THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE®

WINTER 1995 • VOLUME 28 • NUMBER 1 • $7.50

William G. Tapply

An Interview with the Creator of Boston's Brady Coyne

Yankees on the Orient Express

Americans in British Novels of the Golden Age

Books, Crooks and Antiquarian Flatfoots

The Bookseller in Mystery Fiction

Nicolas Freeling

Master of the European Novel of Crime

JOAN HESS

More Madness in Maggody

DEATH OF A POSTMODERNIST
Janice Steinberg

The debut of an exciting series featuring San Diego Public Radio Reporter Margo Simon.

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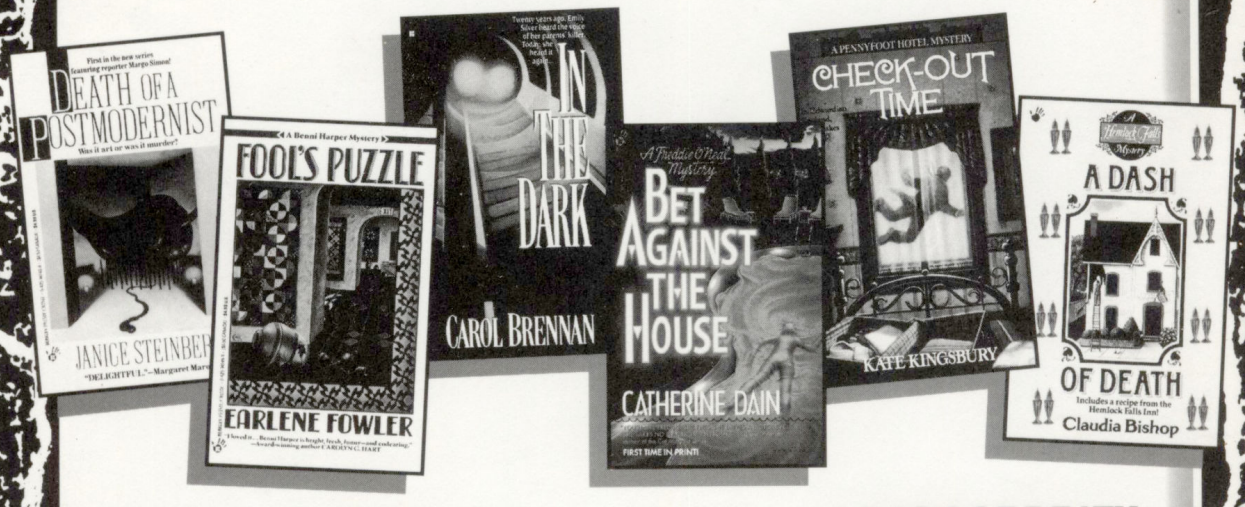

FOOL'S PUZZLE
Earlene Fowler

"A neat little mystery…her plot is compelling…."*—Booklist*

Introducing Albenia "Benni" Harper—quilter and folk art expert. After the sudden death of her husband, Benni starts over in San Celina, California, as curator of the town's folk art museum. When her cousin is accused of murder, Benni is determined to clear her name.

Look for Earlene Fowler's new hardcover, IRISH CHAIN, available March 1995.

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Catherine Dain

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Claudia Bishop

The Quilliam sisters of Hemlock Falls Inn in their second mystery.

The TV show "It's A Beautiful Life" is sponsoring a design contest in Hemlock Falls, pitting the women of the town against each other for a place in the spotlight. When one winner dies and another disappears, the Quilliam sisters have to put business on hold to catch a killer. By the author of *A Taste for Murder.*

Includes a recipe from the Hemlock Falls Inn

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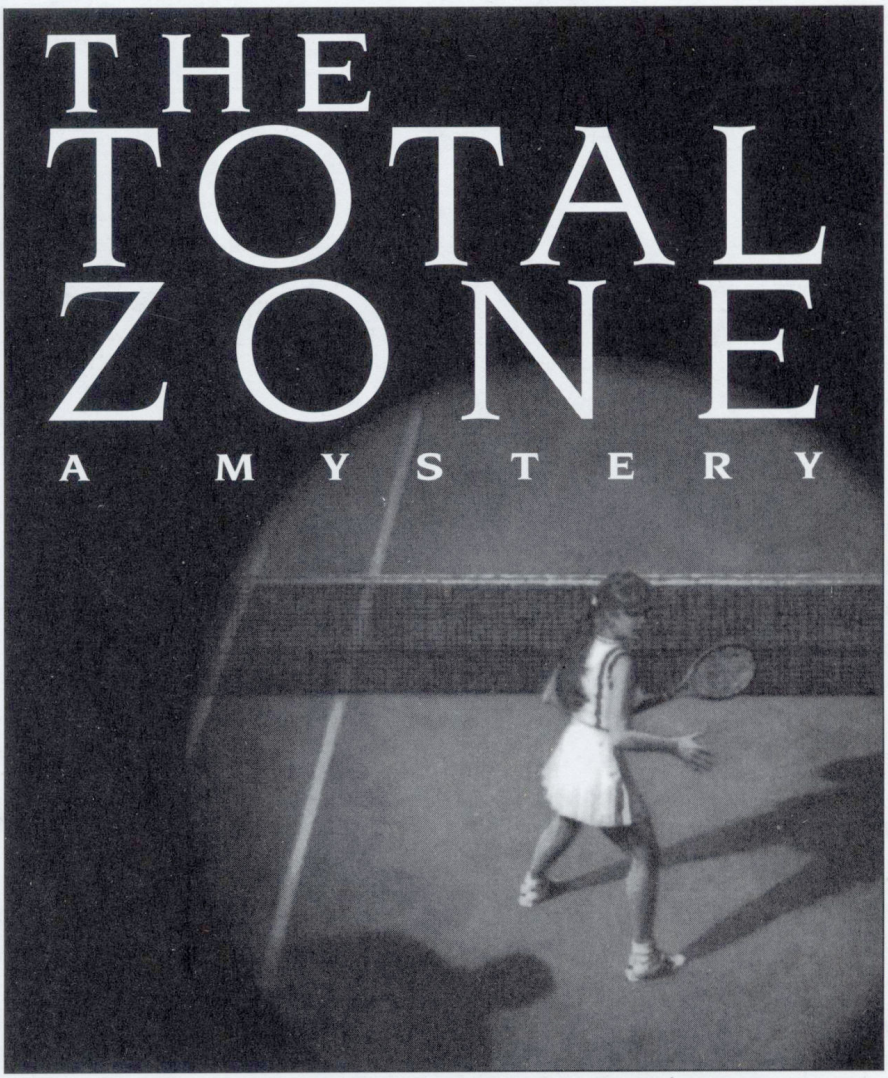

"Delightfully entertaining...a major win."

—Patricia D. Cornwell

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THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE®

WINTER 1995 • VOLUME 28 • NUMBER 1

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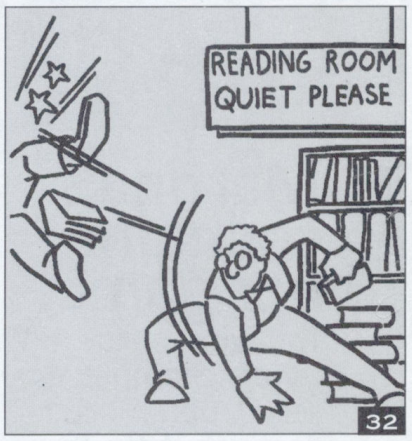

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Uneasy Chair

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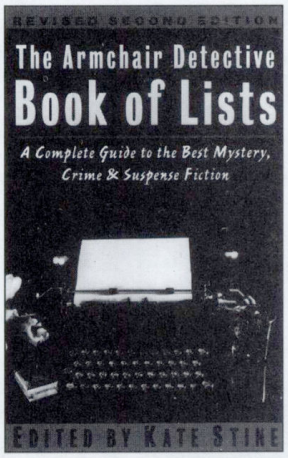
As a former Hoosier myself, I'm happy to report that the first annual Magna Cum Murder Mystery Conference in Muncie, Indiana, was a great success. The nice folks at Ball State University—Kathryn Kennison and Joanna Wallace in particular—did a superb job of making fans and writers feel welcome and involved. One of the distinguishing feature of this new conference is its university setting and the participation of Ball State's faculty as well as that of other academics from a variety of colleges.

Getting into the spirit of the occasion, TAD announced its first annual Armchair Detective Award for outstanding scholarship in the crime and mystery field at the Magna Cum Murder Conference. In recognition of the hard work and low returns involved in academic work, the winner of The Armchair Detective Award receives a $500 cash prize as well as a bronze statuette of, appropriately enough, an armchair.



The winner of the 1994 Armchair Detective Award is *Alarms & Epitaphs: The Art of Eric Ambler* by Peter Wolfe. Professor Wolfe, who teaches at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, is the author of a number of critical works, including the 1988 Edgar-nominee, *Corridors of Deceit: The World of John le Carré*. TAD would like to extend hearty congratulations to Professor Wolfe for his distinguished contribution to mystery scholarship.

We would also like to thank the knowledgeable judges on our award committee: B.J. Rahn, professor at Hunter College and editor of *Murder is Academic*; William F. Deeck, one of the guiding forces behind the Malice Domestic Conference; Don Sandstrom, reviewer and prominent fan; and Mary Clark-Upchurch, a professor at Ball State University. (Note: Due to a horribly malignant cold contracted at Bouchercon, I didn't make arrangements for coverage of this conference in TAD. But since this will be an annual event, we plan to do better next year.)

While we're on a scholarly theme... the second edition of *The Armchair Detective Book of Lists* will be available in bookstores in February. Edited by yours truly, this revised and expanded edition includes complete listings of all the major mystery awards, conferences, magazines, fan clubs, newsletters and "best of" lists by famous writers, critics and booksellers. Compiled with the advice and contributions of many experts in the mystery field—including a number of TAD contributors—we think you'll find it a fun and informative addition to your mystery library.

Enjoy!

Kate Stine
Editor-in-chief

Notice: We would like to inform our readers of a change in our subscription prices due to increasing postal costs. Effective July 1, 1995 our new rates are: 1 year-$31.00; 2 years-$57. Outside of the U.S. 1 year surface mail-$35; 2 years surface mail-$65; 1 year airmail-$48; 2 years airmail-$90. ■

Letters

Literary Criticism? Or Mere Denigration?

Dear TAD,

I'm concerned lest readers of TAD should take Nicolas Freeling's intemperate dismissal of Margery Allingham's novel, *The Tiger in the Smoke*, as the last word on the subject. There is another view and it is on record: in Julian Symons' *Bloody Murder*, where it is described as "a thriller of the highest quality"; and in an earlier edition of TAD, where I set out at length my reasons for admiring it intensely.

It is sad to see any crime writer engaged in the business of denigrating another, since they are both trying, simply, to please the reading public; but evidently Mr. Freeling's contempt for *Tiger* is stronger than any putative authorial fellow-feeling that he might on occasion feel. However, it is perhaps desirable to remind readers of TAD that Mr. Freeling speaks only for himself and those who share his view; he certainly does not speak for everyone. His imputation that Margery Allingham, though "highly thought of" in 1952, is now deemed negligible is also questionable. That her work continues to be reprinted confirms that she is still giving pleasure to readers.

I would ask any readers of TAD who are tempted to dismiss Margery Allingham because of Mr. Freeling's attack on her to read *The Tiger in the Smoke* and decide for themselves. That way they will know how they feel about it.

B.A. Pike
London, England

There are several issues in this letter, that we would like to address. TAD has always been—and will remain—dedicated to criticism of the highest caliber. TAD firmly believes that the function of a critic—which Nicolas Freeling was fulfilling in his article—requires value judgements. Certainly Julian Symons' distinguished Bloody Murder *did not always display "authorial fellow-feeling" (see his rather*

sharp comments on the novels of James Ellroy or Andrew Vachss, for example), nor would that have been appropriate in a critical overview. We have little patience for vendettas or spite, but I think our record shows that we always have room for sincere differences of critical opinion in our magazine.—ed.

Musings on Miller

Dear TAD,

Regarding Dean A. Miller's letter in the Fall issue of TAD (27:4):

In his comments on Sara Paretsky, he mentions one of Michigan's wonderful cities in a derogatory manner; worse yet, he cannot even spell it correctly. ESCANABA, not ESKENABA Mr. Miller, is how it should be spelled. Any 8th grader from there could at least do that much.

LAURA KUHN
Allen Park, MI

Dear TAD,

It was a pleasure to meet all of you at the TAD table at Bouchercon, and nice to find the latest issue waiting for me when I returned. Your columnists, particularly Marv Lachman, Jon Breen, and Bill DeAndrea, were entertaining and informative as usual, and I was especially glad to see an interview with David M. Pierce—who for a Canadian living in France does really good Southern California. And Bill Deeck is a national treasure. I applaud the decision to discontinue fiction in your pages, by the way.

But surely the letter you printed from Dean Miller was a spoof, yes? No one past the maturity level of an attention-seeking high school sophomore would be quite so gratuitously offensive, or describe himself in terms so pompous as "a semi-professional critic of the mystery and detections genres" while at the same time chiding others for taking themselves too seriously. But if not, one wonders what a "semi-professional" is—someone who gets paid *occasionally*, perhaps? It's obvious, though, that a "critic" is one who expresses opinions as canonical law, and in the snottiest possible terms. Assuming that Mr. Miller is real, I await his further appearances in your pages with bated breath. As a mere reader, fan, and reviewer (sharply differentiated from a *critic*, to be sure, even one of the semi-professional variety) I'm always eager to be instructed by my betters, particularly in the avoidance of taking myself too seriously.

BARRY W. GARDNER
Dallas, TX

We, too, were somewhat taken aback by Mr. Miller's rhetoric—but we have no reason to believe it was a spoof.—ed.

Late Vote in Readers' Survey

Dear TAD,

I was disappointed that Patricia D. Cornwell did not make your survey of the best mystery authors. I also feel guilty since I didn't vote for her myself. Unfortunately, I filled out my ballot before I discovered Ms. Cornwell's work. So I'd like to correct that mistake here in your letter section.

Patricia D. Cornwell is one great mystery writer, and I advise any reader not yet familiar with her to grab a copy of *Cruel & Unusual* and prepare to miss some sleep. Even if you hate police procedurals (as I do), you won't want to put this one down.

And while we're on the subject, Elmore Leonard ain't too bad, either. I was surprised that Leonard and Cornwell were both overlooked when the list *did* include Robert B. Parker (who hasn't written one quality novel in the last decade) and Sue Grafton (who hasn't written one quality novel in her career).

BILL BYSTRICKY
Sunnyvale, CA

A Not-To-Be-Missed Hammett Novella

Dear TAD,

The Fall 1994 issue (27:4) was a minor gem of finely done articles and inter-

Mystery Best-Seller List JULY-SEPTEMBER 1994

HARDCOVERS:

1. *Dixie City Jam*—James Lee Burke
2. *A Long Line of Dead Men*—Lawrence Block
3. *Playing for the Ashes*—Elizabeth George
4. *The Body Farm*—Patricia Cornwell
5. *The Last Suppers*—Diane Mott Davidson
6. *Mallory's Oracle*—Carol O'Connell
7. *Night Train to Memphis*—Elizabeth Peters
8. *One for the Money*—Janet Evanovich
9. *Scandal at Fair Haven*—Carolyn Hart
10. *Sanctuary*—Faye Kellerman

PAPERBACKS:

1. *The Cereal Murders*—Diane Mott Davidson
2. *Festival of Death*—Jane Haddam
3. *The Sculptress*—Minette Walters
4. *Aunt Dimity's Death*—Nancy Atherton
5. *List of Seven*—Mark Frost
6. *Agatha Raisin and the Vicious Vet*—M.C. Beaton
7. *Dead Man's Island*—Carolyn Hart
8. *Mystery Bred in Buckhead*—Patricia Houck Sprinkle
9. *Every Crooked Nanny*—Kathy Hogan Trochek
10. *Missing Joseph*—Elizabeth George

PARTICIPATING STORES:

The following mystery bookstores furnished information:
Aunt Agatha's, Ann Arbor, MI;
Murder by the Book, Houston, TX;
Murder for Fun, Raleigh, NC;
Mysterious Bookshop, New York, NY;
Mysterious Galaxy, San Diego, CE;
Mystery Bookshop, Bethesda, MD;
The Mystery Book Store, Dallas, TX;
and Salmagundi, Naperville, IL.

IMBA is a trade association of independent bookstores or related businesses having a strong interest in mystery. Its purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas a channel for communication, and an effective force for change.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION WRITE TO:

Barbara Peters
The Poisoned Pen
7100 E. Main Street
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

views. The piece by William F. Deeck on James Corbett as writer was fine satire. Mordant wit "on the cuff." The author is a Spinx in search of Egypt!

The triptych essay on Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett and Erle Stanley Gardner was finely done, too. I especially enjoyed the illustrations of book-covers from the 1920s and 1930s. I regret, however, that no mention was made (under the year 1933) of Hammett's intriguing little novelette, *Woman in the Dark*, published in serial form by *Liberty* magazine. Reprinted in paperback by Vintage Books, it is only 76 pages with a surprisingly excellent essay by writer Robert B. Parker. It shows in mini-form all of Hammett's major strengths as a mystery writer—plus some of his weaknesses. It's romance elements can't hide the atmosphere of a chaotic Universe. The tone is one of hopeless Stoicism, the acceptance of a Manichean cosmos with no God to save us and with the certainty that the evil of a chaotic world will still enclose our lives. It's worth the look for any Hammett lover.

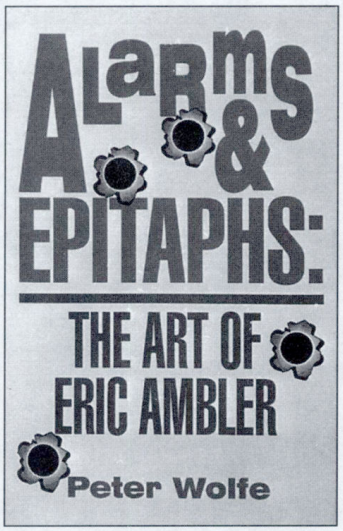
THOMAS M. EGAN
Woodside, NY

Announcing the First Annual

ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE AWARD

FOR THE BEST SCHOLARLY WORK IN THE MYSTERY GENRE

The Armchair Detective, the world's premiere journal devoted to crime and mystery fiction, is pleased to announce its first annual Armchair Detective Award for the best critical/biographical work in the crime and mystery genre.



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PETER WOLFE is a professor of English at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. His other works include a trilogy of critical books on America's leading detective novelists: *Dreamers Who Live Their Dreams: The World of Ross Macdonald's Novels*, *Beams Falling: The Art of Dashiell Hammett* and *Something More Than Night: The Case of Raymond Chandler*. In 1987, his *Corridors of Deceit: the World of John le Carré* was nominated for an Edgar Allan Poe Award.

The aim of The Armchair Detective Award is to help promote the scholarly study of the crime and mystery genre. To that end, a panel of distinguished experts will select the best book in that category each year. The winning book will be featured in TAD and the author will receive an award and a $500.00 prize.

INTERVIEW

TICKLED TO DEATH

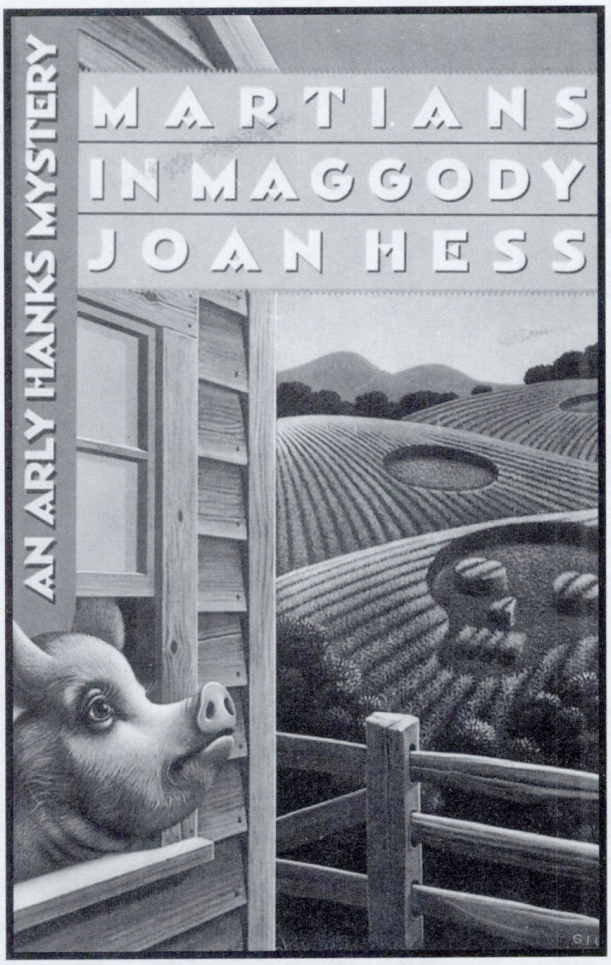
An Interview With Joan Hess

By Charles L.P. Silet

Photograph by Richard Berquist

Joan Hess confesses that she has no formal training in writing beyond the obligatory English class assignments. But since the age of six, she has been a voracious reader of mystery fiction, consuming everything from the Hardy Boys to Agatha Christie. Before she began to write them herself, she read as many as five to ten crime books a week. However informal her background, since 1986, Joan Hess has published almost twenty novels, and there is no indication that she intends to slacken her pace. Currently, she is the author of two highly successful crime series, one featuring the amateur detective, Claire Malloy, and the other set in the small town of Maggody, Arkansas.

She began the Claire Malloy books with *Strangled Prose* (1986), and since then has written nine more, including her latest, *Tickled to Death* (1994). Claire Malloy is a widowed, single mother, who lives with her teenaged daughter, Caron, in the college town of Farberville, Arkansas, where she owns a bookstore, the Book Depot, located in an old train station. In spite of her outwardly quiet life, Claire seems to stumble across more than her share of dead bodies, which much to the concern of her sometime lover, Lt. Peter Rosen of the local police department, she insists on investigating. Thus far in the series Claire has looked into murders at the Farberville high school, a college sorority, a bird sanctuary, and a local beauty pageant. Solving homicides, struggling to keep her financially precarious bookstore afloat, and coping with the hormonal vagaries of her daughter, keeps Claire perpetually on the run and gives the series a wonderful resonance and depth.



