors, to both indie and traditionally published authors, we have it all. Unfortunately, there isn't always a lot of time to get to know our members due to members not being able to attend meetings, or our speakers being so interesting that our meetings run long, and of course over the past 14 months, the pandemic.

We started this column to allow all of us to get to know a little something about our members. If you have missed meeting any of the members we have introduced, check out the list of members who have been highlighted in past issues:

MEMBER	ISSUE
Burford, Pamela	Sep/Oct 2020
Cedeño, N.M	May 2019
Ciambrone, Dave	Jul 2019
Cochran, Kelly	Oct 2019
Fanick, Helen Haught	Apr 2020
Foster, Helen Currie	Nov 2019
Gresham, K. P.	Jun 2019
Kelly, Patrick	Jan/Feb 2021
Manfredini, Kelly	Jul/Aug 2020
Orlando, Tom	Mar/Apr 2021
Paino, Francine	Aug 2019
Waller, Kathy	Sep 2019

We'd like to me you!

It is simple. You do not have to be a published author to be featured. If you are a published author, we can highlight your newest book or your series. If you are aspiring to become published, we can share an excerpt of your work. If you are a mystery fan, we can highlight your favorite mystery book.

Email Kelly at chapter@sistersincrimeaustin.com and let her know you are interested in being profiled in the Meet our Members column.

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

BY HELEN CURRIE FOSTER

In the back of the closet, I recently unearthed my mother's old Caswell Massey "Gardenia" bubble bath. The resulting bath held astonishing comfort and nostalgia. It smelled like her house.

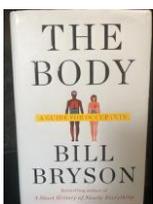
Mystery writers can use smell to reinforce not only setting and character, but powerful plots. Here are strong examples from the first chapter of [Lethal White](#), the fourth in Robert Galbraith's Cormoran Strike series. Chapter one begins with the wedding of Strike's former co-detective Robin Ellacott and her long-time (but insufferable) fiancé Matthew Cunliffe, arguing while the wedding photographer tries to get some decent shots. Strike has fired Robin, partly from fear she'll be killed. Without her job, Robin's miserable. Matthew's furious because of the joy he saw on Robin's face when Strike arrived for the ceremony, heavily bandaged from capturing a killer. And now, arguing with Matthew, how does Robin feel? "The sweet, ticklish smell of hot grass filled her nostrils as the sun beat down on her uncovered shoulders." The hot smell matches Robin's itchy misery as she second-guesses her marriage to Matthew.

The country hotel setting smells beautiful, in stark contrast to Strike's emotions: "For a while he lurked at the end of the bar, nursing a pint...and then repaired to the terrace, where he had stood apart from the other smokers and contemplated the dappled evening, breathing in the sweet meadow smell beneath a coral sky." Sweet meadow smell; miserable situation.

Robin finally reaches Strike on the stairs as he's leaving: "They were holding each other tightly before they knew what had happened, Robin's chin on Strike's shoulder, his face in her hair. He smelled of sweat, beer, and surgical spirits, she, of roses and the faint perfume that he had missed when she was no longer in the office." The scene is almost shocking in its sensory overload. We feel their powerful attraction. Galbraith (J. K. Rowling) brilliantly gives us not only the protagonists, but the pain of their predicament, using scent to remind us of Strike's injury (surgical spirits) and the fact that he has missed her perfume because she's no longer in the office.

We already know that Chet, the heroic detective dog of Spencer Quinn's Chet and Bernie series, is a dog of admirable olfactory sensitivity. He feels sorry for his human partner, Bernie (who labors under the misapprehension that *he*, not Chet, is the detective), because Chet knows human limitations, olfactorily speaking.

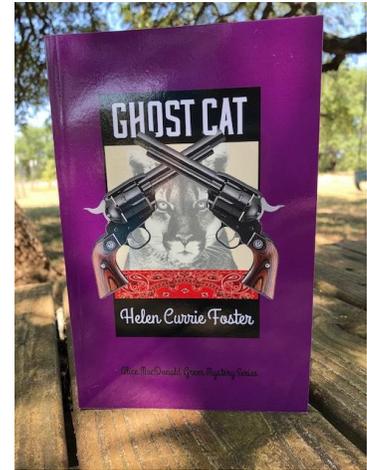
Chet and Bernie search for lost young campers in Spencer Quinn's [The Dog Who Knew Too Much](#). Chet's nose moves the plot along: "I smelled ashes, plus chocolate, the way it smells when hot chocolate gets burned in the pot, and....the remains of a not-too-long-ago campfire. I knew fire pits, of course, went over and took some closer sniffs. Burned hot chocolate, yes. There'd also been Spam and something eggy. I stuck my nose just about right into the ashes. They were cold." Oh, the advantages of a detective dog as protagonist.