The enormously funny and popular Maggody series began in 1987 with *Malice in Maggody*. Now there are seven others, including *Martians in Maggody* (1994) which appeared last fall. Maggody, Arkansas (population 755), serves as the setting for hilarious small town mysteries featuring a cast of locals who appear to be a cross between characters from "Hee Haw" and escapees from a Faulkner novel. The protagonist is Arly Hanks, who went off to the bright lights of "Noow Yark," and returned to Maggody to recuperate from a disastrous marriage. She became sheriff because nobody else wanted the job. The series plays off the ongoing life stories of Arly's meddlesome mother, Ruby Bee, who runs Ruby Bee's Bar & Grill, and her friend Estelle Oppers of Estelle's Hair Fantasies, and includes the Reverend Verber, Jim Bob and his sanctimonious wife, Raz Buchanan and his prize sow, Marjorie, and an assortment of other eccentric small-town types. Arly works diligently to keep the peace and to establish sanity in this loony community.

Hess also wrote a third series, under the pseudonym of Joan Hadley, which featured retired florist, Theo Bloomer, but it ended after only two books, *The Night-Blooming Cereus* (1986) and *The Deadly Ackee* (1988). She occasionally threatens to revive it.

In the following interview, Joan Hess talks, often irreverently, about her characters and her writing and about the place of the crime novel in contemporary life.

TAD: Let me begin by asking about your background, where you grew up, went to school, that sort of thing.

HESS: I'm fifth generation Fayetteville, Arkansas, and did a bachelors at the university here in art and a masters in Long Island in early childhood education. I eventually combined the degrees to teach art in a pre-school.

TAD: You lived in Long Island and moved back to Fayetteville?

HESS: Yes, I hated every minute in New York. Fayetteville is so much more civilized. I get static from people who ask, "How can you live in Arkansas?" I wonder how people can live in New York and get anything done.

TAD: I understand that you got interested in writing by working on a romance novel with a friend.

HESS: Well, I was teaching art at the time and a friend came to me and said we must make our fortunes writing romance novels. I replied with something along the lines of "Huh?" I had never written anything that wasn't due on Monday, and I'd never read a romance novel. This was the early

Charles L.P. Silet teaches contemporary fiction and film at Iowa State University. He is currently putting together a book of his interviews with crime writers and editing a collection of essays on Alfred Hitchcock's classic film *Psycho*.

eighties, and the romance market was very, very hot. I finally persuaded my mother to check some out from the local public library. I read one and half of them and said, "OK, I get it." I sat down and wrote the first three chapters of a novel and sent it off to Harlequin. I received a very encouraging rejection letter—"almost but not quite,"—and asking if I had anything else they could look at. I concluded that it wasn't that hard. Shortly after that, I was at a party late at night, and a friend who did a cookbook and I decided to collaborate, because what on earth does the American woman want more than romance and cooking? We facetiously called it *Recipes for Romance*. We strung together ten or twelve short stories about sisters and various relatives; each resolved the hero and heroine's various problems and sent them to bed. One of my favorite lines is: "Dawn sautéed two chicken breasts in clarified butter as she gazed lovingly across the candlelit dining table." This is what sold. But it was much, much harder to write romances than I realized, and there is only so much you can fake. I did about eight more romance novels, some of them a hundred thousand words, some unfinished, and they were all politely rejected as having too much plot.

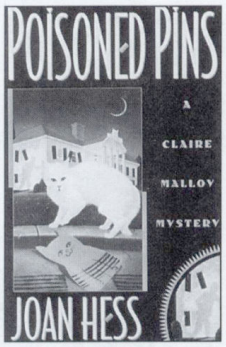
TAD: Didn't that writing experience get you started on your craft?

HESS: Yes, it certainly was a valuable learning experience, both the writing and the frustration as well. In November of 1984 I investigated a Ph.D. program at the university, and was accepted over the telephone. I talked to the head of the Education Department, and he said he'd give me special admission in January. All I had to do was arrange for my transcripts to be sent down from New York, sign a few papers, and work out the class schedule. I panicked, called my agent, and said, "Stop me!" She suggested that I write a mystery. At that point I decided I would give myself the spring semester to try to write a first draft; if it didn't sell, then I would go to school. That's when I wrote *Strangled Prose,* and it was so much more fun than writing romances. Romances were very restrictive. I discovered that in the mystery you could pretty much do anything you wanted. I had probably read ten thousand mysteries by then. Even when I was writing romances, I was reading them. I would go to the library and start with Catherine Aird and work around to Donald Westlake. Then I would just go back and start again.

A woman at a UFO conference told me that she and her roommate were abducted by aliens—and they had no memory of it. I didn't ask the obvious question.

TAD: Where did you come up with the idea for Claire Malloy?

HESS: When I decided to write a mystery, my agent strongly suggested that I think in terms of a series. It seemed logical to write about a woman, and I chose a woman in her thirties. Claire has barely aged since 1985. I, on the other hand, have been leaping ahead. She's about to turn forty now. I gave her a bookstore because I couldn't think of anything more fun than running a bookstore. Because, of course, all booksellers do all day is sit around and read books, right? I gave her a daughter because I have a daughter. I made her a widow, which in retrospect was prophetic. At the time I was very happily married, but by the time the first book was published, I was very happily divorced.



TAD: Isn't Farberville a disguised Fayetteville?

HESS: People who live in Fayetteville recognize many of the places in the novels. I don't think it was a conscious decision to model it on my hometown. It just happened to be what I knew, and it saved me all kinds of effort. Instead of having to sit down and create places in my mind, I rearranged Fayetteville. I know exactly where Claire lives and the layout of the town, so when I have her walk somewhere I know precisely how long it takes.

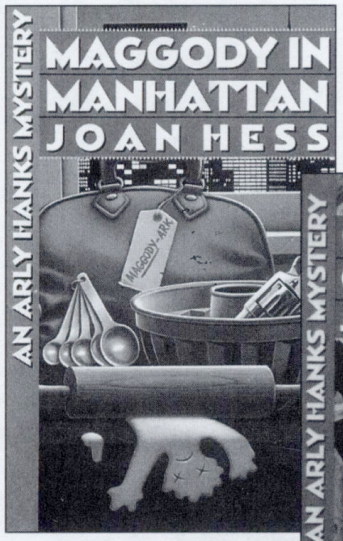
TAD: Why did you give Claire a teenage daughter while most female protagonists have remained unencumbered by family?

HESS: For novelty, I suppose. I've always been partial to the traditional mystery, so it seems normal to have a similar format to work around. I very much respect the authors who have characters with small children. Even with a daughter, Claire can go hither and yon without having to arrange for a baby-sitter.

TAD: It also helps to create a certain amount of the humor...

HESS: If Claire were totally on her own, I would still have to manufacture someone for her to talk with. Caron provides an interesting foil, and on occasion she helps to complicate the plot.

TAD: So otherwise you would have to do more with someone like Lt. Rosen, for example?



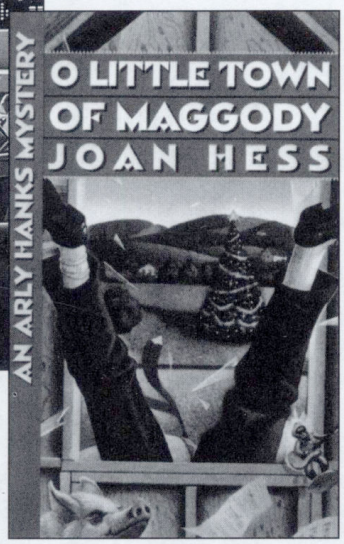
HESS: I did not intend for Claire to get involved with him. In fact, I had a great deal of trouble in the second book when it became obvious that they were going to have a relationship. I don't even acknowledge the existence of writer's block, but occasionally I write myself into a corner. In *Murder at the Murder at the Mimosa Inn,* Claire and Peter went around the far side of the lake and sat on a log for about a week while I tried to figure out what was going to happen. I finally resolved that, but at this point, I would dearly like to have him hit by a bus. In *Dear Miss Demeanor,* a little strain developed in their relationship. In *Death by the Light of the Moon,* Claire grudgingly calls Peter on the phone. In *Poisoned Pins,* there is more strain. Peter keeps appearing less and less. I have a hard time dealing with their relationship and what is going to happen to it.

TAD: How has the Claire Malloy series developed?

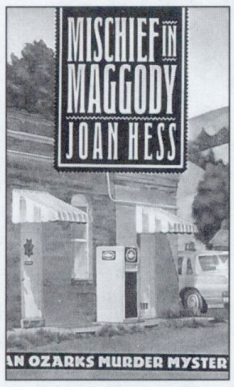
HESS: I don't think there is a great deal of development. Obviously, something has to be done with the relationship between Claire and Peter. Other than that I generally don't plan the books out in a linear frame. I keep notes on the characters, of course, in order to keep them consistent and to avoid memory lapses. In the Claire Malloy series, most of the characters remain pretty much the same. There is more development in the Maggody books. Characters get married, die, fall in and out of love. In that series I did have a lapse of memory—a character died in one of the earlier novels and appeared in a later one. She was a minor character, and nobody's noticed—yet.

TAD: Let's talk about your latest, *Tickled to Death.*

HESS: I had originally written



that as a screenplay, and there are certain lines right out of it. I took the screenplay and expanded it. In the name of research last February I went to a state park for "Eagle Awareness Weekend," I was hoping to get some real hard-core information about such subjects as poaching and population data. The place had all of the charm of a 1940s Holiday Inn, and it was a family oriented program. We spent the first night listening to bird imitations and identifying bird types. That was followed by a ranger coming out with actual birds and telling us such complexities as "Eagles have strong talons" and "Can you say, talons?" The next morning I asked one of the rangers which bird walk I should take. I'd never done this sort of thing before, but I was determined to get into the spirit, so I borrowed a pair of binoculars and set off on the Green Heron trail. After a mile and a half, I'd seen one duck. Sunday morning I went out on a barge to look for eagles. In the winter it's very, very cold on the water especially in an open boat. The nice young ranger said that they were having trouble finding eagles that weekend, but he had *never* taken out a group that did not see one. We went up creeks and we went down creeks, on and on for about an hour and a half. We were so cold that we began saying, "I see one over there." The ranger kept saying "No, no no." Finally we saw one. I thawed out three hours later.



TAD: Why did you set the book outside of Farberville?

HESS: It seemed more appropriate to set the scene on a lake. There had not been a documented case of eagles nesting in Arkansas in recorded history, so nesting eagles would be news. One of the things I did in the book—and no one has noticed it yet—is I name several of the characters after birds. Dick Cissel, the man who may or may not have murdered his wife, is a bird, as is Captain Gannett. I was wondering if I would get a lot of nit-picking letters saying I had gotten the birds wrong, but I haven't. This is not an invitation to write, I can back up everything with the Audubon field guide.

TAD: Generally, do you do much research for your books?

HESS: For the book that has just come out, *Martians in Maggody,* I did read a lot of the most current literature on UFOs. I also went down to Houston to a convention; it was fascinating. We got to see such things as slides of the actual window through which a woman was abducted by aliens. Everybody in the audience would go "Oh...." We got to see drawings of UFO configurations. I talked to a woman out in the lobby who told me that at a previous conference, she and her roommate were abducted—and they had no memory of it. I didn't ask the obvious question.

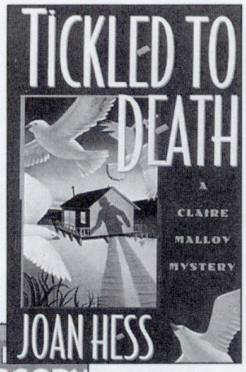
TAD: You really capture the paranoia of these people, who seem very earnest

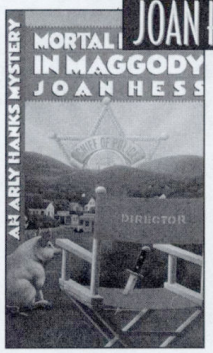
but who also from an outside perspective seem deluded if not exactly crazy.

HESS: It's very hard to get a handle on them. They are very earnest. I wonder if a lot of these people are unfulfilled in their jobs and their personal lives. To say "I was abducted by aliens" puts them in a special category. One of the ways they "document" their experience is by claiming a period of memory loss. We've all had some of those, but that doesn't mean we have been abducted by aliens. I don't necessarily think it's very wise of them to be so open to such suggestions, which come from the idea of repressed memory. They often use hypnosis to retrieve these memories and many of the questions used are of the sort, "Do you remember being awakened by a very bright light?" I mean, who doesn't?

TAD: How did you begin the series set in the little town of Maggody, Arkansas?

HESS: After I had written all of those romances, I wrote my first murder mystery, the Claire Malloy book, *Strangled Prose,* I gave it to my agent and immediately began another with the same character, *Murder at the Murder at the Mimosa Inn*. By the time St. Martin's read *Strangled Prose,* I'd finished *Murder* and they bought those two in the space of a week. That summer my ex-in-laws called for a command performance in Israel and while I was there I began work on the first Theo Bloomer mystery, *The Night-Blooming Cereus*. By November, I had written three books in one year. On a trip to New York, my editor expressed his concern about my writing too many books and recommended a third series. He suggested that I set the books in Arkansas. *Arkansas*. California, New York, Florida and the big cities were all taken, but nobody was doing a back-woods mystery series. He wanted a small town quite unlike the university town of the Claire Malloy novels. When I returned from that trip, I got in the car and went out to the boonies to explore the small towns around the county. I'd try to find a police station if they had one. In one town I had to chase the cop all over the place. I'd go to the bank and they'd say, "Oh no, I think he went down to the hardware store." Someone finally radioed and found him. I would ask the police about the problems, their budget concerns, that sort of thing. I did not have a name for the fictional town at that point. At Christmas that year, I went with a group to Jamaica and rented a house. One afternoon we were taking a train to the island interior, and we went by a little shack with a weathered sign that said "Maggotty." I thought, "Oh, that's perfect." I wrote it down, but when I returned home, I changed it to "Maggody." No one really noticed the similarities in the spelling. I spend a lot of time seeing what I can get past New York. I have a character called Merle Hardcock in the Maggody books. It never ever occurred to me that they would let me use "Hardcock," but I tried it and it slipped past the copy editor. Now when they object, I say, "Oh no, he's a regular character in the series."





TAD: How did you decide to make Maggody such a small town with a population of 755?

HESS: The look of the town and its size are based on several towns from around here. I went into places like Ruby Bee's Bar & Grill or little tiny police stations that consist of one room in the city hall. As I prepared to write, I found myself going through a fairly bitter divorce. I wrote *Malice in Maggody* in less than six weeks in order to get rid of the terrific anger I felt toward my husband. After my editor read it, he called and described it as "239 pages of unrelenting sarcasm." He wanted me to wait a little bit before I did revisions. The original must have been a doozy. But I mellowed a bit, and I re-read it after a reasonable amount of time and toned it down. I backed off of some of the characters, especially the less lovable ones.

TAD: You do give the local inhabitants of Maggody a hard time, but you also seem to understand and love them.

HESS: We've all met characters like them. I don't make a conscious effort to save them, however, or make them likable.

TAD: You write the Maggody stories using multiple points of view. What does that allow you to do?

HESS: It gives me a great deal of flexibility. When I get confused about what is going to happen, I switch over to see what somebody else is doing, then pick up again with Arly. I try not to get too frenetic, although at the end I do have to pick up the pace, so the scenes get shorter and shorter.

CBS

CBS

KATE JACKSON PLAYED ARLY HANKS IN THE CBS PRODUCTION OF "ARLY HANKS MYSTERIES" IN 1994, BASED ON JOAN HESS'S MALICE IN MAGGODY.

TAD: You said in something I had read that characters can take over the writing.

HESS: I do very little plotting before I begin a novel. I really don't outline. I crank out a few pages, to establish the situation and the characters, and pray I'll figure it out. In *The Deadly Ackee,* I was absolutely stunned to discover someone else had done it, but it made more sense than what I had originally planned. *The Night-Blooming Cereus* was the first book in which a character took over. Theo went to the front desk and rented a jeep. He was a kibbutz. I had no idea why he was doing this or where he was going, and I stared at the screen for ten minutes before it came to me. It's my most politically incorrect book thus far. I wanted to write about Jewish terrorism, which at the time was not something one could read about in the *New York Times.* It was rarely reported here, but it certainly was a major concern there. Of course, the book is hopelessly out of date now. And out of print.

TAD: Why did you drop the series after only two books?

HESS: They didn't do very well. My editor wanted me to do the series under a different name. If libraries see two books listed by the same author, they only buy one of them, so I was writing the Bloomer books under the pseudonym of Joan Hadley. But after I had written a number of books under my own name, I had built up name recognition, and lots of people still don't know that I wrote those books. It's also hard to call up the newspapers and say, "Hey, I've changed my name, want to do another interview?" So Theo faded away. He was going to be a travel series—which would have allowed me to go lots of places with the blessings of the IRS.

TAD: I was going to ask why these books were set all over the place, especially since the others are so locally placed.

HESS: I used the trip to Israel for the first one and the trip to Jamaica for the second. Theo's retired for the moment, but I'm scheming to send Claire to Acapulco in the future.

TAD: You have a lot of different characters in the Maggody books. What does this variety allow you to do?

HESS: You may have noticed that not all of the characters appear in all of the books. Some overlap, but others only appear in one book. It allows me to introduce new people all the time. I suspect that before I put away my quill, I may have touched on all 755 people in town.

TAD: Before the books begin, Arly went away from Maggody to live in Manhattan. Why was that necessary?

HESS: It gives her a different perspective so that she can see, to some extent as readers do, the small town as an alien culture. If she had never left, she wouldn't be able to provide this point of view, provide insight into the characters of the place or dissect the dynamics. She needed to be forced to realize that there are other cultures, other ways of life.

TAD: It also allows you to take the series to New York in *Maggody in Manhattan.*

HESS: That was an interesting book because I had to move the inhabitants of Maggody out of town, which I did in two ways. Ruby Bee went with the contest winners to Manhattan, and Dahlia and Kevin are on their honeymoon. I really didn't know that Dahlia and Kevin were even going to get married. It also allowed me to create Marvelous Marvin. I was a little worried writing about a black male bank robber. But there he was.

TAD: He is so much smarter than Dahlia or Kevin, and he is so polite to his victim and hostages.

HESS: He is a thoroughly delightful character. Perhaps he'll wander into town one of these days.

TAD: In all of your books you deal with a string of social issues. Is the mystery novel a good vehicle for social criticism?

A Joan Hess Reading List

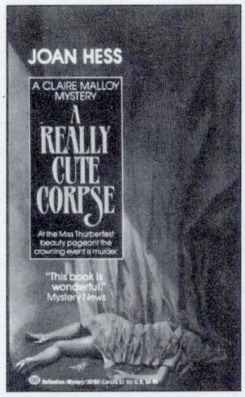
The Maggody Series

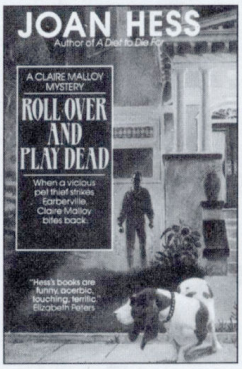
Martians in Maggody
O Little Town of Maggody
Maggody in Manhattan
Mortal Remains in Maggody
Madness in Maggody
Much Ado in Maggody
Mischief in Maggody
Malice in Maggody

The Claire Malloy Series

Poisoned Pins
Death by the Light of the Moon
Roll Over and Play Dead
A Diet to Die For
A Really Cute Corpse
Dear Miss Demeanor
The Murder at the Murder at the Mimosa Inn
Strangled Prose

HESS: Mysteries are morality plays, where good and evil are played out. And they work as social comment insofar as good and evil have a social connection. For example, I value the small town. In *Madness in Maggody* I wrote about the Wal-Mart experience of potentially destroying the local economy with one large superstore. I wanted to explore the behind-the-scenes manipulations of corporate America. In the Claire Malloy book that is coming out in the spring, *Busy Bodies,* I deal with another question of social responsibility. That book arose out of a situation in Little Rock, where a man has put some 3 or 4 million lights all over his house at Christmas time. He bought the houses on either side so he could decorate them as well. It's an unbelievable display. His neighbors are not happy about the situation because there is a traffic jam every night as soon as it gets dark, and they can't get in or out of their houses. They finally brought a lawsuit last year to get some relief, arguing that if someone had a heart attack, they couldn't get an ambulance. The man who decorates these houses finally agreed to a limited schedule that satisfied nobody. I thought that was an interesting problem. It raises issues like freedom of expression versus the rights of the neighbors who are trying to lead some kind of normal life. That's what *Busy Bodies* is about.





TAD: What is the next Maggody book?

HESS: The next Maggody is about a faith healer. It may be titled *Miracles in Maggody.*

TAD: Both the Maggody and Claire Malloy series are set in Arkansas. In what ways are you a southern writer?

HESS: I am much more Southern than my accent implies. Originally, I did not intend to put Claire in Arkansas. But although the settings for both series are in the South, I think they are more generally small town and university town atmospheres than anything specifically southern.

TAD: Has the fact that President Clinton is from Arkansas had any impact on your writing or sales?

HESS: I really don't know. It certainly put Arkansas on the map. We get swarms of reporters these days. They come down here to see the state for themselves and usually find what they are looking for: poverty, squalor, rural quaintness. But I don't know what commercial impact any of this has had on my writing. Clinton has yet to acknowledge my existence. When he was governor, I saw him at political rallies and after I began publishing, I sent him my books. One time I was introduced to him, and he responded, "Oh yes, Hillary and I enjoy them so much." We all laughed. I doubt he has read them, but at some point I think he started recognizing me. I am President of the Arkansas Mystery Writers Alliance, Charlaine Harris is Executive Vice-President, and Grif Stockley, a Little Rock lawyer, is Secretary/Treasurer. You've now heard the membership of the entire alliance.

TAD: You've been fairly active in a number of mystery organizations. What do they do for you?

HESS: I was quite amazed with the closeness of the writing community. There are a lot of women who started writing about the time I did, and they have been especially supportive. In terms of advice and encouragement, they help make up for some of the drawbacks of living in Arkansas where there is no one with whom I can carry on a forty-five minute conversation about mystery writing—or publishing gossip. We discuss mutual problems in the field. I was very active in the Mystery Writers of America at one point and served on the board of directors. But I got on a do-gooder binge and spent an entire year making waves, and finally resigned.

TAD: Do you think women have been at a disadvantage in the mystery genre?

HESS: They certainly were at the beginning. Women crime writers were thought of as British ladies, mostly dead. That certainly changed with Marcia Muller, Sara Paretsky, and Sue Grafton, and with the realization by the publishing industry that women buy books. In the eighties, women mystery writers did not receive an appropriate share of the reviews. The reviewers were mostly male and tended, I think, to review the writers they read, who were primarily male as well. It was brought to their attention that women writers were accounting for an increasing percentage

of the books each year, and things have now begun to change. Women have not yet reached parity but the situation has certainly improved. Marilyn Stasio began reviewing a wider variety for the *New York Times* and that made a difference too, as has the presence of an organization known as Sisters in Crime. SinC has been criticized a great deal in the last year. The argument that women are storming around the country dominating the industry and taking money out of the poor male P.I. writers' pockets doesn't hold water. If we are all so incredibly powerful and talented why aren't we all rich and famous? If I had the choice, I would be. Trust me.

Sisters in Crime sponsors booths at the ALA and other conventions, and publishes a bibliography of our members to promote our books. The network has been very successful, and brings together women mystery writers from all over the country. If I want to know the zip code of the North Carolina State Prison, I have someone to call. If I want to know which bookstore to stop at in Albuquerque, I can find somebody who knows somebody there.

TAD: How have you been treated by the critics?

HESS: Pretty well, for the most part.

TAD: Do you ever learn anything from a review?

HESS: I try *not* to. I recently received a whole packet of them from the last book. They were all good except one from Florida that went on about what a silly novel it was. My first response was to send him a letter bomb. My second was to call him and say, "You moron, you failed to notice this and that." My third was potentially disastrous: "Now watch this, I'm going to write a hardboiled, blood and gore, violent, vicious book to show you that I can do what any of the boys can do." Then I tossed it.

TAD: Are you writing anything or have you ever wanted to write anything outside of the mystery genre?

HESS: No, not too seriously. Mysteries are what I've always read and loved. My son's English teacher asked me if I would still write books if they were not going to be published. I finally said, "No, I probably wouldn't write books because they are an awful lot of work." But I would write short stories for my own amusement and as a form of catharsis. That's not to say that I only write for money, but it sure helps.

TAD: Is there anything that you haven't done that you'd like to do?

HESS: Well, I've never made the *New York Times* Bestseller list or appeared on "The Late Show with David Letterman" to perform a stupid author trick. Other than that, I'm content with my career, which has come a long way since my first $2,000.00 advance. Every conference seems to provide the opportunity to meet my idols of yore or to meet beginning authors. My job description includes the option of lunching with my friends, as well as faxing gossip and running up a $300+ telephone bill. It's a good life. ■

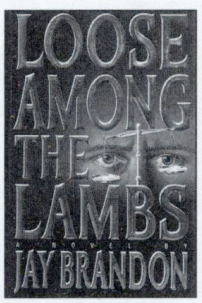
AJH Reviews

By Allen J. Hubin

Harold Adams' series about Carl Wilcox in Depression-era South Dakota continues with **A Perfectly Proper Murder** (Walker, $18.95). Carl makes a living of sorts painting signs, though frequently beset by murderous distractions. He comes one summer day, aboard his Model T, to Podunkville (I kid you not). He settles in for a bit of painting, offending the town's leading citizen in the process. When said citizen is found dead in proximity to said Model T, a certain amount of suspicion drifts in Carl's direction. The local cop, having heard the Wilcox reputation, gives him a little rope with which to hang someone. The dead man's family—his comely widow, teenage children and his brother—are worth some of Carl's attention; as are his businesses and their employees; and his girlfriends, the citizen was anything but a nice guy. Which might bring us to the circumstances of the passing of his first wife, some years before... Pleasantly atmospheric and well cast, as usual.

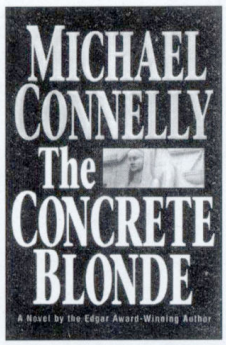
The law has its beady eye on one Gerald Suzman, an unconvicted malefactor in the literary arena, so Dexter "Charlie" Peace, a Black detective who turns up occasionally in Robert Barnard's novels, is dispatched to the village of Micklewike in Yorkshire. Little distinguishes this backwater except that it was the home of Susannah and Joshua Sneddon, brother and sister novelists. Susannah's dozen books are enjoying a feverish revival of interest, in which Suzman seems to be carving himself a major role. Joshua's novels sank without trace, and one day in 1932 he took an axe to his sister and a gun to himself. Now a modest crowd, including a contemporary Sneddon, has gathered in Micklewike for a Sneddon weekend. Literary forgeries, of the sort for which Suzman is roundly suspected, do not ordinarily produce corpses, but one is provided here in fairly short order. What is Suzman's scheme, and how did it generate so much murderous passion? Charlie comes out from under his cover as a Sneddon enthusiast to investigate. These matters are most entertainingly recounted in Barnard's **A Hovering of Vultures** (Scribner's, $20.00), which I commend to your attention.

Eleanor Boylan, niece of Elizabeth Daly, has a series about Clara Gamadge, widow of Daly's sleuth Henry Gamadge, which now has reached four with **Pushing Murder** (Henry Holt, $19.95). Maybe the earlier ones, not read by me, were better, but I found this only slight entertainment. Clara's friend Sal has good fortune in double dose: a doting new husband and a new mystery bookstore in Greenwich Village that bids to be very successful. Clara has bad fortune in double dose: someone tries to kill her by poison and she breaks her ankle in a fall. So she's in the hospital, maybe long enough to miss Christmas, and trying to figure out who wants her dead and why. She's surrounded by friends determined to help and protect her, one of whom is maybe a killer. In due course a motive of sorts emerges, along with a steady stream of to–ing and fro–ing. You just know Clara's going to end up as an elderly woman-in-peril despite her crew of protectors... I can (just) handle this sort of thing in small doses, as here: 149 pages.



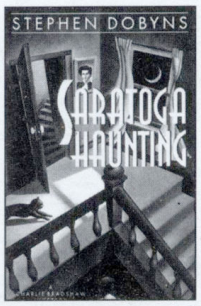
Jay Brandon's **Loose Among the Lambs** (Pocket Books, $22.00) is a moving, powerfully effective tale, one I found almost impossible to put down without peeking ahead. The setting is San Antonio, where children come forward to tell about sexual abuse. It's D.A. Mark Blackwell's case, and it comes at a critical juncture in his re-election campaign. It seems easy: the molester, represented by high-powered counsel, wants to confess—a political windfall for Blackwell. But the man then recants his confession and the children can't identify him. If not guilty, why did he confess? And if he's not guilty, who is? Suspected is someone in the San Antonio old boy network, smooth and well-liked by everyone, even Blackwell. How could such a person be convicted on the uncertain testimony of children, especially when the defense counsel is Blackwell's mentor and closest friend? How could Blackwell's career survive an attack by him against a San Antonio icon? By all means, read this!

I'm just catching up with D.C. Brod's Quint McCauley series with number four, **Brothers in Blood** (Walker, $21.95). This represents a solid perfor-



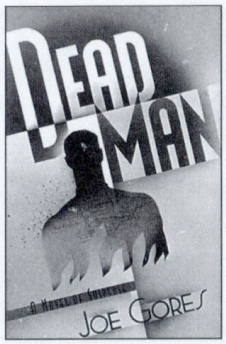
mance: complex characters, strong emotions, tangled relationships, all vividly captured. Jubal and Brig Tanner have hated each other with a passion, though the roots of that hatred aren't clear. Brig is the successful one—successful, at least, in business, and aspiring to be mayor of Foxport, the Illinois town where Quint practices his P.I. craft. Everything Jubal touches seems to turn to ashes or get taken over by Brig. Jubal's aspirations in horse breeding, for example. Brig has just bought the stud horse Jubal thought he had a lock on. When Brig's latest bedmate is shot while driving Brig's car, the cops fasten on Jubal as the killer—a simple case, they think, of Jubal trying to kill Brig (again) and getting the woman by mistake. Jubal tells Quint his story, some truth, some lie, with lots left out, and hires Quint to keep him out of jail. This is a fine tale, full of engaging subtleties and impressively resolved.

Michael Connelly's third outing for L.A. homicide cop Hieronymus "Harry" Bosch is **The Concrete Blonde** (Little Brown, $21.95). Based on the thoroughly absorbing reading experience which this offered me, the first two (the Edgar-winning *The Black Echo* and *The Black Ice*) have to go on my "must read" list. Some years ago, Harry shot and killed a serial murderer known as The Dollmaker. Case closed; killings stopped. But the dead man's widow has filed a wrongful death civil suit against the city, utilizing the services of a very tough lawyer, who is quite able to cast Harry in the blackest light. The city, and Harry's reputation, are being defended by a hack attorney who is terminally overmatched. If this weren't bad enough, a note has just been received from The Dollmaker, leading to the discovery of a corpse for which the man Harry killed could not have been responsible. Here is a superb puzzle, with characters large as life and a city large as death—a striking novel, indeed!



Stephen Cook's **Dead Fit** (St. Martin's, $16.95) is a charmless novel to me, with no particular facility in the telling and a distinctly unappealing cast. Introduced here is Constable Judy Best, who, I fear, is destined to return. At present she's bedding a black man, which is not a good way to further her career as a London policewoman. She has also joined a health club frequented by Duncan Stock, who's something in city money circles and who goes after Judy with casual lust. This leads to murder, and the slimeball copper in charge thinks said black man dunnit, and suspends Judy from duty for good measure—though of course she's not disposed to sit on the sidelines. Don't bother with this one.

Charlie Bradshaw of Saratoga, New York, fits the private eye stereotype: former cop, unmarried, scraping to make ends meet. Stephen Dobyns has been writing about him for some years, and **Saratoga Haunting** (Viking, $19.00) is the seventh novel in the series. What's haunting here is Charlie's past. When he was a policeman, in 1974, Charlie investigated the case of Grace Mulholland,

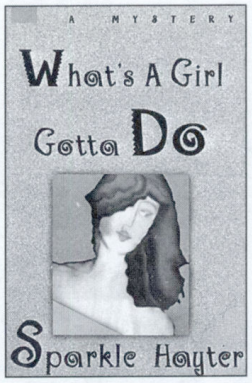


who had embezzled a few hundred thousand dollars from her employer and disappeared into the Mexican sunrise. Or so Bradshaw's investigation showed. But now Mulholland's skeleton—but no money—has turned up, and Charlie, driven by a compulsion he barely understands, reopens the case: reading the old police files, interviewing the principals again, and finding out what sort of person he was in 1974—not liking that person very much at all. But somewhere there's a killer and the police are mostly sitting on their hands, so Charlie's on his own. And, to complicate matters, someone Charlie sent to prison is now out and threatening to eliminate Charlie. A pleasant diversion.

Joe Gores' **Dead Man** (Mysterious, $18.95) brings us dilettante San Francisco private eye Eddie Dain. He loves playing around in computer databases, and he doesn't take anything very seriously...until one of his cases produces killers—Dain has poked his fingers where he shouldn't. And Dain should be dead—the killers have really blasted away—but a flicker of life remains. Nursing back to life, health and strength takes years, but a new Dain emerges, a grim, determined Dain. No fun now, just vengeance. Can so cold a trail be picked up? This seems unlikely, but Dain thinks the connections he needs to find are in the professional under-

world, in organized crime, and if he gains a certain acceptance in those lowly circles something useful might turn up. He's willing to be watchful and very patient... Gores quickly swept me into his tale and along we went, faster and faster, till he was done with me and I put the book down, a bit breathless and highly satisfied.

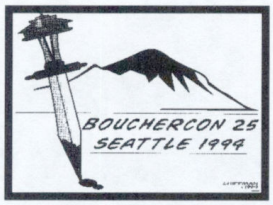
I seldom watch TV, but I have caught a few episodes of "Columbo" over the years. A number of Columbo novelizations have rolled off the presses, but William Harrington's **Columbo: The Grassy Knoll** (Forge, $18.95) seems innocent of direct television parentage, aside from the sleuth. Columbo is a distinctive character, or at least a character of distinctive mannerisms, and Harrington has caught him well. The inverted narrative is also here: we know who killed TV talk show host Paul Drury; we do not know why. Columbo bumbles into the case, convincing the guilty of their safety, but asking his shrewd exit questions and getting nearer the truth—which seems (from the title) to have something to do with the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas. An entertaining affair, although the collapse of the guilty



into garrulous confession at the end strikes me as a bit unlikely.

Sparkle Hayter (named for Sparkle Plenty in the Dick Tracy strip) makes an impressive debut with **What's a Girl Gotta Do** (Soho, $19.95), featuring Robin Hudson, who occupies a lower tier in ANN, a TV news network based in New York. Her life is in some disarray: career foundering (owing to a very ill-timed social blunder on the air); her husband turned adulterous but not, alas, invisible—nor is his mistress; and now some private eye, motive probably blackmail, has been digging in her checkered background. Said P.I. sets up a meet with Robin at a hotel where ANN is holding a New Year's Eve costume party. He is found beaten to death, maybe with the tire iron that formed part of Robin's outfit. So Robin adds prime murder suspect to her resume... This is quite a funny book, with much diverting dissection of the television news business and a serviceable murder plot.

The eighth of Jeremiah Healy's novels about Boston private eye John Cuddy is **Foursome** (Pocket Books, $20.00). Steven Shea, who makes good money in Boston, has a lake home in Maine where he, his wife, and their good friends the Vandemeers, are frequently in residence. One evening someone dispatches the wife and the Vandemeers with a crossbow, and the local police are sure Shea's their man. Cuddy gets the call from Shea's lawyer, and is not unhappy at the excuse to enjoy a rural setting. But the trail leads back to Boston—to Shea's employer, who would have the slaughter be the work of business competitors; to the dead Hale Vandemeer's family: his unsuccessful auto-dealing brother and his strung-out and gang-connected son. This is not going to prove a relaxing and blood-free case for Cuddy. Suspenseful and well done. ■



BOUCHERCON 25

Silver in Seattle

by Jeffrey Marks

This year found Bouchercon at a crossroads: Recent conventions had been plagued by complaints and organizational problems. No one had bid for the 1996 site and several magazine articles had called for Bouchercon's demise, claiming that the regional and specialty conventions had supplanted the world mystery convention.

Happily, rumors of the convention's death have been greatly exaggerated. Bouchercon is alive and well—and this year's 25th anniversary convention proved to be a wonder of organization, thoughtful programming and innovative improvements. To top it off, Seattle's much-maligned climate gave attendees nothing but sunshine and fair weather the whole weekend.

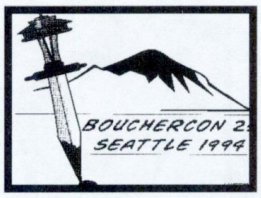
The Pike Street Market which is directly adjacent to Puget Sound was only blocks away from the Stouffer Madison Hotel, site of this year's convention. The convention started with the usual Meet and Greet party at the Washington Center, giving the fans a chance to mingle with their favorite authors.

Friday morning began with two programming tracks which grew to three on Saturday and Sunday to accommodate the many authors in attendance (St. Martin's Press alone boasted over fifty authors at this year's convention!). After their panel, participating authors went to the signing room where fans could bring books for autographing. Andi Shechter and Alan Rosenthal—the chairs for programming—made an extraordinarily complex job look very easy. This year's programming also included numerous readings. In general, panels were informative, entertaining and diverse enough to satisfy almost any mystery fan.Some of the popular standard programming included:

- How Many Mystery Writers Does It Take...Humor's Place in the Mystery;
- How Writers Work;
- What Happens in Hollywood? Turning books into movies;
- Gender Switching: Female protagonists developed by male writers and vice versa;
- Religion in Mysteries;
- The Health and Welfare of the Mystery Short Story;
- Historical Mysteries;
- Social Responsibility and the Mystery Writer.

Included also were some more unfamiliar topics. For example, at "The Crime Scene" panel Moderator Patricia MacEwan led the audience through the steps of a crime scene complete with multiple dead bodies, stab wounds, gunshots, and physical evidence galore. Spectators observed a "bad cop" contaminating the crime scene among other possible complications to an investigation.Other new programming included:

- Women Who Love Cops Too Much. "Every time you turn around, another amateur sleuth is in love with a cop...";
- Where Did That (Blank) on the Cover Come From? Cover art stories from hell;
- Is This Book Going to Be Valuable Some Day?;
- Ya Gotta Help Me, You're My Best Friend and Stand Up Straight. Why all the criticism of the helpful detective?;



Bouchercon's Silver Anniversary

Guest of Honor **Marcia Muller**

Fan Guest of Honor **Art Scott**

Toastmaster **George C. Chesbro**

Life Achievement **Tony Hillerman**

- The Babe with the Smoking Roscoe—A Slideshow of Great Paperback Covers;
- Booksellers and Publishers Face to Face.

I participated on "The Forgotten Authors" panel which was intended to point fans toward underappreciated writers deserving of rediscovery. My fellow panelists included Bill DeAndrea, Marv Lachman, and Maxim Jakubowski. Marv and I had both mentioned Margaret Millar as our favorite author whom we felt deserved more attention (today she is best remembered as Ross MacDonald's wife). And while I did my best not to hog the mike with stories about research for my Craig Rice biography it was clear that her work was also a favorite.

The Book Dealers Room was one of the largest in recent memory and housed dealers in contemporary mystery hardcovers and paperbacks, collectable and rare mysteries, memorabilia, magazines and periodicals, videotapes and other items of interest. I helped Kate Stine staff *The Armchair Detective* table—which we shared with the fun folks from *The Drood Review*—and many reviewers, writers and fans stopped by to say hello and chat.

In one corner of the room was Anne Milburn from Time Warner Electronic Publishing, who is doing her part to steer mysterydom onto the information superhighway. She showed me the "The Authors Forum" and "The Crime Forum," both of interest to mystery fans and currently available on CompuServe. Everything from excerpts of the O.J. Simpson trial to old pulp fiction covers appeared on the screen with only a point and click.

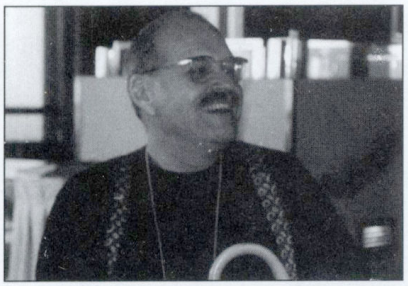
I'd heard before that Bouchercon really is two conventions going on simultaneously. On one level, fans have a chance to attend panels and get their books signed by their favorite authors. The other level is focused on the business of writing and the art of schmoozing between authors, agents and editors. Armed this year with my $500 grant from the Malice Domestic convention for my novel-in-progress, I hit the second level running. On Friday I had three breakfasts in order to talk about my books—including one with fellow TADian and mystery editor Keith Kahla at a coffee house overlooking the Sound. Then followed other multiple meals to make contacts. Is it any wonder I could be found at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza's exercise room doing sit-ups during the off times?

All in all, this more business-oriented side of the convention is potentially very profitable for attendees. I personally came out of it with a better understanding of publishing along with this article assignment and some other projects.

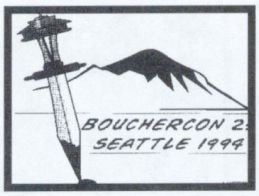
By Saturday afternoon, exciting news had spread through the convention: St. Paul, Minnesota, had made a successful bid for the 1996 Bouchercon. Mary Higgins Clark will be the Guest of Honor, Jeremiah Healy will act as Toastmaster and Ellen Nehr will be the Fan Guest of Honor. The St. Paul event will be held at the Radisson Hotel on October 9–13th of 1996.

With this announcement, a considerable sigh of relief spread over the convention; there had been fears that the 1996 convention would have to be cancelled due to lack of bids. Bouchercon is now scheduled three years in advance: 1995 in Nottingham, England; 1996 in St. Paul; and 1997 in San Francisco.

Jeffrey Marks work has appeared in a variety of magazines including *The Writer, Mystery Scene,* and *The Armchair Detective.* Jeffrey was the winner of the 1994 Malice Domestic Grant for his novel, *The Scent of Murder.*



LAWRENCE BLOCK WON THE PWA'S BEST NOVEL SHAMUS AWARD FOR *THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD.*



BOUCHERCON25

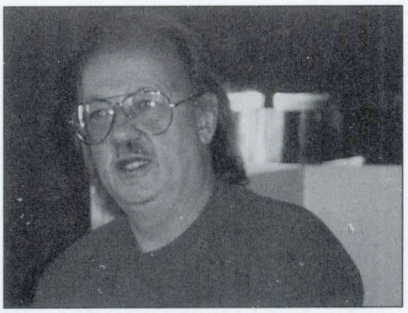
The Photos

by Barry Zeman

REPRESENTATIVES FROM BOUCHERCON 26 (1995), TO BE HELD IN NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND.

SARA PARETSKY AUTOGRAPHS COPIES OF HER LATEST V.I. WARSHAWSKI NOVEL, *TUNNEL VISION.*

BOUCHERCON GUEST OF HONOR MARCIA MULLER SIGNED COPIES OF *WOLF IN THE SHADOWS*, WHICH WON THE ANTHONY AWARD FOR BEST NOVEL.



GEORGE C. CHESBRO–AUTHOR OF THE MONGO MYSTERIES–WAS THE TOASTMASTER FOR BOUCHERCON 25.

ROBERT BARNARD CHATTING WITH ANDI SHECHTER, WHO WORKED ON THE BOUCHERCON PROGRAMMING.

(L TO R) JIM HUANG AND BETH THOENEN FROM *THE DROOD REVIEW* AND JEFF MARKS AND KATE STINE FROM TAD ALL SHARED A TABLE IN THE BOOKDEALERS' ROOM.

The Anthony Awards

Best Novel:

Wolf in the Shadows by Marcia Muller

Best First Novel:

Track of the Cat by Nevada Barr

Best Critical Work:

The Fine Art of Murder edited by Ed Gorman, Martin H. Greenberg, Larry Segriff with Jon L. Breen

Best True Crime:

A Rose for Her Grave by Ann Rule

Best Individual Short Story:

"Checkout" by Susan Dunlap (*Malice Domestic 2*)

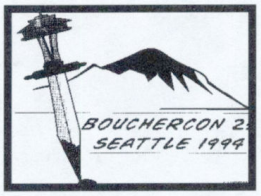
Best Short Story:

Collection/Anthology: *Malice Domestic 2,* edited by Mary Higgins Clark

The Private Eye Writers of America's Shamus Awards were given for the last time at this year's Bouchercon. Starting in 1995, the awards will be announced at a new convention, EyeCon, to be held in Milwaukee during the month of June. The winner for Best Novel was *The Devil Knows You're Dead* by Lawrence Block. Block also picked up the award for Best Short Story for "The Merciful Angel of Death." Lynne Hightower won Best First Novel with *Satan's Lambs*. Rodman Philbrick won Best Paperback Original for his *Brothers and Sinners* from NAL. His agent, Dominick Abel, accepted the award for the author.