Well, Chet, don't underrate us. Research shows we humans can detect at least a trillion odors! Bill Bryson, [The Body](#), at 90.

Furthermore, as Chet the dog already knows, we humans each have our own unique scent: “It’s like a fingerprint,” says Johan Lundström, a neuroscientist at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, in “The Sense of Smell in Humans is More Powerful Than We Think,” by Marta Zaraska—an [interesting article](#).

Didn’t we already know we can identify the scent of the loved one? Mothers can recognize their newborns by smell (and vice versa). Bryson says olfactory information goes directly to our olfactory cortex, next to the hippocampus, where memories are shaped, which is why some neuroscientists think certain smells evoke memories. Oh, didn’t Proust mention that? Scent brings back the dead, if only for a second. In my [Ghost Cat](#), after the death of his wife Holly, Russ confesses that when he walks in the house, he lifts his eyes and inhales: “I always hope for a little whiff of Holly.”



However--some odors fly under our radar. We may feel, but can’t always articulate, how certain smells arouse our emotions. We say fear is contagious but we haven’t known how. Zaraska cites research showing when we smell body odor from a stressed person, we ourselves become more vigilant. When we smell body odor of a close relative, per Zaraska, we can recognize family, and our dorsomedial-prefrontal cortex can light up. Maybe some of this we’ve known without really knowing it.

Plus, we apparently have sensory radar for genetic information. For mating! A woman inhaling body odor of a potential mate senses how genetically related the two are--by sniffing a gene family that links body scent and the immune system, called the “major histocompatibility complex” or “MHC.” This capacity is useful: we like our mates to be related enough--but not too much. My protagonist Alice, lawyer and amateur sleuth in the Alice MacDonald Greer Mystery series, is well aware how much she likes the way her love interest Ben Kinsear smells--he “smells good”--but she hasn’t put words to the smell the way Chet the dog has. He defines his own smell as “the most familiar smell in the world: old leather, salt and pepper, mink coats, and just a soupcon of tomato; and to be honest, a healthy dash of something male and funky. My smell: yes, sir.”

Could you define your own smell? With aromatic detail? Probably not. A loved one might be able to.

Smell can deepen a scene, define character, highlight plot. Ann Cleeves, in [Dead Water](#) (her *Shetland* series) describes the reception desk in the hotel, a key setting, as “all dark wood, with the smell of beeswax.” The sweet smell, the dark venue.

Elly Griffiths in [The Crossing Places](#) shows us her protagonist, archeologist Ruth Galloway: “Climbing the danksmelling staircase to her office, she thinks about her first lecture: First Principles in Excavation.” Danksmelling...excavation. Her job.

Louise Penny, in [A Better Man](#), uses smell to reinforce the humiliating demotion of her protagonist, Quebec Inspector Armand Gamache. A former subordinate now bosses him. A giant ice storm with crashing ice flows and high water threatens Quebec. Worried the Champlain bridge will break, on the way to a police meeting, Gamache gets splattered with mud trying to see whether the dam will hold.

“I see some of the crap thrown at you today on Twitter has stuck,” said the senior officer from the RCMP, gesturing at Gamache’s clothing.

Gamache smiled. “Fortunately, it won’t stain.”

“But it does smell,” said the Mountie, with a wry smile. “Helluva first day back on the job, Armand.”

A great metaphor for the smelly attacks on Gamache that have led to his demotion.

In *A Cinnabar Sky’s* opening scene, Billy Kring uses smell to build dread and suspense around the locked trunk his protagonist Hunter Kincaid and her companion Buddy are about to pry open. Buddy says, “Now the smell is more like a really bad swamp, right?” When they pop the trunk, it’s “like an abandoned slaughterhouse gone fetid and rotten in the summer heat.”