The Anthony Awards followed later that night at the annual banquet. Tickets were scarce this year with only five hundred available. The committee compensated by providing "B-TV" coverage of the banquet on the TVs in the hotel. The organizing committee put together a snazzy graphics presentation reminiscent of the Academy Awards which added a nice touch to the proceedings. The banquet was followed by an auction—presided over by Otto Penzler—to benefit Eleanor Bloch, the widow of the recently deceased writer Robert Bloch. Items included books, manuscripts and proof copies among other memorabilia. Literary immortality was up for sale, also—several writers offered to name a character in their next book after the highest bidder. Sunday is always the slow day as everyone recovers from the previous night's revelry, but Bouchercon still had a full day of programming. The highlights included the panel on humor featuring Donald Westlake, a very hoarse Parnell Hall (who is being blamed for a rash of colds among mystery writers and fans) and another midwesterner, Taylor McCafferty.

All in all, this was an excellent Bouchercon Convention and a great forum for meeting a variety of people who love mysteries—writers, editors, agents, mystery magazine publishers, booksellers and fans. Bouchercon remains the one convention that draws writers of all the various mystery subspecialties from a wide geographic area. It's reassuring to know that it has a strong future ahead of it. ■



And a Tip of the Hat to the Organizers

Chairman: Thom Walls

Treasurer: Janice Murray

Secretary, Office: Roger Wells

Programming: Andi Shechter, Alan Rosenthal

Dealers' Room: Bryan Barrett

Hotel Liaison: Shelley Dutton Berry

Publications: Stu Shiffman, Steve Berry

Registration: Helen Keiser

Autographing: Bob Altizer

Merchandising, Signs, Special Graphics: Buff Hitko

Banquet Coordinator: Yvonne Richardson

Hospitality: Miriam Uhlig, Susan Eggers

Green Room: Marie Cooley, Heather D. Watson-Vancranebrook

Special Interest Groups & Events: Beryl Kolafa, Judy Lyen

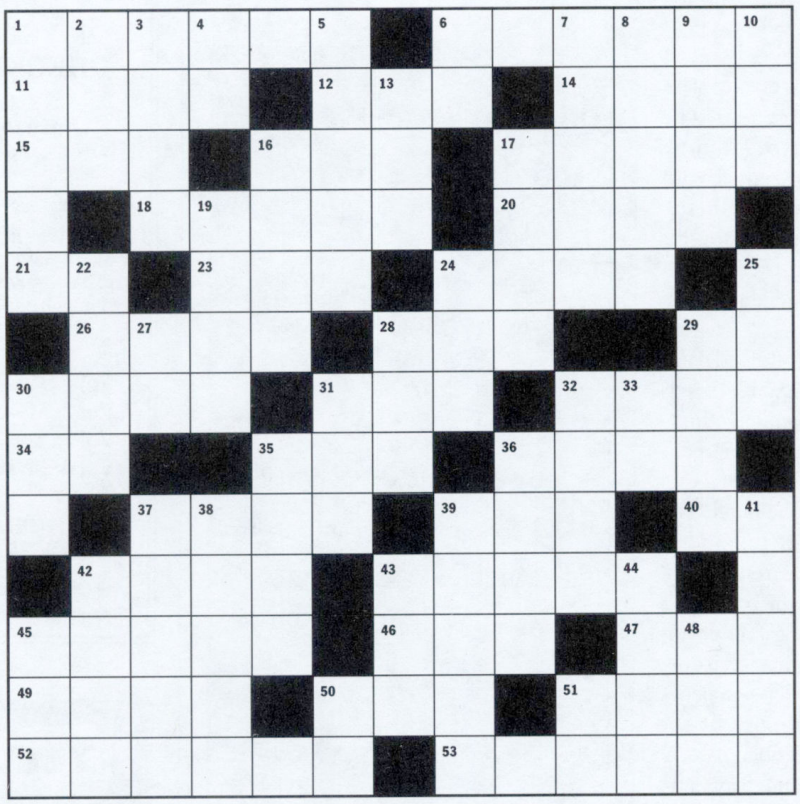
Press/PR Liaison: Karen Duncan, Sandra Goodrick

Anthony Awards Administrator: Larry Fisher

and Bill Farley as: Bill Farley

The Armchair Detective Crossword Puzzle

by John K. Young



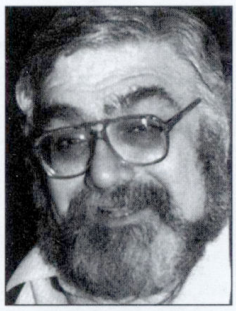
ACROSS

1 Argentinean winner of special Edgar
6 His mystery criticism won this prof two Edgars
11 Motel room
12 The original Edgar
14 Kiln
15 Room for fun
16 What Mrs. McGillicuddy did
17 What killer on lam did
18 His classic debut was "The Specialty of the House"
20 What Merle Haggard is proud to be
21 McBain, creator of Steve Carella
23 Original surname of Saint creator
24 Another pen name for cousins Dannay and Lee
26 Creator of Insp. C.D. ("Seedy") Sloan
28 Combining form meaning "in the middle"
29 _____ *Done Her Wrong* by Kaminsky
30 Joy
31 Garve's pseudonym in writing *Two If by Sea*
32 Author Engelman
34 A pirate's expression for "yes"
35 Anthony Berkeley's real last name
36 Wrote *The Postman Always Rings Twice*
37 Slang for food
39 What Little Miss Muffet did
40 Musical note
42 To injure
43 Author of *Night and the City*
45 Vera Caspary's masterpiece
46 To do this is human
47 1958 Edgar Allan Poe Award nominee
49 Language spoken by Patrick McGinley's forebears
50 Cuckoo's black kin
51 _____ *Gun for Hire* by Graham Greene
52 Excretes
53 Revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities*

DOWN

1 His novel first mystery called a "who-dun-it"
2 _____ *For the Money* by newcomer Evanovich
3 *Time* cover's first mystery author
4 Initials of *The Mystery Fancier* publisher
5 *Poison for Teacher* author
6 Hinton, author of YA *The Outsiders*
7 _____ and crannies
8 *A Gentle Murderer* author
9 Douay Bible name for Hosea
10 Estimated time of departure (Abb.)
13 *The Devil's* ___ by Peter Curtis
16 How victim reached floor
17 Author of the Jeff and Haila Troy mysteries
19 _____ *of Orpheus* by Robertson Davies
22 Most popular *Black Mask* writer of his time
24 Stout, Grand Master recipient in 1958
25 Debden's French detective
27 That is (Abb.)
28 Agent 99's not-so-"smart" partner
29 _____ *for Red October*
30 Pharoah Love was the first ____ detective
31 *Death Takes a* ____ by the Lockridges
32 Taps lightly
33 Famed Japanese poet
35 Robin Cook's first medical thriller
36 Master of the impossible puzzle
37 ____ and effect
38 Puts on payroll
39 Fine line in type
41 ____ *Gold,* Andrew Greeley's latest
42 Gone, But Not Forgotten by Phillip ____ olin
43 What Margaret Millar called her husband
44 Her *Following the Mystery Man* earned 1988 Edgar bid
45 Creator of Scout and her dad, Atticus
48 First name of David Pierce's P.I., Daniels
50 Initials of *Sleuth* author
51 Tellurium (Chem.)

Solution on Page 110



J'Accuse!

By

William L. DeAndrea

It's a small world.

Small and very weird.

I've been going around this for weeks, and I've come to the conclusion that the only way to tell it is chronologically.

In June 1954, in New Zealand, two young girls—Pauline Parker, 16, and Juliet Hulme, 15—and close friends, saw Pauline's mother, Honora Parker, as standing in the way of some big plans they had. Pauline's diary later revealed that the girls had constructed something they called the Fourth World, with film stars and themselves as royalty and nobility, and so on. They decided on a life of adventure, and planned to start it by going to South Africa. Pauline's mother said no.

One day, the girls went with Mrs. Parker for a climb in the hills around Christchurch's Victoria Park. They placed a piece of brick in the toe of a stocking. One of them held the woman down while the other bashed the woman's head "nearly four dozen times."

The story they told was that Mrs. Parker had lost her footing and tumbled down the rocky slope, repeatedly hitting her head. That lasted until a medical examiner got a look at the body. Pauline's diary revealed the rest. After the duelling psychiatrists had done their things at the trial, the girls were convicted and "detained at Her Majesty's pleasure" indefinitely, which is the phrase under which dangerous juveniles in the Commonwealth (and still today in the United Kingdom) are incarcerated.

In 1966, Bantam published a paperback original entitled *The Woman in the Case* by Ellery Queen. This was a collection of a series of magazine articles published some eight years before. Manfred Lee, the writing half of the Queen team, wrote them from research prepared by the magazine's staff. At the time the book came out, I was fourteen years old, was still in that first omnivorous rush of mystery fandom. I would have bought a slice of moldy bread if it had the name "Ellery Queen" on it. (In fact, some of the stuff that came out around then signed, but not written by Ellery Queen might have been improved by being printed on slices of moldy bread.)

Peter R. Simpkin

Anne Perry

In any case, I bought *The Woman in the Case,* and read it. Unlike most of my Queen books though, I never re-read it. Too grim. Too sad. Too banal. Not at all like the crimes and solutions I found in fiction.

But one chapter stayed unpleasantly in my mind. It was called "Detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure," and as a teenager myself, it troubled me enormously. I have written previously about the neighborhood I grew up in. It was no garden spot. And if it wasn't the war zone some places are today, the concept of teenage violence was not strange to me.

But this was different. This wasn't a couple of idiots getting high and pulling knives, this was a couple of respectable young women premeditatedly murdering one of their *mothers*. I suspect the worst gang leader around would hesitate to kill his mother.

Queen's article ended by telling the reader that as far as the New Zealand authorities were concerned, Pauline and Juliet would be "detained at Her Majesty's pleasure" for the rest of their natural lives.

In 1993, Orania and I relocated temporarily to London. During the months we were there, we made only one trip back to the States, to honor a commitment Orania had made to speak at M.K. Lorens's "Hearing Voices" program that ran concurrently with Bouchercon in Omaha. While we were there, we had a signing at a local bookstore, along with Anne Perry, author of a very good and very successful series of Victorian mysteries.

The turnout was good, but none of us is Stephen King; there was time to talk. At one point, speaking of foreign editions of her books, Orania said the Jane Haddam had yet to be translated. Anne Perry pointed out how in her religion (she's a Mormon) being translated means you've died. We laughed. She met our son and patted his head.

Back in England for the last few months of the year, our attention, like all of Britain's and most of the rest of the world's, was riveted by the trial of two Liverpool boys, each only ten years old, who had lured a two-year-old away from his parents, tortured and killed him. The boys were convicted and detained at Her Majesty's pleasure.

Early in 1994, Orania had lunch with her British publisher. He told her, among other things, that in the wake of the Jamie Bulger trial (two-year-old Jamie was the victim), all the British publishers were eager to publish true crime books about murders committed by children.

We returned to the States in April of 1994.

In August, there was an article in *The*

New York Times. A writer, eager to give the British publishers what they wanted was researching an old murder committed by two teenaged girls in New Zealand in 1954. They'd killed the mother of one of them. One of the girls, who had been detained at Her Majesty's pleasure, had been released after five-and-half years and had returned to her native England.

The woman, knowing it was going to come out anyway, released the news and consented to interviews. She was in her fifties now, living quietly in Scotland with her mother. She had become quite well known writing mysteries under the name Anne Perry.

In the interview, she said that at the time of the murder, she was taking a medication for illness that was later withdrawn from the market because of its mental and emotional side-effects. She said she had been thoroughly convinced that her friend would have committed suicide had she not helped in the murder of the friend's mother. She talked of her continuing remorse and the solace of her faith in God's forgiveness.

I sat there looking at the article and flashed back to the earlier one, the one by Ellery Queen.

Now I'd better say right here that I cannot categorically state that the two cases are in fact the same. I don't know how many times in 1954 two teenaged girls in New Zealand bashed in the head of one of their mothers. For all I know, there may have been dozens and I'm not about to go phoning the authorities in Christchurch to find out.

The same or not, (and let's face it, the odds look pretty good for the former,) it leads me to an unusual situation.

I'm the type of guy who's usually sure about what he thinks and feels about any given situation. That's the kind of person who winds up writing a column.

But this one has me stumped. The image of the bloodstained teenagers crying crocodile tears about the woman they'd just killed horrifies me as much as it ever did. The image of the warm, friendly, devout and smiling Anne Perry I've been acquainted with for fifteen years or so remains in my mind.

Which one is real? How is the transformation made? When does the perpetrator of a stark real murder fade into the creator of cozy fictional ones?

And the next time I meet Anne Perry, what am I going to say to her?

The most perturbing mysteries are the ones outside of the books.

. . . . . .

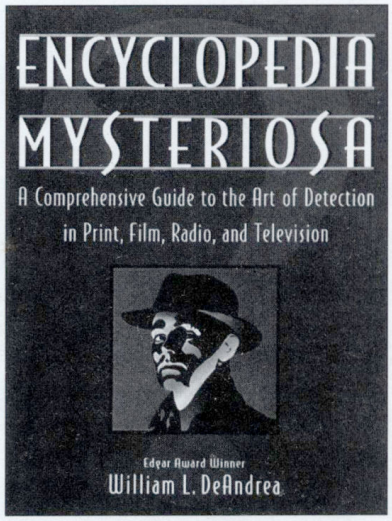
Truth in Advertising

One of the nice things about being back in the States is being able to watch American football. With that, of course, come the ads—cars, beer, and the U.S. Army. You know, "Be all that you can be." Now, I'm not an opponent of the military by any means, but shouldn't the Army be obliged to point out that one of the things you can be is *dead*? Just asking.

. . . . . .

E-N-C-Y-C-L-O-P-E-D-I-A

By the time you read this, it will be January, and you will have already received and/or given as a gift a copy of the *Encyclopedia Mysteriosa* for Christmas (the perfect gift for any mystery fan), and you will have read it and used it and forgiven the typos, especially the one that renders Walter E. Mosley's detective as "Fasy Rawlins" instead of "Easy."



You will also forgive the fact that the Anne Perry entry, as it stands, is way too brief.

As I write this, though, it is early days yet. Copies are just turning up in bookstores, and finding their way to contributors and critics. I am learning to live with the fact that I will never stop hating that title.

Let me explain. At the same time I was pitching this idea, Prentice Hall was planning a whole series of genre encyclopedias. They had already signed up writers to do an *Encyclopedia Galactica,* an *Encyclopedia Fantasia,* and an *Encyclopedia Horrifica.* If I wanted the dough (and boy, did I want the dough), I had to conform to their series title, even though "mysteriosa" does *not* mean mysterious, but rather spooky.

Still, they wanted continuity, so I bit the bullet and gave in, especially since *Encyclopedia Detectiva* sounds even worse. So guess what happened? Right. I was the only S.O.B. masochistic enough actually to deliver a book. By the time it became apparent that the other volumes weren't going to happen, it was too late to change. Big sigh.

And, while I think the book is superbly designed, and the jacket is striking, I hate the illustration—a portion of a creature I have to call the Hardboiled Hermaphrodite. What makes it even worse is that directly under the drawing, it says "Edgar Award Winner William L. DeAndrea," as if it were supposed to be a picture of *me,* for God's sake. I know I'm fairly gruesome to look at, but I'm not *that* gruesome.

Anyway, reaction is beginning to trickle in, almost all of it positive. The big thing is that Otto likes it. He's been there before, so his approval means a lot.

Ed Gorman sent me his review from *Mystery Scene,* and he said some glorious things. He also said one fairly dumb thing, but I was too polite to tell him so, and anyway it's his magazine.

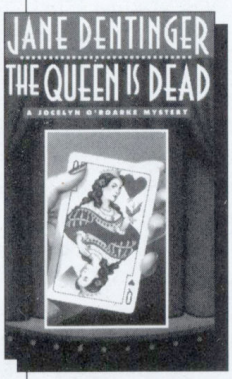
What he said was that maybe one person shouldn't be *allowed* (my emphasis) to write a book like this single-handed because it limits points of view. Like there was a vast horde of people chomping at the bit to do this, and the publisher could pay a committee of them or something. Anyway, I like to think of the limited point of view as "focus."

Anyway, by now it's out and it's had its best chance to sell, and however it's done and whatever its flaws, it's still my baby and I love it, and I promise I won't write about it any more in this column.

Unless I think of something else to say, of course. ■

It would be downright criminal to miss these mysteries

The Queen is Dead
JANE DENTINGER

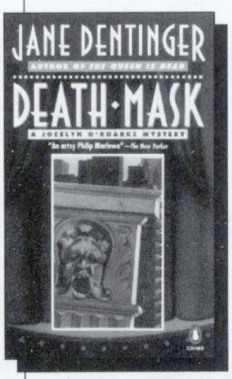


VIKING HARDCOVER

A campus play offers Jocelyn O'Roarke a quick course in murder in a new book in the series that sparkles with "a special fizz because, on top of her great skills as a storyteller, Dentinger fills her books with show business lore and a marvelous theatrical savvy."

—**HOWARD KISSEL**
Drama Critic, *New York Daily News*

Death Mask
JANE DENTINGER

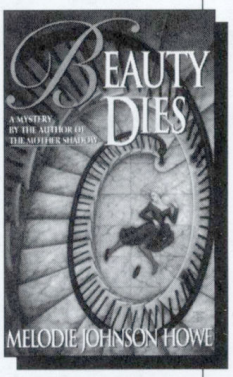


PENGUIN PAPERBACK

Getting to the truth about the very public death of a very unpopular actor demands all the talents of the actress-detective Lawrence Block calls "bright, sophisticated, gorgeous, tough-minded, funny, and very good company."

Also available from Jane Dentinger in Penguin, *Murder on Cue*, *First Hit of the Season*, and *Dead Pan*

Beauty Dies
MELODIE JOHNSON HOWE

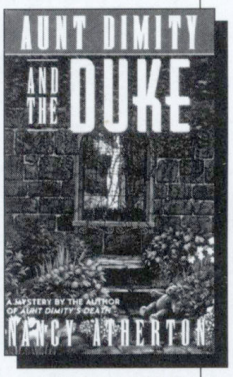


VIKING HARDCOVER

The dynamic female detective duo from *The Mother Shadow* is back—in a smart, sexy mystery set on the seedy side of New York City. It's sure to appeal to Sue Grafton and Sara Paretsky fans—and fans of Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin as well.

Also available in Penguin, *The Mother Shadow*

Aunt Dimity and the Duke
NANCY ATHERTON

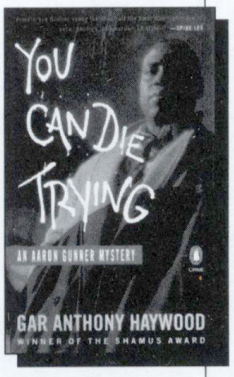


VIKING HARDCOVER

Aunt Dimity—the indomitable spirit introduced in the "charming, romantic" (*Houston Post*) *Aunt Dimity's Death*—uses her supernatural touch and a bit of ghostly guidance to inspire some star-crossed lovers—and reveal the secrets hidden in an old mansion.

Also available in Penguin, *Aunt Dimity's Death*

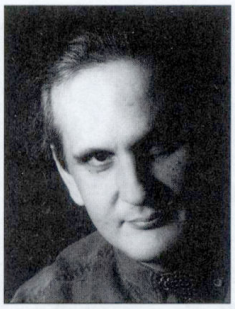
You Can Die Trying
GAR ANTHONY HAYWOOD



PENGUIN PAPERBACK

"Private eye Gunner yanks the sheet off the American nightmare of race, politics, and murder, L.A. style" (**SPIKE LEE**) in this gritty tale starring the African-American detective of *Not Long for This World* and *Fear of the Dark*, winner of the St. Martin's Press/PWA Best First Private Eye contest.

AT BOOKSTORES NOW
FROM VIKING PENGUIN



J. Lincoln Thorner

Collecting Mystery Paperbacks

By

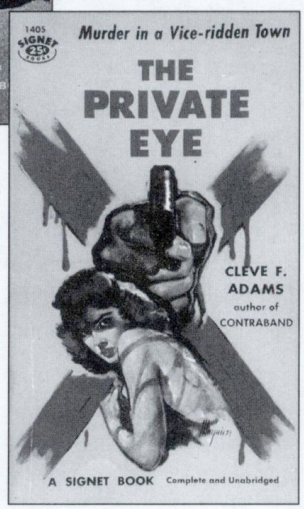
Gary Lovisi

Paperback collecting is hot now, especially those books published during the early vintage years of 1939 to 1959. This piece will focus on this period since these form the majority of paperbacks with high demand and value. There are many reasons for this.

Most of the interest has to do with the often gorgeous (and sometimes exploitive or campy) cover art. This cover art was usually highly illustrative, highly visual, and often full of raw passion and wild action. Often there was the threat (or promise) of murder, mayhem, a dangerous but gorgeous femme fatale, or a woman in peril. The cover often tells a story all by itself, sometimes separate but just as compelling as the book it illustrates. Paperbacks from the 1940's to the 1960's in Fine condition [a collector term for paperback *unread* and almost "as new"], with good mystery or hardboiled cover art, are often highly prized by collectors irrespective of the value of the book they illustrate.

For the collector of mystery paperbacks there's another important criteria, perhaps the most important factor in the demand and value of a collectable mystery paperback of any era.

Private Eyeful by Henry Kane (Pyramid #G432) has typical femme fatale cover art.



The Private Eye by Cleve F. Adams (Signet #1405) has a classic hardboiled cover with a "good girl" woman-in-peril type of illustration.

"Paperback originals"—also known as PBO's—are true first editions. That is, original publications that have never appeared in print before. There are a surprisingly large number of them, many by some of the biggest names in the mystery field.

Though most paperbacks generally have less value than their hardcover edition, in the case of paperback originals, there is no hardcover edition at all. To make matters more involved, many times the PBO is the only edition of that book ever published.

Paperbacks began as a medium for cheap reprint fiction, a place where hardcover publishers dumped work to make a few extra bucks after their first hardcover edition had sold out. Today some hardcover collectors and dealers continue to hold to the arcane notion that paperbacks are *only* cheap reprints with little or no value—to their disadvantage. While there are many reprint editions with little value for collectors—and while certainly not every paperback original is collectable, there are many mystery paperback originals that are eagerly sought by collectors and dealers.

The paperback original phenomenon took off in 1950 with Gold Medal Books and later (their Crest line), Lion Books, Graphic Books, Dell First Editions, and others. However, it had its roots back in the early 1940's with Avon Books who published PBO's in their Murder Mystery Monthly digest series. Examples are: Raymond Chandler (*Five Murders,* MMM #19, PBO 1944; *Five Sinister Characters,* MMM #28, PBO 1945; and *The Fingerman*, MMM #43, PBO 1946); James M. Cain (*Double Indemnity,* MMM #16, PBO 1943; and *The Embezzler*, MMM #20, PBO 1944); and William Irish/Cornell Woolrich (*If I Should Die Before I Wake,* MMM #31, PBO 1945; *Borrowed Crime,* MMM #42, PBO 1946). Many of these books sell in the $100+ range today for near Fine copies. Actually, some of those listed above are not, strictly speaking, PBO's. Rather, they are new collections

Gary Lovisi is the editor of *Paperback Parade*, a magazine devoted to collectable paperbacks of all kinds. He also sponsors the NYC Collectable PB Expo, an annual book show. In 1995 his exhibit, "Paperback America" will debut at the Brooklyn Public Library's prestigious Main Branch at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn. For more information contact Gryphon Publications, P.O. Box 209, Brooklyn, NY 11228, USA.

of previously published pulp magazine stories. However, they are true first editions and hence very collectable.

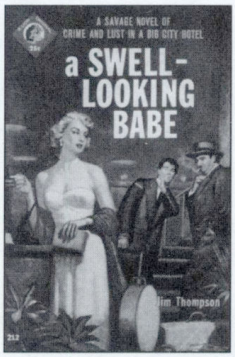
Other examples of crime and mystery paperbacks in the Avon series are the various incarnations of Robert Bloch's *The Scarf of Passion* and later on, the various Avon original editions of the works of Chester Himes (#T-328, *The Real Cool Killers*, PBO 1959; #T-357, *The Crazy Kill*, PBO 1959; and T-434, *All Shot Up*, PBO 1960). These Himes titles can run you about $50+ each in Fine shape. Chester Himes is still relatively undiscovered, but he may be the next writer whose PBO's will become really hot in years to come.

There's a lot of collectable and valuable paperbacks in the mystery field; some are of interest despite the fact they are not PBO's. First paperback printings can also be collectable, such as the reprint of Robert Bloch's hardcover edition of *Shooting Star* (half of Ace Double #D-265) which is backed with a Bloch collection, *Terror in the Night*. On the other hand, there are also Bloch's PBO's in the Ace series such as *Spiderweb* (Ace #D-59, PBO 1954) and *The Will to Kill* (Ace #S-67, PBO 1954). These are excellent crime novels and highly collectable, dating from an era when Bloch was writing contemporary crime and mystery.

Another interesting item is the dust-jacketed edition of *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett (Pocket Book #268). Dust-jackets were a publisher gimmick to re-package the book, usually with more provocative cover art, so they could sell it again. This edition of *Falcon* is not a PBO, it's not even a first paperback printing. My edition of the book is just a low 8th printing from 1945, but it does feature that rare and highly collectable dust jacket wrapped around it (later used as the cover on the Perma Book edition of this title). That makes all the difference. Dust jackets on any vintage era mass-market paperback are rare and much sought after by collectors. This one, because it is Dashiell Hammett, his most famous novel, and features Sam Spade, usually sells at a premium. A near Fine condition copy (near Fine dust jacket, that is) can sell from anywhere from $100. to $250. Other Dashiell Hammett collectable paperbacks were published by Mercury Mystery, Jonathan Mystery, and Bestseller Mystery in digest size.

Another collectable mystery paperback is *Pattern for Murder* by David Knight (Graphic Book #48, PBO 1952) which is actually Richard Prather's first book under pseudonym, and the first Shell Scott novel (later reprinted as *The Scrambled Yeggs*). There is a lot of this kind of thing with collectable mystery paperbacks—pseudonyms, retitles, new editions with new cover art—all guaranteed to make your collecting much more complicated, or more fun, depending on your interests.

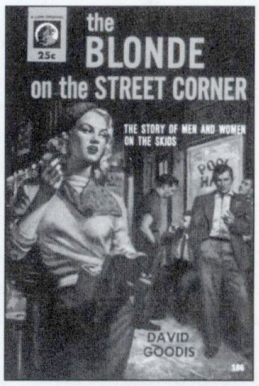
In the 1950's Gold Medal Books and Lion Books lead the pack publishing paperback originals and many of the books they published have become the blockbuster collectable titles of the 1980's and 1990's.



Tiny Lion Books, in a major coup, published eleven paperback originals by a fellow named Jim Thompson throughout the 1950's, including his first book, *The Killer Inside Me* (Lion #99, PBO 1952). This is an incredible crime novel, and this first edition, valued in the $500-$600 range in near Fine condition, is quite scarce.

Examples of other collectable Thompson titles in the Lion series are *A Swell Looking Babe* (Lion #212, PBO 1954), *Recoil* (Lion #120, PBO 1953), and *The Golden Gizmo* (Lion #192, PBO 1954). These Jim Thompson Lion editions in Fine shape can run you anywhere from $100 to $250 each.

David Goodis also wrote for Lion Books, and they published four of his paperback originals. They are great



crime novels as well as being highly collectable: *The Burglar* (Lion $124, PBO 1953); *The Dark Chase* (Lion #133, PBO 1953); *The Blonde on the Street Corner* (Lion #186, PBO 1954, with a gorgeous Robert Maguire cover); and *Black Friday* (Lion #224,

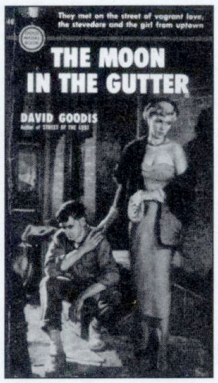
PBO 224). These can fetch from $100 to $200 in Fine shape.

Aside from Jim Thompson and David Goodis, there are many other collectable mystery PBO's in this Lion series, making it one of the toughest and most costly series to attain for the completest collector, or the crime fiction fan.

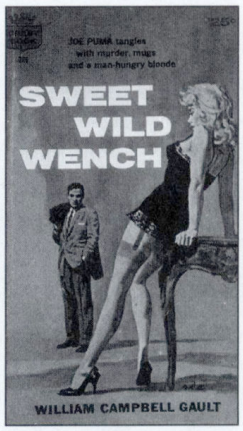
Here's a few of the highlights: *The Lustful Ape* by Russell Gray (Lion #38, PBO 1950, actually mystery author Bruno Fischer under one of his horror pulp bylines); *Someone is Bleeding* (Lion #137, PBO 1953) and *Fury on Sunday* (Lion #180, PBO 1953) are both by Richard Matheson when he was writing crime fiction; and *The Kidnapper* by Robert Bloch (Lion #185, PBO 1954) are all much sought after titles. Of these four, the first is a $25 book, the last three, anywhere from $75 to $200 depending on condition.

Books by David Karp, Stanley Ellin, Kenneth Millar, Day Keene, and Eleazar Lipsky are some of the best in the Lion series. There's also some hidden treasure. *Bodies are Bust* by P. J. Wolfson (Lion #83, 1952) is not a PBO, but it is scarce. A hardboiled novel about a crooked cop on the way down, it's a great read, and was reprinted by Berkley Books in 1960 as *Hell Cop* (Berkley #D2036). The Berkley reprint is tough to find, too.

G. H. Otis wrote two incredible hardboiled thrillers for Lion in 1953, then seemingly disappeared from paperbacks. His first book was *Bourbon Street* (Lion #131, PBO 1953), a few months later, *Hot Cargo* (Lion #171, PBO 1953) appeared, and that was it. *Bourbon Street* is about a loot-mad gunpunk on a rampage who takes apart New Orleans; *Hot Cargo* is a riveting tale of betrayal, spies, double-dealing, and more upon a tramp oil tanker on its way to hell. Otis wrote only two books for Lion and there's next to nothing known about him. Nevertheless, these are unknown classics and very underrated. They sell at about $5-$15 and are a steal.



Gold Medal Books was the leader in publishing original paperbacks in the 1950's, and is responsible for some of the finest work in the mystery field finding its way into print. Even today, most Gold Medals are still good reads, and with such fine authors as John D. MacDonald, David Goodis, Peter Rabe, Richard Prather, Day Keene, Bruno Fischer, Gil Brewer, Lionel White, Vin Packer, Harry Whittington, Charles Williams and others—there's a lot here for the reader and collector. Gold Medal also offers some big money books, such as *The Brass Cupcake* by John D. MacDonald (#124, PBO 1950, his first novel); and these four by David Goodis, *Cassidy's Girl* (#189, PBO 1951), *Of Tender Sin* (#226, PBO 1952), *Street of the Lost* (#256, PBO 1952), and *The Moon in the Gutter* (#348, PBO 1953). These sell for $100 or so, and many in this series of 1000+ titles published up to 1960 are equally collectable.

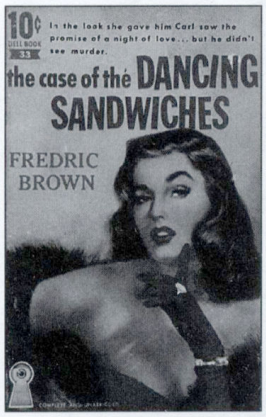


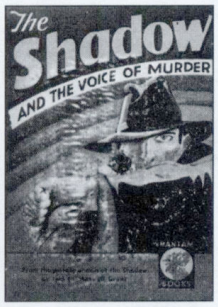
One of the hottest Gold Medal titles is *Black Wings Has My Angel* by Elliott Chaze (Gold Medal #296, PBO 1953) which is very scarce and on just about every collector's want list—this time it's because it's a good hardboiled mystery people want to *read*. Worn and torn copies easily go for $20 (when you can find them) and Fine condition copies are $50 and up. It was reprinted by Berkley Books as *One for the Money* (#Y658, 1962) and is even tougher to find than the Gold Medal edition.

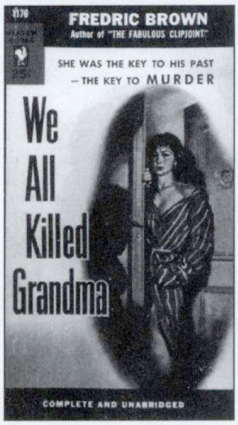
Crest Books, a Gold Medal imprint also published an interesting mix, reprints with originals, much of it mystery fiction. Among these are five of the Joe Puma novels written by William Campbell Gault. All are PBOs. These are undervalued, and excellent hardboiled private eye novels that I would rate even higher than Gault's Brock Callahan books. These run $10-$20 each, *Sweet Wild Wench* (Crest #309) seems to be the toughest one to find.

Of course, I've hardly mentioned some other series containing collectable mystery paperbacks, such as the William Irish titles in the Dell Ten-Cent series: *Marihuana* (#11, PBO 1951), and *You'll Never See Me Again* (#26, PBO 1951); nor the scarce Fredric Brown edition of *The Case of the Dancing Sandwiches* (#33, PBO 1951) all of which are incredibly collectable, and valued in the $100-$200 range. Fredric Brown also had mystery titles published in the Bantam series, and though these were all reprints, they are still very collectable. They run in the $15-$25 range for Fine copies. *We All*

Killed Grandma (Bantam #1176) is a good example of a Fredric Brown Bantam mystery from the 1950's.







Speaking of Bantam, the LA Bantam series (no relation to Bantam Books) has many rare mystery editions. A few highlights: *The Spanish Cape Mystery* by Ellery Queen (#1, 1939); *The Red Threads* by Rex Stout (#1A, 1939, in illustrated and non-illustrative cover versions); *The Shadow and the Voice of Murder* by Maxwell Grant (#21, PBO 1940 also in two cover versions); and *The Blue Geranium and Other Tuesday Club Murders* by Agatha Christie (#26, 1941, in both cover versions). All LA Bantam's are rare, and with one exception, the mystery titles with illustrative cover art are the most desirable. These can range from $100 up to $500 in near Fine shape. Most for $50-$75 in almost any condition.

Charles Willeford is a writer who made his name in the mystery field with his fine Hoke Mosely novels, but Willeford had many earlier crime novels published by sleaze outfits like Beacon Books in the 50's. *Pick-Up* (Beacon #B109, PBO 1955); *High Priest of California* (Beacon #B-130, 1st separate edition, 1956); *Lust is a Woman* (Beacon #B-175, PBO 1958) and *Honey Gal* (Beacon #B-160, PBO 1958) are a few of his much sought after early titles that can run $75 to $200 in Fine. Willeford also wrote crime books for Newsstand Library, another soft-core outfit. *The Woman Chaser* (#U137, PBO 1960); *Understudy For Love* (#U-170, PBO 1961); and *No Experience Necessary* (#U-182, PBO 1962) can fetch from $100 to $200.

Later vintage books of note are the Richard Stark books published by Pocket Books. These are PBO's and the author is, of course, Donald Westlake. Many of the early Ed McBain crime novels were PBO's such as *The Mugger* (Perma #M3061, PBO 1956); *Killer's Payoff* (Perma #M3113, PBO 1958); and others.

In the 70's and 80's many newer writers built up followings. They're big stars today. Lawrence Block had some of his books published as Gold Medal originals in the 60's and 70's, as well as other titles under pseudonym such as his Chip Harrisons. All are collectable today. In fact, Block's first Evan Tanner novel, *The Thief Who Couldn't Sleep* (#d1722) was first published by Gold Medal as a PBO in 1966. Meanwhile, *In the Midst of Death* (Dell #4037, 1976) featuring Matt Scudder was also published as a PBO.

Robert Campbell, known for his hard-hitting crime fiction has had at least one book, his first Jake Hatch novel, *Plugged Nickle* (Pocket #64363, 1988) appear as a PBO which goes today for about $10-$15.

Roger Crais, who began writing about his wacky modern P.I. hero Elvis Cole in the novel *The Monkey's Raincoat* (Bantam #26336) had this first novel, appear as a PBO in 1987. It sells for $15-$20 in Fine condition.

James Ellroy, known for often brutal serious crime fiction also had his first book, *Brown's Requiem* (Avon #78741) published as a PBO in 1981. It's his only PBO, usually selling at $15-$25 in Fine shape.

New paperbacks are being published all the time, some will be the mystery and crime collectibles of the future. In August 1994 Vintage Books released *Born Bad*, the first-ever short story collection by Andrew Vachss, in a trade-paperback edition with some new never-before published material. In essence, a PBO. The book is already in a third printing with that scarce first printing nowhere to be found. It sold out in a few days! This is Vachss' only book not to have previous hardcover publication. I believe that scarce first printing will become a prime collectable paperback.

Mystery paperbacks are fun to collect. The older vintage era books (1939-1959) can often still be found at flea markets and yard sales for as little as a quarter a piece. Even today it is still possible to make amazing finds! You just have to know where to look, and what to look for.

And new mystery paperbacks are being published all the time. Who will be the next big star? Who will be the next author to take off? A good bet is that it will be someone who has had at least one book—usually his first—and maybe many books—published as paperback originals. So it's a hunt and it's a gamble, a game and a wonderful hobby for the rabid mystery fan and collector. Good hunting. ■

Books, Crooks, and Antiquarian Flat Foots

MICHAEL DAVIDSON

The life of a rare book dealer is nothing if not glamorous, exciting, high-paying, and action-packed—or so it seems from the impression given by the class of detective stories known as "bookseller mysteries."* Indeed, reading

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Steven E. Smith is Special Collections Librarian in the Sterling C. Evans Library, Texas A&M University, where he daily defies all the stereotypes of librarians portrayed in bookseller mysteries.

these tales of malfeasance and murder in the book trade, which are quite often written by tradesmen themselves, one senses that what clothing, shelter, and food are to the rest of us, intrigue, adventure, and danger

by Steven E. Smith

are to the rare bookdealer. Whether this image of the bookman as James Bond, or at least Dick Tracy, correlates at all with the real McCoy I do not know.

MICHAEL DAVIDSON

My experience of book selling is like that of the bachelor who when interviewing for a job as a waiter was asked what his qualifications were and answered that he ate out a lot.

That is, I have not sold all that many books in my time (zero as a means of making a living) but I have read quite a few—and of late a good many of these book-slinger whodunits.

The greatest mystery in mysteries that feature a bookdealer as protagonist is that the protagonist is able to make a living at all, for numerous demands are made on his time, very few of which have anything to do with the buying or selling of books. These demands can be divided into four general categories: (1) solving the mystery; (2) wooing sophisticated and sexy women (booksellers don't go for bumpkins); (3) vacationing; (4) some combination thereof, preferably of (2) and (3).

What allows the dealer to divert so much time from his business to these other activities is his faithful girl assistant. The bookseller's girl assistant is a distinct psychological type, her chief characteristics being an unswerving loyalty and an iron bladder. She is frequently called upon to mind the shop without so much as a bathroom break for weeks on end. On occasion she may complain, but she never deserts her post. The "part-time" saleslady runs Parker's Rare Books full-time in John Ballinger's *The Williamsburg Forgeries* (1989). In *Booked to Die* (1992) by John Dunning, Cliff Janeway's girl takes a bullet between the eyes for her dedication. But far above them all in unheralded and unrewarded devotion is Greta Glass of Harry Kurnitz's *Fast Company* (1938). Greta happens to be married to the hero, Joel Glass. One of the drawbacks of being related to the boss is that you're easily left off the payroll. But this is not her only challenge. Within the first fifty pages she is verbally backhanded on the auction room floor, shooed away whenever the men want to talk business, and literally thrown on the ground for dipping into the company coffers to buy herself a new dress. And this from the good guy in the story.

Mrs. Glass, however, suffers her burdens gladly. Not so, Julia Thorne, secretary and all-purpose punching bag to Abe Selig, bad guy of the same book. The recipe for a fictional rare bookseller is a mixture of equal parts thug, savant, and man-about-town. There must have been a shortage of the last two ingredients when Abe Selig was cooked up. The following exchange reveals the flavor of his character:

"Any calls?" [Abe asked.]

"They're on your desk." While Selig busied himself with these memoranda, tossing them one by one into the basket, [Julia Thorne] said, "I told Mr. Bannerman that you would not be back but he insisted on waiting."

Selig grunted. "I saw him. Don't I pay you to get rid of people I don't want to see?"

Miss Thorne flushed. "I couldn't very well throw him out."

"I told you I didn't want to see him. That ought to be enough. You're hired to use your head. Use it. Did Bernhart bring back my copy of 'Tom Sawyer'?"

"No, sir. I phoned him twice."

"Write him tonight registered and make it plain that we want the book or we'll swear out a warrant."

"Yes, sir."

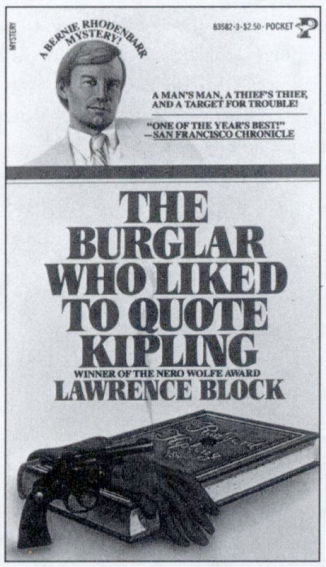
"I want you to go to the Lenox Library tonight. I left my Fourth Folio Shakespeare there with Mr. Stevens. I want an affidavit that it has been collated with their copy and that it checks."

"But, Mr. Selig, we only sent the book up this morning."

"He'll do it for you," said Selig. "I've seen that way he looks at you."

Abe is actually in one of his better moods here. Earlier in the day at an auction he had gotten into a fistfight with another dealer, which accounts for

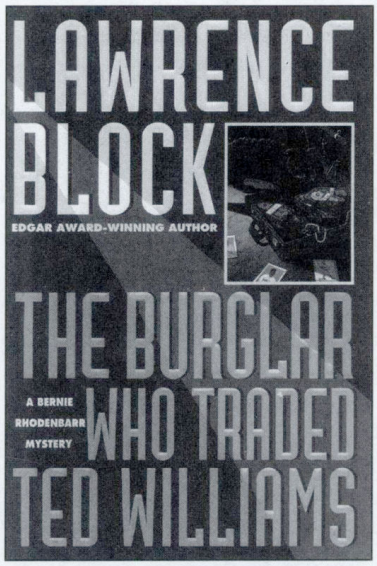
his uncharacteristically buoyant mood. In short order Julia bumps him off and in slightly longer order is found out and thrown in jail. One can't help wondering, however, if justice would have been better served if Ms. Thorne had been exonerated on grounds of diminished capacity due to her boss's gross



insensitivity and plain bad manners. One might even go further and wonder if perhaps she deserves a pat on the back and the keys to the store.

Abe's real trouble was not his abrasive personality but the fact that he spent too much time in his store, which in the rare book business is a sure sign you're up to no good (forging manuscripts, fabricating association copies, switching dust jackets). Abe's crime was a complicated insurance fraud scheme. What it got him was a fatal tap on the side of the head with a bust of Dante he kept on his desk for good luck.

If Abe Selig had gotten out more often, he would no doubt have led a more honest life, and probably a longer one, too. The bookshop seems to rank only slightly better than the driver's seat of a New York City taxi cab in the category of occupational safety. I have already mentioned the assistant who had her hair parted with a .38 caliber bullet in *Booked to Die*. In *The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling* (1979) by Lawrence Block (who has written a dozen or so books in this series, the most recent and successful of which is *The Burglar Who Traded Ted Williams*), there are times when the protagonist considers any place, even the homes of people he has formerly burglarized, safer than his store. *The Williamsburg Forgeries* ends with a shoot–out in a bookstore in which three people are plugged with enough metal to gild



every book in an English baron's manor house library. Carolyn Wells' *Murder in the Bookshop* (1936) is obvious, and apparently quite common.

But booksellers themselves don't go in much for guns; they are usually the ones being shot at. Fist-play is another matter altogether, though. The average dealer is as adept with his hands as his mind. And it's little wonder since before entering the trade the average dealer has also served an apprenticeship in espionage, burglary, law enforcement, professional sports, or the Green Berets. Halfway into *Fast Company* a streetwise police detective asks, "Hasn't anybody in this business got a peaceful disposition?"

In George Sims' stories the hero is usually an ex-boxer or a combat veteran or both. John Dunning's Cliff Janeway is a homicide detective who converts to book dealing after being brought up on battery charges. Brad Parker of *The Williamsburg Forgeries* is a former CIA agent. Lawrence Block's hero got his start breaking and entering. And the dust jacket blurb for Roy Harley Lewis' *Manuscript Murders* (1982) describes Matthew Coll, secret agent turned antiquarian dealer, as a "novice at book auctions but an old hand at murder." The wonder is not that no one in the business appears possessed of a peaceful disposition; the wonder is that anyone in it survives his first career to begin his second.

I wonder about reverse examples. Has anyone ever written a mystery in which the leading character has gone

from antiquarianism *to* crime-solving? Are there, for instance, detective stories where the hero is a CIA mercenary who got his start in modern firsts, or an MI6 agent who lost his innocence in the incunable market, or a private dick who couldn't make a go of Judaica, or a street cop who learned the ropes peddling color-plate flower books? If there are any such characters I have not run into them, and I doubt that I will. The problem, put simply, is one of verisimilitude. Put more simply, who would believe it? Any bookman worth his salt, I gather, would simply find crime-busting for its own sake entirely too pedestrian.