In the upcoming *Ghost Daughter*, seventh in my series, Alice quizzes a young friend about a new boyfriend. Alice blurts, “So he smells good?” She realizes her own standards for a lifetime companion involve “someone who smelled right...” Probably you’ve all had that experience. Maybe that’s how humans perceive certain under-the-radar scents, as “right” or “not right,” as “good” or “threatening.” Based on Zaraska’s article I suppose “good” may mean “right” in terms of the mysterious “major histocompatibility complex.” Not sure that’s how I want to describe it, though.

I’ll keep working on aromatic pages.



[Helen Currie Foster](#) is the author of the Alice MacDonald Greer Mystery series. She earned a BA from Wellesley College, an MA from the University of Texas, and a JD from the University of Michigan. Married with two children, she lives north of Dripping Springs, Texas, supervised by three burros. She works in Austin, and she’s active with the Hays County Master Naturalists and the board of Austin Shakespeare. Many thanks to Helen for allowing Sisters in Crime – Heart of Texas Chapter to reprint her blog posting at [The Ink-Stained Wretches](#).



NATIONAL MYSTERY CONFERENCES/CONVENTION UPDATE

If you are ready to travel or even if you're not, the mystery community has several conferences/conventions this year that are ready to teach you, introduce you to new friends, and get you excited to read and write mysteries!

Virtual ThrillerFest XVI

June 28-July 10, 2021

Hosted by International Thriller Writers

<https://thrillerfest.com/>

Virtual Murdercon

August 6-7, 2021

Hosted by the Writers Police Academy
and Sirchie

<https://writerspoliceacademy.com/>

Killer Nashville (Currently In-Person)

International Writers' Conference

August 19-22, 2021

Franklin, Tennessee

<https://killernashville.com/>

Bouchercon, 2021(Currently In-Person)

"Blood on the Bayou"

The World Mystery Convention

August 25-29, 2021

New Orleans, LA

<https://www.bouchercon2021.com/>

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Upcoming meetings, contests, conferences, book signings, etc.

Upcoming Chapter Meetings

All meetings are currently held virtually via Zoom. Details <https://sinc-heartoftexas.com/meetings-events/3105-2/>

- **May 16, 2021*** – **Writing the Historical Mystery Novel**, Anna Castle, author of *Francis Bacon mystery series* and the *Professor & Mrs. Moriarty mystery series* will talk about meeting the challenges of writing historical mysteries.
- **June 9, 2021** – **Writing: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly, and The Funny**, Kaye George, national-bestselling, multiple-award-winning author of pre-history, traditional, and cozy mysteries will join us for a lively and entertaining walk through her storied career!
- **July 11, 2021** – **Learn What It Means to Be a Female Private Eye**, Anji Maddox, Founder of She Spies Private Eye, Inc will share her 19 years of experience in the field of investigations

*This is the 3rd Sunday of the month instead of the 2nd Sunday

Sharing – Chapter Meetings

- **May 16, 2021 (Houston – Virtual) - Classical Poisons – Lucy Zahray** – a retired pharmacist with an extensive knowledge of poisons and how they operate, native Texan, Zahray has a master's degree in toxicology from Texas A&M University and twenty-five years' experience in the field. She has been dubbed “The Poison Lady” and enjoys sharing her knowledge with others, including at the national Malice Domestic conference and with writers' groups across the country. Zahray’s fun and interesting presentations address poisons found in everyday plants, over-the-counter medications, and household chemicals. **If you wish to attend, please email the Houston Chapter President, Carol Bennetts, at carolbennetts@att.net**

Call for Submissions

- **June 1, 2021 – Die Laughing – An Anthology of Humorous Mysteries**
Short Story (1000 – 8000 words). **Payment .02 per word** <https://mysteryweekly.com/submit.asp>
- **June 1, 2021 – True Crime - “THE BEST NEW TRUE CRIME STORIES: PARTNERS IN CRIME”** fifth volume - Query first with a brief pitch. Submission - 4,000 to 7,000 words. Payment \$130 plus 2 books. <https://mitzischereto.com/call-for-submissions/>
- **September 1, 2021 – True Crime - “THE BEST NEW TRUE CRIME STORIES: UNSOLVED CRIMES & MYSTERIES”** sixth volume - Query first with a brief pitch. Submission - 4,000 to 7,000 words. Payment \$130 plus 2 books. <https://mitzischereto.com/call-for-submissions/>
- **September 1, 2021**– <https://twitter.com/MysteryWeekly/status/1382038965914628101?s=20>