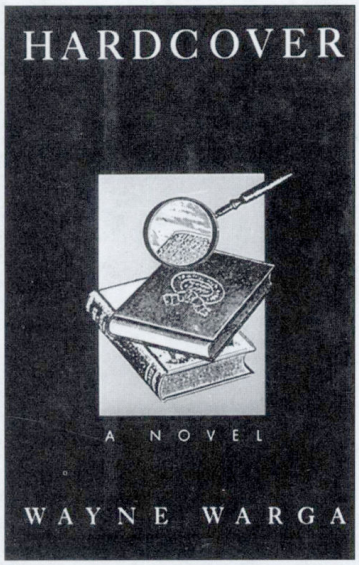
The rare book world is not all brutes and bullets, however. Vacations and holidays have their place as well. But in this profession the relationship between work and play is somewhat symbiotic, which is another way of saying the former provides a handy excuse for the latter. Dave Canon of *Bored to Death* (1975), by Michael Delving, is the perfect model. An American, Dave combines annual buying trips to England with visits to in-laws, his wife being of British extraction. Before he has the

chance to relax, however, the inevitable cloak-and-dagger play is in full swing, and does not abate until the book does. At the end of one of Canon's holidays, any normal man would need a vacation.

Dave's example notwithstanding, the bookseller usually does not remain on holiday for the length of the mystery. The leading men in George Sims' novels are more typical. *Rex Mundi* (1978) and *The Last Best Friend* (1967) begin with their heroes vacationing on the beaches of Corfu and Corsica, respectively. In these two stories the trouble begins at the beach, and then, like a lost puppy but not nearly as welcome, follows the hero home.

Henry Gamadge (the creation of mystery author Elizabeth Daly) has a different problem. The trouble for him does not begin when he is on vacation but when his wife is. This is a handy thing since Gamadge is "dashingly attractive to women," most especially women in distress. Having a wife around at these times could really put the skids on the sleuthing.

In his treatment of women the fictional rare bookdealer is ambidextrous—equally capable of winning charm or brute insensitivity, depending on the woman. Women with spunk, good looks, and nice legs get the former. Women lacking these qualities get the job of faithful female assistant, provided they come with the requisite loyalty and reinforced plumbing. The attractive women are given more than charm, however. In the company of a "sexy skirt"—to use a nonsexist, police procedural term—bookdealers have a habit of going invertebrate. The attraction is nothing if not mutual, however. The only thing that surpasses the rare bookdealer's weakness for leggy females are leggy female's weakness for rare bookdealers. Take the case of Jeffrey Dean in *Hardcover* (1985) by Wayne Warga. While cruising the stalls at a book fair, Jeffrey finds himself on the business end of an alluring brunette's gaze. He decides to risk saying hello. She in turn picks him up, buys him drinks and gives him her phone number.



And then there's Robert Seldon of *The Terrible Door* (1964), another of George Sims' contributions to the genre. The story opens with Seldon attending the funeral of a loyal customer. Over the cold-cut buffet afterwards, another dealer approaches him with a plan for pillaging the deceased's library and splitting the spoils between them. Seldon is shocked. The poor man has barely been in the ground and hour, he objects. Yet within another hour Seldon is in the aforesaid library smooching the aforesaid dead man's widow—an excellent example of situational ethics if ever there was one.

I know of no novel in which the protagonist is both a rare bookdealer and a female. Annie Darling (née Laurence) of Carolyn Hart's "Murder on Demand" series owns a bookstore specializing in mysteries, and though she devotes one wall of her store to used titles, her establishment does not deal in rare or first editions *per se*, and thus she falls outside the boundaries of this discussion. Lady booksellers (which sounds like the name of a city league bowling team) of the antiquarian bent do occasionally show up in supporting roles, usually the love interest role, which means they have (guess what?) spunk, good looks, and nice legs. Rita McKinley, a "damn good-looking" bookseller who "don't do retail" in *Booked to Die,* is the best example of the type. From her secluded mountaintop mansion just outside of Denver, she deals with the rest of the trade and an elite group of collectors via her answering machine. Her specialty is modern first editions with an emphasis on association copies in pristine condition.

Rita is a female assistant made good. She got her start working for a bookseller in Dallas, where (no doubt loyally minding the store while her boss was hot on the bibliographical trail of whichever criminal was vexing the local cops that week) she met and took up with the John D. Rockefeller of book collecting. After a few years her billionaire bibliophile was kind enough to stake her in the business by dying and leaving her everything.

For a time it appears as if Rita is the villain, the prime mover behind several brutal murders, one of which happens to be that of the hero's female assistant. The hero, and reader (or at least this one) I might add, feels a bit conflicted over the possibility. The hero's problem is that he is in love with her; the reader's problem is that she is the most interesting character in the book. In the end Rita is cleared, and everyone is relieved to know that she only *seems* capable of cold-blooded butchery. The story closes with a question mark over the future for Rita and the hero, a question mark that portends a sequel. This is not a bad

thing; it would be nice to see Rita McKinley in a future installment. She is far and away the most powerful female character in all of book-sleuth literature, but this is a little like calling the stripper at a bachelor party the best-looking woman in attendance. On the one hand the compliment is well-deserved; on the other, there ain't much competition.

One would assume that given his way with the feminine species the fictional bookseller would be a fairly nice-looking chap, a real James Bond in the Roger Moore style. In practice he falls a little short of this mark, however. If I was asked to describe the typical fictional bookseller for a composite sketch, I would say male (of course), Caucasian, mid-forties; not ugly but not stunningly handsome either (excessive good looks would make maintaining a cover too difficult); physically fit but no Arnold Schwarzenegger (I see him possessing what tailor's used to call an athletic build, back when athletic meant stopping by the gym once or twice a week to toss around a medicine ball and lounge in the steam room); squarish jaw, honest face, nice teeth, and dark brown hair cut conservatively above the ears. His dress would be informal—sports jackets and cotton pants with pleats, sometimes jeans, perhaps loafers, but never a tie. The bookseller could easily double as an assistant professor of English, though not one of serious poststructural persuasions (there is not nearly enough black in his wardrobe for that). He could in nowise, however, be mistaken for a librarian, or at least the librarians that show up in bookseller mysteries. He is neither reed-thin nor slack-jawed. He doesn't walk with a stoop and he's not given to wearing glasses (contacts perhaps, but spectacles no). His forehead is not low; his hairline does not recede; and his eyes are not deep set—they are not shifty either. The librarian has several if not all of these traits, the outer man being a fair approximation of the inner one, which, not to put too fine a point on the matter, is witless.

But perhaps I'm overstating the case. Not every librarian in these stories is stupidity incarnated in a three-piece suit. One or two are female and thus do not wear suits. The standard view of the librarian (and libraries) is indicated by Rita

Rare and Antiquarian Bookseller Mysteries

Bookseller mysteries belong to the class of novels known as "bibliomysteries." Loosely defined (as it most often is), a bibliomystery is a mystery that involves books or some aspect of the book world. They usually come in one of three varieties: those set in libraries (*The Name of the Rose,* by Umberto Eco, for a famous example); those involving publishers or the publishing business (*The Book,* by Robert Grudin, for a recent example); and those concerning the antiquarian or rare book trade (see the text for numerous examples, some recent but none famous). In this essay I have focused on the last type, and of those only the ones that feature a bookseller as protagonist, which, for reasons I find both unexplainable and slightly discomforting, are particularly appealing to me.

The best list of bibliomysteries is by John Ballinger in *The Armchair Detective,* vol. 18, no. 2—Spring 1985. The catalogs of Oak Knoll Books, a bookselling firm that specializes in bibliography and books about books, are also good sources. And an ongoing list is maintained by a mystery readers listserv out of Kent State University.

John Ballinger,
The Williamsburg Forgeries (1989)

Lawrence Block,
The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling (1979)
The Burglar Who Traded Ted Williams (1994)

Elizabeth Daly,
The Book of the Dead (1944)
The Book of the Lion (1948)
Death and Letters (1950)
et al...

Michael Delving,
Bored to Death (1975)

John Dunning,
Booked to Die (1992)

Harry Kurnitz,
Fast Company (1938)

Roy Harley Lewis,
Manuscript Murders (1982)
Where Angels Fear to Tread (1984)

George Sims,
The Terrible Door (1964)
The Last Best Friend (1967)
Rex Mundi (1978)

Wayne Warga,
Hardcover (1985)

Carolyn Wells,
Murder in the Bookshop (1936)

Steven E. Smith,
Jake Brawn, P.I. Bookman
(in progress, but movie deals and cash advances welcome).

McKinley when she bemoans the fate of collections donated to them: "They just don't have the staff or the knowledge to handle it." Books left to a library, she opines, might as well be taken out and burned. Why? Because librarians are the "world's worst enemies of good books."

Rita gets the situation a little bit wrong, however. The librarian and the bookseller are more opposites than they are antagonists. Nowhere is this more evident than in Roy Harley Lewis' *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1984). Lewis, veteran author of several thrillers in the book-sleuth tradition, has here traded in his bookseller hero for a librarian. Notice I did not say "librarian hero." This is because the protagonist, Henry Franklin (bald, gangly, daydreamy, and on the whole "unprepossessing"), does not solve the mystery; he fumbles through it via a series of fortunate accidents, most of which turn upon the bad guys mistaking his ignorance for cunning, fear for courage, confusion for perceptiveness, and clumsiness for cat-like agility. Henry is forever dodging the bullet by fainting rather than ducking, but he is the only one who knows it.

Henry does share a few things in common with the bookseller, namely a faithful female assistant who minds the library while he plays cloak-and-dagger. He also tends to be irresistibly, and inexplicably, attractive to women. In every other respect he is everything the bookseller is not. Indeed, Henry Franklin, like so many others of his vocation in these stories, is not so much a librarian as he is a bookseller drawn in relief—very stark relief.

Reading these mysteries has given me an idea: the ABAA (Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America) and the FBI should join forces to compile a database of booksellers' names, addresses, and specialties, and then make this information available to law enforcement agencies around the country. You never know when the local PD will need someone to work the bibliographic angle on the latest triple homicide.

All these book-slinger tales have also given me an itchy trigger finger, so to speak. I would not mind taking a shot at writing one myself. Perhaps it would begin something like this:

Jake Brawn, P.I. Bookman

by Steven E. Smith

Jake Brawn sat at his breakfast table, staring at his bran muffin. He was still a little groggy after the late night flight from Tunis. Monique padded by in her bare feet on her way to the refrigerator for her morning glass of orange juice. She had just gotten out of the shower and hadn't bothered with a bathrobe. Instead she wore a towel wound tightly round her body. He appreciated the chance to once again admire her long, shapely legs. He reminded himself how lucky he was to have a girl with a set of chop sticks like that, and a Ph.D. in microbiology from Harvard to boot.

But even these thoughts could not lift his spirits. His last mission for the agency had left him depressed. Oh sure, one gets a certain amount of satisfaction from foiling a plan by Middle Eastern extremists to infiltrate nuclear launch sites in Russia and the U.S. and then launch each country's missiles at the other, thereby precipitating WWIII. But it was all beginning to have that "been there, done that" feel.

Maybe it was time to find another line of work, he thought. But it would have to be something that would support his one great passion—collecting first editions of modern American authors, Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck, etc. His collection was now so large it occupied nearly every bit of available wall space in his Georgetown condominium. Lately he was even considering putting up shelves in the extra bath off the guest bedroom. He would not admit it to himself, but in truth his books were the only thing holding him to his job. It would not be easy to find another that paid the salary and provided the travel opportunities necessary to support this habit.

He pushed his muffin aside and picked up the paper. Languidly he scanned the headlines and then turned to the "Business Opportunities" section of the classifieds. Almost immediately his eyes landed on the following notice:

Wanted: Partner in antiquarian bookselling firm. Knowledge of forensic and criminal sciences required. Experience in espionage or related field preferred. Taste for high adventure and derring-do a must. Interest in books helpful, acquaintance with bibliography a plus, but will train if willing to learn. Benefits include travel to exotic locations, generous pay, liberal vacation.

The game, Jake thought, is afoot.... ■

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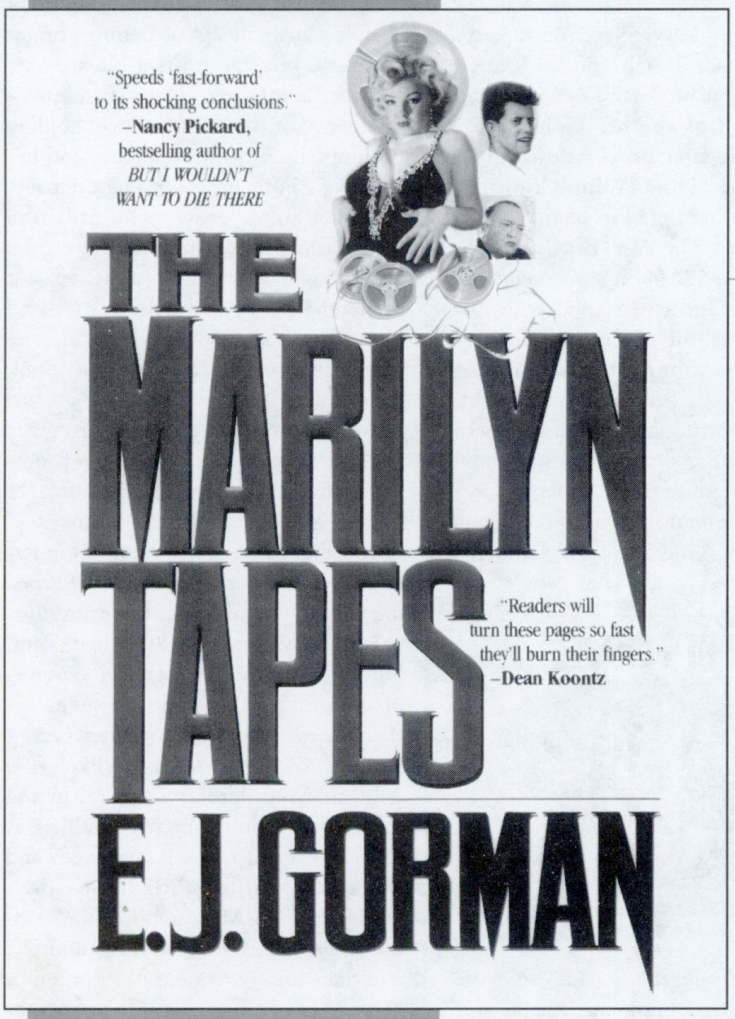

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ORIGINAL SINS

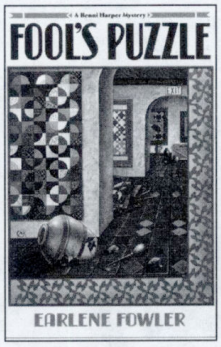
BY MARVIN LACHMAN

Fans of 1950s and 1960s paperback original mysteries know that a Gold Medal mystery does not only signify the name of the publisher—a division of Fawcett. They know it connotes a certain type of book identified with such writers, now gone, as John D. MacDonald, Harry Whittington, Jim Thompson, and Charles Williams. Lawrence Block, a

legend in his own time, as the cliché goes, is very much with us, as proved by the Grandmaster award and short story Edgar bestowed on him at the 1994 MWA Awards Banquet. Block's first book, **Mona**, was published by Gold Medal in 1961, and it has been reprinted in 1994 by Carroll & Graf, $3.95. It epitomizes the Gold Medal mystery, with its tightly written suspense and interesting, albeit amoral, characters.

Joe Marlin is a crook, but like Block's current "villain," Keller, he has a complex moral code. He meets Mona Brassard and, as often happens in these books, he falls for her at once. Eventually, in typical *noir* dialogue, he says, "I could not live with her and I could not live without her." Mona happens to have a husband—also on the wrong side of the law—who has a shipment of heroin which falls into Joe's hands. The husband must go, and Marlin's efforts in this direction generate suspense reminiscent of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Block's story is told with much economy in 138 pages, but not a word more is needed. The ending is surprising, and if initially questionable, seems just right the more one thinks about it. Also, without unnecessarily lengthy descriptions, Block succinctly captures the book's many locations: Atlantic City, New York City, Scarsdale, Miami Beach, and Las Vegas.

Block's popularity has also led to the republication of another Gold Medal original, his first book about Evan Tanner, **The Thief Who Couldn't Sleep** (1966; reprinted in hardcover by Otto Penzler's The Armchair Detective Library, 1994, $22.00 in a trade edition; $75.00 for a limited, signed edition). This adventure of a man with a sleep disorder ranges throughout Europe, as Tanner tries to find gold hidden by Armenians during a Turkish massacre fifty years before. It is not a very complicated plot, but there is action and amusing observation in this combination of James Bond spoof and Candide-like adventure.



Once, the publisher's name told the reader whether a book was a hardcover or a paperback. However, in the last few years such former paperback houses as Pocket Books, Bantam, and Berkley have been publishing hardcovers, often first novels. An example is Earlene Fowler's **Fool's Puzzle** (1994; Berkley, $17.95), a book with an interesting background (a folk art museum) but a not very interesting protagonist or plot. Benni Harper, a recent widow and the museum curator, is another first person-narrating female amateur sleuth who attracts corpses and has a relationship (in this case a love-hate one) with a police detective. (In fairness, I must point out that this is no more of a cliché than the male private eye bedding every eligible female in sight.) Benni is bright and sassy, but she grows a bit tiresome with her admissions of stupid and juvenile behavior, her constant withholding of information from the police, and her negative comments about them. Finally, even her jokes grow stale. Still, the information on quilting is interesting, and it has led to a most attractive dust jacket painting of quilts by Cheryl Griesbach and Stanley Martucci, one which may some day make this book collectible.

Lonely Street by Steve Brewer (1994; Pocket Books, $4.99) *is* a paperback original, one which fits into that rapidly growing sub-genre of mystery: stories about Elvis Presley and his imitators. Presley's popularity always escaped me because I found him to be an unsophisticated singer-actor of limited talent, but that may be the reviewer showing his age. Elvis fans could do a lot worse than Brewer's private eye story about Bubba Mabry, a very marginal Albuquerque detective, hired in the 1990s by someone who may be Elvis. A Florida scandal sheet is involved, and there is a murder with Bubba (he's originally from Mississippi) as the leading suspect. The story moves smoothly, and there are some good descriptions of New Mexico's largest city, especially its seedy Central Avenue. However, don't look for a very logical, believable plot. It appears that now many writers, editors, and critics don't consider good plotting to be part of good writing.

With its inside comments about mystery writing and book buying, Neil McGaughey's first, **Otherwise Known as Murder** (1994; Scribner's, $20.00) may well duplicate the success of *Booked to Die*, by John Dunning, from the same publisher. McGaughey has been a

mystery reviewer for ten years; his series character-to-be, Stokes Moran, also is a mystery reviewer. Moran has been offered $25,000 by *Playboy* to locate the pseudonymous Seymour Severe, interview him, and review his latest book. Why would *Playboy* pay that much? Severe is said to be a best selling author who has "...changed the course of fictional crime writing...." Unfortunately, there are no examples or evidence of this, so we must suspend disbelief almost from the outset. (Also, though this is a good subject for satire, McGaughey plays it relatively straight, except in selecting the writer's name.)

Moran goes to New Orleans where he gets in trouble so quickly, it appears that not only will his mission be aborted, but he is in danger of being arrested for murder. However, with the help of his literary agent and a makeup artist who disguises him, Moran goes back to clear himself and find the elusive Seymour Severe. Though the early stages of the book are difficult going, McGaughey has a pip of an ending, one so good I suspect he came up with it first, with the rest of the book trailing along. Still, it makes a nice change from some first novelists who have great beginnings but don't know how to end their books.

Mystery readers who spend their weekends "booking" are likely to enjoy the well-realized background of Susan Holtzer's **Something to Kill For** (1994; St. Martin's Press, $19.95)—the world of garage sales. The college town of Ann Arbor, Michigan, (so reminiscent of Berkeley, California,) comes alive in this story of murder among the "scavengers" who haunt these sales—professionals and amateurs hoping for "The Big Score" (always capitalized) in antiques and/or art.

Holtzer's book won the 1994 award at Malice Domestic for the best traditional first mystery, but it is hard to know what the word "traditional" means these days. If it means a book with an amateur detective, then Holtzer's heroine, Anneke Haagen, qualifies, and she is bright and decent enough to support a future series. If traditional means a book without gratuitous sex, blood, and violence, I have no problem with including it in that category either.

However, I fear that traditional is beginning to mean a book with a female protagonist who has an obligatory romantic involvement with a police detective. The relationship is invariably at the expense of the detection, something a traditional writer like Agatha Christie worked so hard at. Here, the vital clue is a dying message, but it is so inadequately handled, I could imagine Ellery Queen whirling in his grave.

Categorization aside, *Something to Kill For* flows smoothly, with a large cast of characters handled in a manner worthy of an author with more experience. However, I would have been happier not having to read the dumb messages on their T-shirts, but that may just be the reviewer showing his age again.

Once, first mysteries usually were published in 192 pages. Occasionally, they came in at 224 pages. Without advocating a return to arbitrary limits, I wonder whether publishers are really serving their readers in their quest for blockbusters which "transcend the genre." Mystery fiction can do quite well, thank you, without either transcension or condescension. A case in point is Allan Folsom's **The Day After Tomorrow** (1994; Little, Brown, $24.95) a 596 (!) page book, which starts in an exciting, if unlikely, manner. While in Paris, Dr. Paul Osborn recognizes the man who, 28 years before, had stabbed his father to death on a Boston street. The chase begins, and this reader would willingly have suspended disbelief, as he often did with Cornell Woolrich, for a tight thriller of reasonable length. Instead, we get more characters than we can keep track of. For reasons not very believable, a Los Angeles detective named McVey is summoned to Europe to help with the case. McVey and Osborn race around Europe as Folsom tries to tie the murder of the elder Osborn to a series of beheadings, and the result is a political Frankenstein of a plot, sewn together from equal parts of espionage and Jack-the-Ripper. There is considerable violence and sex, but I will say that some is relevant to the plot, and at times Folsom even shows restraint. The dust jacket blurb calls *The Day After Tomorrow* "a novel that truly reinvents the thriller." If it does, this huge book reinvents it as a doorstop.

Though it deals with such modern topics as environmental depredation, Larry Shriner's first, **Epilogue for Murder** (1994; Walker, $21.95), is an "old-fashioned" private eye mystery which moves along very crisply. Its narrator is Atlanta's Bennett Cole, who is so well versed in the works of Raymond Chandler that he subtly incorporates several "in" jokes. Unfortunately, the reader is asked to believe, without Shriner providing any credible basis, that Cole gave up a promising academic career as a professor

to become a self-styled "...two-bit private dick with his heart where his brain ought to be." He is hired to investigate the death of his hero, novelist Walker Redgrave, about whom he once wrote books. Here, as in the McGaughey book, the reader is required to accept that Redgrave "...elevated his books above the level of mystery genre," without receiving any convincing evidence. Cole goes to the cheap motel in the Florida Panhandle where Redgrave died, an apparent suicide, in a locked room. The heat and humidity of Florida are very well described.

There are disconcerting errors (not deliberate) in language use, surprising in that they come from the professor-detective and another character who is a book editor. The resolution of the locked room killing is unimaginative and unsatisfactory. This time, it is John Dickson Carr who is gyrating in his crypt. Yet, on balance, this is one of the better debuts of 1994, a book which, despite serious flaws, proved worth reading.

"Gritty" has become clichéd when applied to New York crime novels, but it often applies, and certainly to Peg Tyre's compelling **Strangers in the Night** (1994; Crown, $20.00). This story of violence in the neighborhoods of Brooklyn has a cast of losers and louses, some of the most despicable people you would ever, reluctantly, want to come across. Yet, the book is hard to put down due to the tight prose of Tyre, a first time novelist, who won a Pulitzer Prize for her crime reporting. It has two likable, complex (albeit self-centered) characters, a crime reporter and the police detective with whom she has a love affair. In a fictional world where few murder victims are interesting, Tyre makes us sympathize and want to see the capture of the murderer of a hardworking nurse. This book's dust jacket mentions that Tyre is married to Peter Blauner, whose equally gritty Edgar-winning first novel, *Slow Motion Riot* (1991) was favorably reviewed in this column. Both Blauner and Tyre see and write about New York City very clearly and compellingly, though they spend much of their time with its grit in their eyes. ■

Murderous Affairs

BY

JANET A. RUDOLPH

SEMANA NEGRA! WHAT CAN I SAY? I RECENTLY PARTICIPATED IN THIS TEN DAY EXTRAVAGANZA IN GIJON, SPAIN. PART FESTIVAL (I.E. FERRIS WHEELS, ROLLER COASTERS, AND CROWDS OF HOLIDAY GOERS), PART INTERNATIONAL WRITERS CONFERENCE (PARTICIPANTS HAILED FROM CHILE, MEXICO, NORWAY, GERMANY, CUBA, THE U.S., SWEDEN, SPAIN, AND ENGLAND, TO NAME A FEW COUNTRIES), THIS "BLACK WEEK" WAS HELD IN THE SEASIDE CITY of Gijon in Asturias on Spain's northern coast. The name Semana Negra comes from the Spanish term for the hardboiled detective novel, and the writers in attendance were members of several branches of the International Association of Crime Writers. Entire families flocked to the "fair"—over one million in attendance during the week! There were the usual amusement rides and carnival attractions, but also mystery related exhibits of hardboiled comic art, booths for booksellers (next to the empanada and cotton candy booths), author signings, and round tables. Did I mention "copas con los escritores" (drinks with the writers)? The *copas con los escritores* were actually listed on the daily program. Now, I've been known to "drink with the authors" at Bouchercon and Malice Domestic, but it's never been an intrinsic part of the program. The Semana Negra group published a very professional daily paper, **A Quemarropa** (Point Blank), chronicling daily events as well as in-depth articles of specific writers or schools of thought. The paper also had wonderful photos of the writers at the Municipal Waste Plant (an interesting trip accompanied by bagpipe and drum), the Fair, on the Black Train, at round tables, and in the midst of the fiesta. Did I mention that all the writers traveled to Gijon on a special "black" train which was met at the station by a brass band? Quite a fanfare! During the week, French singer Georges Moustaki and New York crime writer Jerome Charyn participated in a death defying game of Ping-Pong against the local team (the local team won). And, on one evening "1.5 kilometers" of books were spread out across the fairgrounds—donations collected for book-starved Cuba. One of the most unusual happenings was the appearance of "Superbarrio," a character dressed in red tights, red/gold mask and gold lamé cape. Superbarrio is a living Mexican legend. He was a street vendor turned crusader for social justice in Mexico City's poorest neighborhoods (barrios). Superbarrio at Semana Negra resembled a slightly overweight Superman and was possessed of the same qualities to do good for humankind.

O.K. Who was there? What were the round tables about? And what does this all have to do with mysteries? Since one of the main purposes of IACW as well as Semana Negra is to foster translation and enlarge readership across language barriers, the writers at Semana Negra were from many countries and many wrote in languages other than English or Spanish. I became quick friends with Kim Smage of Norway, a very popular Scandinavian writer of crime fiction, Sabine Deitmer, a prolific German writer very involved in feminist writing, and Regula Venske, also of Germany. Other countries represented? Arne Blom, President of IACW (AEIP), and a well-known Swedish writer was there. Writers from Italy even formed their own round table. The U.S. contingent was represented by Jerome Charyn, Rolando Hinojosa, Mary Wings and myself. Norman Spinrad of science fiction fame was also in attendance. The Brits had charming John Malcolm, president of the Crime Writers' Association, and Val McDermid, author of the Kate Branigan novels. The bulk of the participants, however, were from Spanish-writing countries such as Mexico, Spain, Cuba, Argentina, and Chile. It was surprising that there were no writers present from Eastern Europe and that there were no Hispanic women. One might say that the only serious flaw of Semana Negra was a real lack of interest in women's writing, but then the conference was organized by Hispanic men. Not a major complaint, just duly noted. Some of the Hispanic writers at the conference included Leonardo Padura and Justo Vasco from Cuba, Paco Taibo and Mauricio

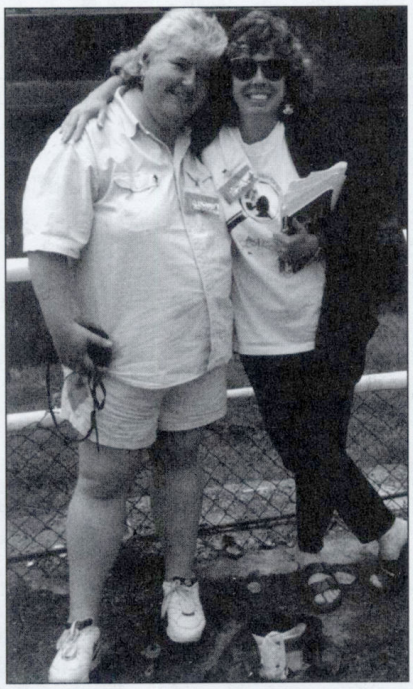
Schwarz from Mexico, Domingo Santos and Julian Ibanez from Spain, and Luis Sepulveda from Chile.

Surreal would be an understatement for the events which take place every year at Semana Negra. What is important to tell you is that this entire mystery festival was conceived by Mexico's premier crime writer, Paco Taibo II. If you've met Paco, you know his energy is boundless, and putting Semana Negra together takes a lot (he did have help from his wife Paloma who organizes cultural festivals). Anyway, it's quite a tribute to the genre—this Semana Negra—and to Paco Taibo for putting it together. This is the seventh year for this week of mystery and mayhem. What an accomplishment.

Since you're interested in the mystery sessions (isn't that why you're reading *TAD*?), topics focused on the mystery novel, Mexican mysteries, crime fiction and reality, women mystery writers, the Italian police novel, and more. Round tables were only one part of the conference, however. What I found most valuable were the more informal discussions taking place over meals and drinks. Great new friends were made, relationships cemented, and hope implanted that we'll be able to read each other's work—in translation—soon. For the mystery lover who wants something completely different, Semana Negra fits the bill!

O.K., so you weren't invited to Semana Negra, where can you go to meet writers and fans of mysteries? **Bouchercon,** the world mystery convention, meets September 28–October 1, 1995 in Nottingham, England. Write to Bouchercon 26, Broadway, 14 Broad St., Nottingham, England NG1 3AL for information. There was a last-minute bid for the 1996 conference—it will be held in St. Paul, Minnesota. Bouchercon will return to San Francisco in '97.

1995 promises some other special conventions. **Left Coast Crime V** moves to Arizona, February 17–19, 1995. This will be held at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Conference Center. Southwestern authors and mysteries will be showcased. Space strictly limited to 400. Featuring Southwestern Mystery Authors with Guest of Honor Tony Hillerman, Toastmistress Judy Van Gieson. Taco Tea on Friday Afternoon. Write to LCCV, PO Box 908, Scottsdale, AZ 85251.



AUTHOR VAL MCDERMID AND JANET RUDOLPH AT SEMANA NEGRA.

Malice Domestic VI, one of my favorite conventions since it is devoted to "comfortable crime" will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, Maryland (near Washington, DC), on April 28–30. For more information, write to PO Box 31137, Bethesda, MD 20824–1137. Membership includes the Agatha Awards Banquet and the Agatha Christie Tea.

Eyecon, the first private eye writers (and readers) convention is scheduled for June 15–18 at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee. Guest of Honor is Sue Grafton and Toastmaster is Les Roberts. Programming will run from 4 p.m. on Thursday, June 15 until Sunday, June 18 at noon. Author presentations, signings, fan panels and special events are scheduled. Sunday will feature the first PWA Writers Conference designed for new writers. The PWA Lifetime Achievement Award and St. Martin's Best First Novel Award will be presented at the PWA Luncheon on Friday, June 16. PWA Shamus Awards will be presented at the Octoberfest Banquet on Saturday, June 17. Registration fee includes the Friday PWA Buffet Luncheon and the Octoberfest Banquet. Gary Warren Niebuhr is the force behind this first Private Eye Writers of America convention.

In August of 1995, **Sisters in Crime** plans a **Writers Workshop**. For more information write to Ann Braziel at 1616 Isham Dr, Lawrenceville, GA 30245–2871.

And, if you can't go to a convention, there are many other opportunities for you to meet writers and other fans. Mystery bookstores, mystery book clubs, and libraries all have signings, talks and teas with authors. Check your local listings and the special mystery newsletters.

And, a small plug for the **Mystery Readers Journal**, the official publication of Mystery Readers International. *MRJ* is a quarterly thematic journal, edited by me (Janet A. Rudolph). Each issue contains articles, reviews and author essays on a specific theme, as well as special columns, a calendar of events, and other mystery related material. 1995 issues will focus on Suburban Mysteries, San Francisco, regional British Mysteries, and Technological Mysteries (computer, etc. as the background). Membership in Mystery Readers International which includes the *Mystery Readers Journal* is $24/year ($35/overseas airmail). PO Box 8116, Berkeley, CA 94707.

Next time in this column, I'll do an update of awards, mystery bookstores, conventions, and events. Don't forget, I depend on you to keep me informed on mystery bookstores, events, societies, periodicals, and anything else mystery-related. Write to me, **Janet A. Rudolph, Mystery Readers International, PO Box 8116, Berkeley, CA 94707** or fax to **(510) 339–8309**. ■

EyeCon'95

THE FIRST CONFERENCE
HONORING THE
PRIVATE EYE WRITERS OF AMERICA

JUNE 15 - 18, 1995

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

The streets may be a little meaner in other cities but Milwaukee will be hosting the festivities as mystery fandom doffs its fedora to the people who make it all possible - the private eye writers of America. APBs have been issued for all of our favorites. **SUE GRAFTON** has been picked up to act as the **Guest of Honor**. Ms. Grafton is responsible for the activities of Ms. Kinsey Millhone (but you already know that!). Our **Toastmaster** is **LES ROBERTS**.

The rest of the line-up as of November 1, 1994 includes: Harold Adams, Neil Albert, Terry Beatty, Lawrence Block, Max Allan Collins, Bill Crider, Catherine Dain, Janet Dawson, Earl Emerson, Paul Engleman, David Everson, Graeme Flanagan, Parnell Hall, Jeremiah Healy, Wendi Lee, John Lutz, Thomas McCall, Walter Mosley, Warren Murphy, Maxine O'Callaghan, Robert Randisi, S.J. Rozan, Sharon Gwyn Short, and David J. Walker. Take this opportunity to meet the men and women behind the books!

SCENE OF THE CRIME

Hyatt Regency Milwaukee
333 West Kilbourn Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53203 USA
(414) 276-1234

Conference room rates are
$88. per night for both single
and double occupancy.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

$100. thru January 15, 1995
$125. thru June 15, 1995

Registration includes
the **PWA** Luncheon on Friday and
the Octoberfest Banquet on Saturday.

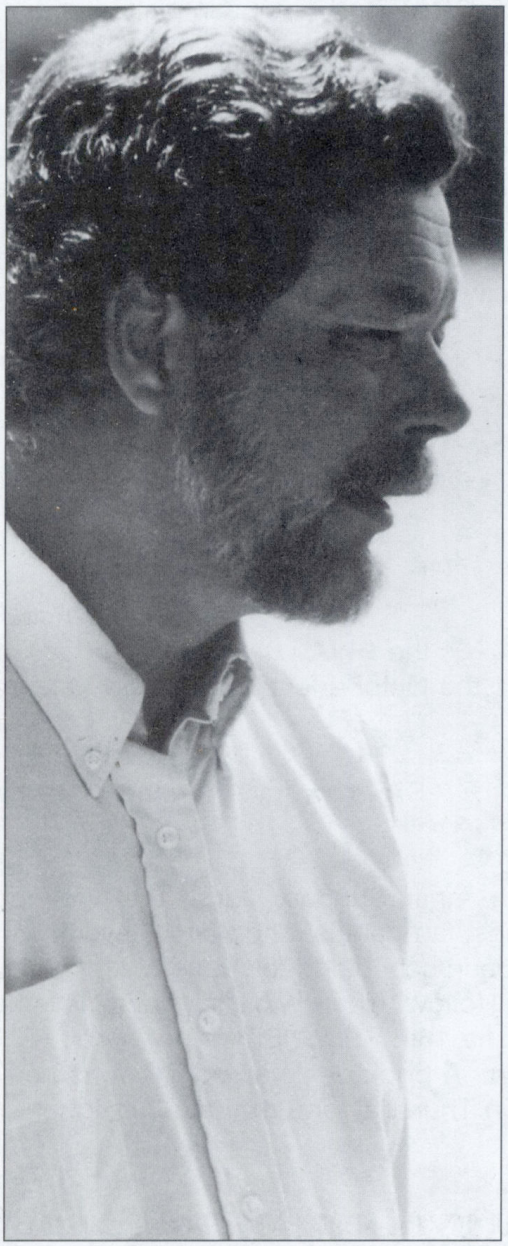
Daily registration will be
$75. per day - no meals included.

Programming will run from 4pm on Thursday, June 15th, until Sunday, June 18th, at noon. Programming will feature author presentations, author signings, fan panels, and special events. The first **PWA** Writers Conference designed for new writers has been scheduled for Sunday afternoon; a separate registration fee is required for this and information will follow. The **PWA** Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented at the **PWA** Luncheon on Friday, June 16th. **PWA** Shamus Awards will be presented at the Octoberfest Banquet on Saturday, June 17th. A book dealers' room, sponsored by **MYSTERY ONE** bookstore of Milwaukee, will open at 4pm on Thursday and operate throughout the conference.

For additional information/registration forms, please write **EyeCon'95**, P.O. Box 341218, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53234. A team of high-level investigators will get on it right away!!

COYNE of the COMMONWEALTH

An Interview with William G. Tapply



by Charles L. P. Silet

Over the last ten years, William Tapply has written an even dozen crime novels featuring Boston lawyer Brady Coyne, who serves an exclusive and wealthy New England clientele. However, from the very first of the series in *Death at Charity's Point* (1984), Brady has been overstepping the boundaries of a lawyer in order to straighten out his clients' personal and family problems, and as the series has developed, the crimes he now investigates seem to be originating from an ever-widening number of sources.

The only thing they appear to have in common is Brady's hesitancy to become involved. Pursuing his inquiries takes this lawyer-turned-amateur detective all over New England, and since he often seems more passionate about fly-fishing than he does about the law, Brady frequently interrupts his sleuthing to dip a line into a promising stream along the way.

Brady Coyne is primarily a solitary man, and he lives alone in an apartment overlooking the ocean. Although he is a divorced father of two grown sons, he remains largely free from entangling relationships, aside from the emotional attachment to his ex-wife which still lingers long after their divorce. Introspective and compassionate, Brady struggles with the demons of his time and tries to provide at least a momentary stay against the chaos of the modern world.

William Tapply is also well-known for his articles and short fiction about hunting and fishing and is a contributing editor to *Field & Stream* magazine. He has published three collections of his outdoors writings and has written a reminiscence about his father "Tap" Tapply, who is also a famous author of sporting stories and articles.

TAD: Tell me something about your background.

TAPPLY: I went to Amherst College and graduated in '62 with a bachelor's degree in American Studies. I earned a master's degree at Harvard in Education and embarked on a career in teaching and administration in the public schools which lasted 26 years from which I (prematurely) retired in 1990. I started writing sometime in my thirties just to get the itch out, and it worked out that people liked what I wrote and bought it. My first novel was published in '84.

TAD: You grew up on the East Coast and lived in or around the Boston area...

TAPPLY: Actually I have lived in Massachusetts all my life.

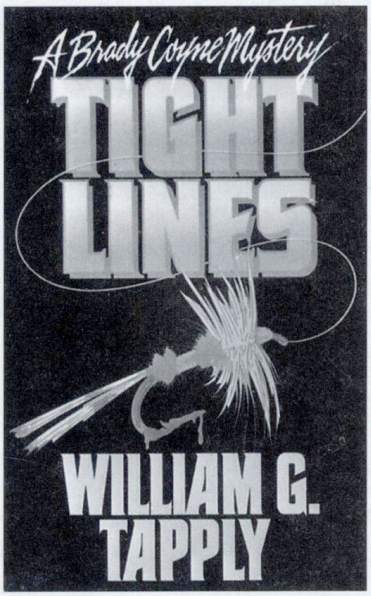
TAD: And your father is Tap Tapply, the prominent outdoors writer?

TAPPLY: He was a writer and a magazine editor. When my sister and I were approaching the age for college—he was writing freelance at the time—he decided he had to do something more secure. So he beat his brains out in a Boston advertising agency for about 15 years, but he continued to write for *Field & Stream*. They had been reprinting his articles until recently. He's 84, alive and well, and lives in New Hampshire with my mother—who's also alive and well and in her late seventies.

TAD: So you grew up in a writer's family.

TAPPLY: I tell the story about when I was growing up and my father was working in Boston though still writing. He absolutely hated advertising. He hated every minute of it, but he felt he had to do it. After dinner he would go to his office downstairs and do his writing. When I was little I used to stand outside the glass door and watch him. I could see the pain on his face, and I could see the piles of balled-up yellow paper behind him on the floor that he was ripping out of his old Underwood typewriter, and starting over again. It was a lesson I've never forgotten—how hard writing can be!

TAD: What motivated you to start writing?



TAPPLY: I don't want to be glib about it, but probably something that you would summarize as mid-life angst. I'd been teaching and doing public school work at that point for about 18 years. It was a good, rewarding career, gratifying. I wasn't going to get rich and that was OK, but you know, I started looking into my future and saying, "Well another 20 years of this and...then you retire and then you die."

TAD: Such thoughts concentrate the mind.

TAPPLY: I've always been a good writer. I was one of those people who got through school by writing things well rather than writing profound things, and later I was the one who wrote the committee reports. My teachers told me that I could write well. One of the benefits of my public school job was that I worked with apprentice teachers. We were paid for our work by vouchers from the colleges they were from. I got a voucher one year from Tufts University. So rather than taking education courses and improving myself in that way, which I was sick of doing, I took a short story writing workshop. I can't even tell you the name of the guy who taught it. It was at the summer school. I don't know what I learned there except that it got me writing, got me thinking about writing, and it actually got me writing a piece that eventually turned into the first story I ever sold. It was a true reminiscence that I sent to *Sports Illustrated* and they bought it. From there I said, "Man, this is really fun." The writing part's hard, I knew that, but having people buy your stuff is a kind of affirmation.

So I started writing all kinds of things for magazines. I wrote about gardening, I wrote about education, I wrote a few short stories and about fishing and had a great time. Eventually I started to think like a writer. But I figured *real* writers write books, and the best kind of book to write is a novel because a novel comes out of your own imagination. By definition no one else could write your novel, so you'd actually be putting something out into the world that if you didn't do it would never get there. So I wrote a novel which now resides in a cardboard box somewhere. I spent a year doing it, all my spare time on weekends, summer vacation, and I worked hard on it. It had characters, a plot, a theme, and it had a setting. When I was done with it I said, "Well this isn't very good." But I did it. I had a big stack of paper and I was encouraged by that. I work with a lot of writers now, and they think that the novel they're working on, the first novel, is the one that's going to make them rich and famous, and I tell them that for most people it doesn't work that way. You've got to write one or two or three before you get the hang of it. You've got to serve your apprenticeship; you've got to put in your time.

TAD: How did you decide to start writing mysteries?

Charles L.P. Silet teaches contemporary fiction and film at Iowa State University. He is currently putting together a book of his interviews with crime writers and editing a collection of essays on Alfred Hitchcock's classic film *Psycho*.

MY EDUCATION IN GUN CONTROL by William G. Tapply

These were my first lessons in gun control:

"Never point a gun—even a toy—at anybody."

"Before you cross a stone wall or crawl under a barbed-wire fence, unload your gun."

"When you're in the woods, always know where your hunting partners and the dogs are, and never shoot in their direction."

"Never load a gun in the house or put a loaded gun in the car."

When I was growing up in the 1950s hunting ducks and pheasants and ruffed grouse in the fields and woods of New England, "gun control" simply meant obeying my father's rules of gun safety.

I lived a scant twenty miles west of Boston, but there was plenty of woodland and meadow and farmland in my hometown. I could—and often did—walk out my back door, load my shotgun, and go hunting. No neighbors complained. And when I asked permission to hunt on their property, local landowners never refused. They'd just say, "Now, you be careful, son," or, "Good luck, and bring me back a pheasant." Hunting was considered healthy recreation in those days.

Nobody raised an eyebrow when we talked about shotguns and .22 rifles and killing rabbits and pheasants. None of my friends, or their parents, or our neighbors, thought hunting was morally reprehensible. Nobody said guns should be kept away from teenaged boys. Not everybody owned guns or hunted. But nobody ever questioned those of us who did.

The American West had been "won" with guns. So had a couple of world wars. Prohibition criminals and G-men slaughtered each other with tommy-guns. But when I was a kid, folks did not confuse the criminal with the weapon.

Lee Harvey Oswald changed everything. After Dallas, our world was no longer secure. If a president could be assassinated by a man with a gun, nobody was safe.

As if to prove the point, radical leaders began to preach the benefits of violence. Urban ghettoes erupted in flames and gunfire. More public figures were assassinated. Psychotic spree killers mowed down innocent strangers on college campuses and in post offices.

And the phrase "gun control" changed its definition. No longer did it mean handling guns safely. Now it meant restricting or prohibiting the availability of guns.

Concurrently, those of us who hunted with guns began to be viewed by many as sexually-twisted perverts and sadistic killers, more or less as dangerous as the criminals and terrorists themselves.

Attention focused on "assault guns," Uzis and AK-47s, those evil-looking semi-automatics modeled after military weapons. They were slick examples of form merging with function. They were designed to kill lots of people easily and quickly. Wicked acts of random murder were committed by crazy men with assault guns.

To me, assault guns gave *all* guns—and all of us who used guns responsibly—a bad name. So when, in 1989, the Massachusetts Commissioner of Public Safety invited me to testify before a state senate subcommittee in favor of legislation to restrict the availability and use of assault weapons, I accepted.

I told the panel that I was speaking as a private citizen, that I was a lifelong resident of the Commonwealth, that I had owned and hunted with guns since I was a kid, and that I valued the Second Amendment which guaranteed my right to do so. But assault guns, I said, served no recreational purpose, and I, for one, supported legislation that might keep them out of the wrong hands.

I did not mention the fact that my name was on the masthead of a national sporting publication. But the Public Safety Commissioner, apparently eager to emphasize the significance of my testimony, let it be known that this Tapply was *not* merely a private citizen. He was, rather, a kind of professional gun person. He earned money writing about hunting with guns. He was a contributing editor for a well-known magazine—which somehow was translated as *the* editor.

The local pro-gun lobby wasted no time. They complained to my magazine's real editor in New York. They alerted the magazine's advertisers and urged them to withdraw their advertising. I was called an "enemy" in their newsletter. I was called much worse in anonymous telephone calls.

Some of my friends and acquaintances called my testimony "courageous." Some called it "traitorous." Some called it "stupid."

I hadn't thought it would be such a big deal. After all, I was just one unimportant private citizen exercising his First Amendment rights on an issue which, frankly, I hadn't thought deeply about.

But since that spring morning five years ago when I spoke publicly in favor of gun control, I *have* thought deeply about it.

And the more I think about it, the more complicated it gets. I have studied the NRA hard-line. I have listened to the arguments of the equally hard-line gun control lobby. I've tried to assimilate the views of the compromisers and middle-of-the-roaders. But the more I learn, the less certain I am of where I stand, and the more I'm convinced that those whose convictions are firm and unshakeable just aren't listening to their opponents.

Like abortion and the death penalty and other high-profile public issues, gun control presents many hard questions and few easy answers.

I don't know if I'd testify in favor of that assault gun bill today. But I don't regret having done it back in 1989. That experience sparked the idea for a novel. *The Seventh Enemy* is, among other things, my effort to explore the complex issue of gun control—an issue, I've come to realize, that I've been exploring all my life. ■

William G. Tapply is the author of thirteen Brady Coyne mystery novels, most recently The Seventh Enemy (Otto Penzler Books, 1995). He is also a contributing editor for Field & Stream and has published several collections of essays on hunting and fishing.

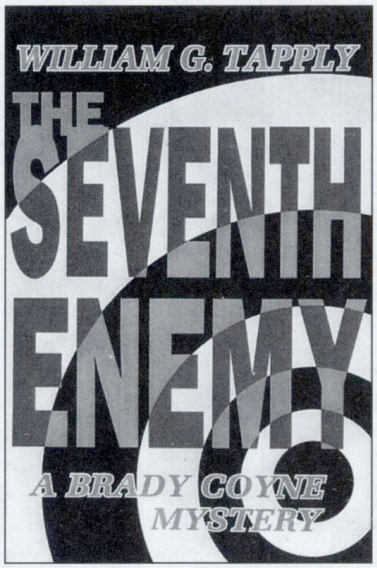
TAPPLY: The book in the drawer wasn't a mystery. I really didn't decide to write mysteries. After I wrote that whatever it is—you can't call it a book—I realized that I wanted to do another one. The idea that I developed wasn't a mystery, actually, but as the writing of it evolved, it kind of turned into that. I didn't write it self-consciously as a mystery, and I didn't call it a mystery when I was done with it. I just called it a novel. Looking back on it, of course, it was a mystery. It had a murder in it, a lot of detection, clues, and all that stuff. Whatever I knew about mysteries, I knew only from having read hundreds and hundreds of books in my life, among them mysteries. But Scribners bought it and they said it was a mystery, and they wrote that right on the cover.

TAD: Who did you read as you were growing up?

TAPPLY: Reading and writing were very important in my house, and I was fortunate to have really good teachers in school who encouraged me to read. I can remember someone asking me, when I was in about the ninth grade, what's your favorite book? I said, *Crime and Punishment*. I read that stuff. I read the Hardy Boys and what I said in the introduction to the reprint of *The Secret of the Old Mill* is not untrue but it probably is exaggerated. I would not say that I was highly influenced by the Hardy Boys. I was more influenced by Dos Passos and Hemingway and Mark Twain. I read Mark Twain when I was in junior high school. We had a volume of Mark Twain's complete works, and once when I was sick I read the whole thing. I was much more influenced by good writers than by popular writers all through my adolescence, and really I'd still rather read a well-written anything than a mediocre mystery. I think I value good writing more than anything else. I really value that in my own writing, too.

TAD: Where did you come up with Brady Coyne?

TAPPLY: Well, I had this story, *Death at Charity's Point,* which became my first book. By the way, it was not my choice for the title. As I said, I had an idea which wasn't even necessarily a mystery. I didn't know what it would be, but I struggled like hell trying to find a way to get into it and get it started. I kept writing these beginnings with different points of view, characters, and so forth. I remember waking up early one morning in the summertime—I was on vacation—I went down to my Smith-Corona portable typewriter and started writing in the first person and really felt like it was working. I had never written in the first person before. I wrote two paragraphs and I said, "I can see how I can get into the story this way, but who



is this guy?" Well, he's gotta be a lawyer; I figured that much out. I wrote a little bit more and I wondered how old he was, where did he live and was he married and all that stuff, and he just kind of evolved out of his voice. Actually, the name came from a very minor character in the book that's now in a cardboard box. I don't know where it came from, but Brady came out spontaneously. I hadn't thought to tell the story in the first person. I hadn't necessarily thought that a lawyer would be the hero of it. I hadn't really seen it as a novel of detection either, but that's the way it seemed to work for me and that's where he came from.

TAD: Why was he a lawyer?

TAPPLY: I'm not sure that he had to be a lawyer, but the way I envisioned the original story, he was a lawyer who was going to settle the estate of this dead guy, and the story sort of depended on whether that character had committed suicide or not. Brady had to figure all that out and get all the guy's effects in order and so forth. I mean I made it up as I went along. The kind of lawyer he was and the kind of clients he had.

TAD: Is there an advantage to having him a lawyer who has very few, very rich clients?

TAPPLY: Well, it would be much better if he were a private investigator. I've always been kind of envious of guys whose protagonists are private eyes, but on the other hand I kind of sneer at them because they sit there in their office and people call them up and say, "I'll give you money if you'll go solve this problem." Because my guy's clients are rich and because they tend to be elderly and they tend to have crazy families, their problems come to him in more indirect ways. To me it's interesting to devise ways a problem would come to Brady. It makes his decision to become involved in a situation a little more interesting, and it gets into his character and personality and philosophy of things. He has options of simply not getting involved or bowing out of these situations all along the way, so it allows me to delve a little deeper into what's important to him.

TAD: Locations seem to be very important in your books.

TAPPLY: I'm not sure why that is except it just seems relevant to me. I'm interested in place. I like to think about the ways that place, and all the stuff that goes into settings, which includes weather, time of year, climate, and little things like that, interact with people. Some stories take place in the winter, and the story line wouldn't be the same if it was in the summer. I write about places I know intimately, places I've been. I really don't know how people can say, "My story can take place anyplace." Mine can't, or at least I feel they can't. The other side of that is when I'm driving around or out fishing or walking through the woods, these

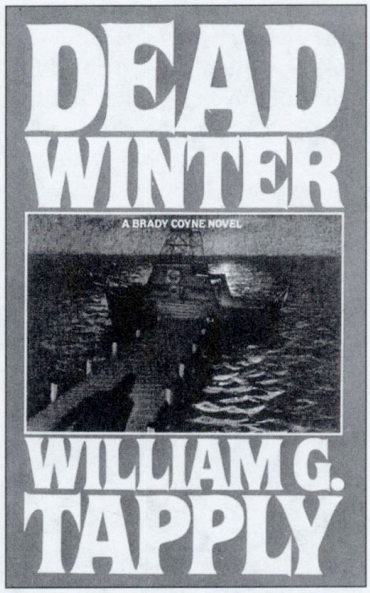
places are talking to me and saying "Well this is the kind of thing that could happen here, it couldn't happen anywhere else." I had a story where one of the elements is that a hydroelectric dam periodically releases water, and whenever it does the water comes up in the river and if anyone was fishing in it, they better get the hell out or they'll drown. As far as I know there's only one place in Massachusetts where that could happen, and that happens to be a place where Brady likes to go fishing.

TAD: Is your interest in place partly a result of your writing about the outdoors?

TAPPLY: I've grown up in the outdoors, feeling connected to it and relating to it. I'm aware of how I am reacting to a place, what's going on in a place. I've done a lot of hunting in my life and when you're hunting you're tuned into things around you—sounds and smells—and I think I probably bring some of that to my writing. John D. MacDonald used to talk about the "telling details," and I look for those when writing about location. I try not to do big, descriptive scenes where I catalog all of the things that are there. I try to pick out the thing that summarizes or stands for everything else or the thing that makes it unique as opposed to the thing that makes it characteristic.

TAD: Brady's divorced but he doesn't quite seem to be able to completely break from his wife.

TAPPLY: Yeah, he's working on it. It's interesting that my women readers are very tuned in to that whole issue. When I started writing about Brady, I was for all intents and purposes happily married, living in the suburbs, and raising my children. And you know as I was writing that first book and questions came up, making him divorced



didn't seem like a big deal. I'd visualize what his relationship with his wife was like and what his relationship with his kids was like and how he lived, even though I didn't live that way. I'm living that way now. I was kind of working out my own life by developing him. The business with his wife just came out, and I found it interesting and I have since realized that it is probably as close to what I would want a relationship with an ex-wife to be. I can't see why you need to hate each other through a divorce. Why can't you still be connected in a certain way? Why can't fondness carry over? I've found from a lot of people I know, including to some extent my own self, that it's not inaccurate, and that these kinds of old relationships change and evolve but they're not over. Brady has a lot of relationships with women, and I think I originally decided to make him divorced so that he could have many relationships. I thought it would be more fun to write about and more interesting for readers. He has a little trouble with commitment but that's OK because there are new relationships along the way. I'm working on a book now in which he seems to be more involved, more committed. Serious stuff is happening to him.

TAD: Is he going to become more committed?

TAPPLY: In the first several books he always met a woman and by the end of the book they would part for various reasons. Then a couple of books ago—at the end—he was still with this woman. But when the next book came out, she dumped him and that was that. Anyway, he reflects stuff in my own life and development. Maybe he is finally deciding to grow up, I don't know. In *The Seventh Enemy* he's kind of involved with a woman. I don't know what's going to happen. I don't see how we can get him married. I think a lot of people would string me up if I married him off. She's talking about their living together, and he's not running in the other direction right now. I don't know what he's going to do.

TAD: Why don't you do a lot with Brady's kids?

TAPPLY: It's one of the sadnesses in his life that his kids stayed with his ex-wife and lived in Wellesley while he was in Boston. In the book I'm working on now, one of them is living out in Idaho. He finally dropped out of college, and now he's a ski instructor. The other one has graduated from high school and he's going to Stanford on a scholarship. So they're far away right now. That isn't to say that they're not an important part of his life, because it's an important part of his sadness and the

kind of crisis that he's feeling.

TAD: You talked about Brady's progression through the books. Do you think there is a general progression in your own writing?

TAPPLY: My answer to that is: I can only say what I try to do. I think of my books more and more as novels, and I try not to think about them as mysteries. There's always a mystery plot going on, and it carries the action. But what really interests me is characters. I'm not sure that Brady has learned a hell of a lot, but everything adds up and it makes him more and more complex and interesting, and maybe less like me than he started out being.

TAD: Have your ideas changed about crime fiction in general?

TAPPLY: Well, I never thought much about it and I really still don't, I guess. I'm not a wide reader in the field. I start a lot of books people recommend but I don't finish as many as I start by any means. I still like to read other stuff. I think I know what works and what doesn't work for me, and I see a lot of stuff in books that doesn't work for me and that's what I don't like about them. However, I think probably some of the best writing in the country is in crime fiction. "Crime fiction" is a good phrase, and I like to use that term rather than mystery, because there are so many different sub-species of that general category. An awful lot of writers are not interested primarily in creating complex puzzles, but they're really interested in character, the same elements that go into serious fiction, literature. Those are the ones that I like to read.

TAD: What's the relationship between fishing and your crime fiction?

TAPPLY: The kind of fishing that Brady and I like is trout fishing. It involves a lot of problem solving and stalking and deduction and analysis. So in terms of what a fisherman does and what a crime solver does, there's at least an analogy.

I think of myself as a writer and not a mystery writer. It's all writing, it's all trying to tell a story in a clear and interesting way. Some of the things I write are novels and fiction, and some of the things I write are fishing stories, "how to do it" stories. It's all communicating.

TAD: Am I mistaken or does there seem to be more fishing all the time?

TAPPLY: I don't think about it but maybe there is. In the early books there wasn't much; there was more golf. I was playing more golf in those days. Now I quit playing golf. When he's fishing, there seemed to be a piece of Brady that allows sides of him to emerge. It helps define him. So probably you're right. He probably thinks about it more in the recent books than he used to, but whether he actually does more of it I don't know. I don't really have a lot of fishing scenes in the books anyway, but people seem to notice and remark on them. I mean, pragmatically, it would be nice if all the fishermen in the country decided to buy my books because there was fishing in them, but you can't say that it's worked that way, anymore than all the mystery readers buy my fishing books.

TAD: Let's talk a little about the last couple of novels. You just finished both *Snake Eater* and *Seventh Enemy*.

TAPPLY: Well, *Snake Eater* started out very much as a character book. I had met people, who were roughly my age or a little bit younger than me, who were in Vietnam and who carry around all kinds of demons with them, and they've always interested me. I wasn't there and I feel deprived in a way, and I feel very lucky in another way. I talk with these guys a lot and I realized that because of the experience they had that I didn't have, there are gaps that need to be bridged. One guy that I ran into had an Agent Orange problem. He was growing marijuana to treat his condition and the local cops kept harassing him, and tearing up his garden, just making his life miserable. Another guy I know, who lived in North Carolina, was at the time working on a book about his experiences in Vietnam, and I talked with him a lot. He is the physical

A TAPPLY READING LIST

The Brady Coyne Mysteries

THE SEVENTH ENEMY

THE SNAKE EATER

TIGHT LINES

THE SPOTTED CATS

CLIENT PRIVILEGE

DEAD WINTER

A VOID IN HEARTS

THE VULGAR BOATMAN

DEAD MEAT

THE MARINE CORPSE

FOLLOW THE SHARKS

THE DUTCH BLUE ERROR

DEATH AT CHARITY'S POINT

Nonfiction

SPORTSMAN'S LEGACY

HOME WATER NEAR AND FAR

OPENING DAY AND OTHER NEUROSES

THOSE HOURS SPENT OUTDOORS:
REFLECTIONS ON HUNTING AND FISHING

model for Daniel McCloud in the book. He was telling me how his book was helping him sort out his own demons. So that's another piece of it. I started thinking those "what if" things. What if this book he is writing was really a terrible exposé of something? I guess that's my Vietnam book written by someone who has never been there. What's interesting to me is what has happened to these 45- to 50-year-old men who are out there and degraded by society, and have this stuff in their heads—the things they did that none of us knows anything about.

TAD: Although you don't really push it very hard, there is an undercurrent of social commentary in most of your books.

TAPPLY: I think that's probably true, and you're right, I don't push it very hard. To me, not writing about something important doesn't mean the book isn't very important. I wrote one book about a search for an adopted person's biological parents. You know people read the book, and they don't even *see* it as a book about that. *The Seventh Enemy* is about gun control. But to me it's a story about people.

TAD: Do you find crime fiction lends itself to that kind of social commentary?

TAPPLY: I think it does. You probably would be saying it backwards to say it that way because I don't sit down to write books for social commentary. I want to write entertaining books that are about characters—individuals in situations. Social commentary—or whatever it is—is always a product of that. These are fictions, unlike life, where you go along trying to figure things out. The difference in the books is that at the end we get them figured out and in life we generally don't.

TAD: Besides gun control what else were you getting at in *The Seventh Enemy*?

TAPPLY: To me that story is about Wilson Bailey. There are actually two roots to that book, because I was once called upon to testify on a gun control bill, and in fact I did get threatening phone calls as a result of this. It got me thinking. Then there is Wilson Bailey whose wife and daughter were killed by a crazy with an assault gun. The interesting thing to me was what this guy's life would be like and what he would do—how he would deal with his feelings. You read most of the book and you don't know *that's* what's going on until the end. The book is not really for or against gun control. It's too complicated an issue. It's a story that explores both sides of that issue and what the victim goes through.

TAD: It does seem to come down on the side of some sort of control over guns.

TAPPLY: I suspect most people will read it from the position they take in it. I may be wrong. My feeling would be that people who were opposed to guns would find some support for their own position.

TAD: As a sportsman, do you feel caught in the middle on the gun control issue?

TAPPLY: I do feel caught in the middle. Writing for *Field & Stream* I have an official position which is that gun control is bad and is bad if for no other reason than *Field & Stream* would lose advertising from gun manufacturers. But I also do think that legislation is probably not going to do a lot of good. It's mainly going to make people feel better. I don't belong to the NRA and I really don't like them very much, but like they say you are not looking at the problem. I write for a local magazine and they published an editorial called "Ban All Guns Now." I wrote a rebuttal suggesting that they ban all alcohol now and ban drugs now and so forth. I just don't think it's the answer. But on the other hand I don't see much use for assault weapons. It's awfully complicated.

TAD: You were saying that you really don't read much crime fiction. Is there anybody you're reading now, either a crime or regular fiction writer, that you find good?

TAPPLY: I read a lot of books. Right now, I'm reading a book by Lawrence Block and I like him and I read most of his stuff. And I read most of Elmore Leonard. Anything that's good writing I'll read. James Lee Burke, I read all of his books. It's not true that I don't read crime fiction, but I'm selective and I don't really study it. If I have to study it, I generally put it down. If the writer is good enough then I won't have to study it. One of the things that happens is you find yourself saying, "This is a give-away, this is not working," and then I'm not enjoying the book.

TAD: Do you see a lot of difference between mainstream or regular fiction and crime fiction?

TAPPLY: The obvious difference is that in murder mysteries you have a murder and it's presented as a mystery. And in a lot of other kinds of fiction such as Ann Tyler's and people like her, generally a murder is not going on. But what's going on is people in crisis. People whose wants and needs are in conflict. To me that's the basis of fiction, someone who is struggling desperately to find happiness in an unhappy world. I mean if writers are doing their job they're both equally compelling.

TAD: Have you been fairly treated by the critics?

TAPPLY: I've been very well treated by the critics, actually. I don't have any complaints. My reviews have been awfully good for the most part.

TAD: Do you ever learn anything from them?

TAPPLY: That's a good question. You know Bob Parker says he never reads his reviews. I've learned some things retrospectively. One critic said all of Tapply's murders seem to take place on water. I'd never thought about it, but he was absolutely right. One way or another someone gets dumped in the swimming pool or someone dies in the ocean or whatever. I hadn't thought about it. One complained that Brady was a yuppie and you know he's really not and I realized that the only reason she said that was because he drives a BMW. But he started driving a BMW before yuppies were invented. So I had a scene in the next book when he was thinking about getting a new car. He went through this whole thing about how maybe he didn't want to get a BMW because he didn't want people to think he was a yuppie. On the other hand if he drove a pickup truck, well, that says something too. He went through this whole business with cars and realized no matter what you drive people are going to draw superficial conclusions about you. So he decided to get another BMW after all.

TAD: You just mentioned Robert Parker. There are a number of people writing crime books in the Boston area.

TAPPLY: There's an awful lot of good writers here, and we all kind of hang out together. Naturally you tend to run into each other and end up on panels and so forth. I think Boston is a very interesting part of the world to write about, much more interesting than L.A., frankly. You have four seasons, and you can be in the country in an hour by automobile. I could take Brady up to the wilderness in Maine in a half a day. New England is very rich. There's really a very strong academic intellectual community here. There's a lot of good writers per square mile in the Boston area.

TAD: Do you find there's some sort of connection?

TAPPLY: John McAleer, who wrote the big biography of Rex Stout, also wrote a mystery novel and in it Brady makes a cameo appearance. Rick Boyer is a friend of mine. He used to live up here. We put our characters in each other's books but that's about the extent of it. Writers are pretty private people by and large and do their own thing. When I'm with these people and we're talking publicly we argue about things. When we talk in private we complain about things. That's about the limit of it really.

TAD: Do you teach writing?

TAPPLY: I do it in two ways. I have a group that comes to my house on Wednesday nights, and they're fairly serious but unpublished for the most part. I run a workshop for them and help them. I also teach for the Writers' Digest School, which is a correspondence school which I decided to do because I had been a teacher for a long time and really liked it. And the other thing that happens when you start publishing is people come at you from all directions. They ask you, "Would you mind looking at the novel I'm working

on," or "I have a good friend that just finished writing a novel and would really like to have someone look at it." I like helping people but the only way they would take what I said seriously was if they paid me for it, and that's the way it has to be, so that's what I do now.

TAD: Is teaching helpful in any way in your own writing? Does it help you clarify your own ideas?

TAPPLY: Sure it does. If I'm working with someone else I might say, "Well, ah gee...I make the same mistake here," or something like that. It's made me much more aware of what I do and more aware in general of what the requirements of good writing are. I'm contracted to write a book about how to write a mystery novel for Sylvia Burack. I wouldn't have agreed to do that before I started teaching, but now I think I have a much better handle on what I do.

TAD: What are you working on now?

TAPPLY: Well, I'm working on another Brady, which does not have a title. I have that book now in the thinking stage. I've also collaborated on a novel with a friend of mine. I don't think she would call herself a romance writer anymore, but she started out that way and ended up writing big sagas. Her name is Linda Barlow and she and I collaborated on a novel which Penguin is bringing out next summer.

TAD: Got a title for it?

TAPPLY: Yeah, it's called *Thicker Than Water.* It's a sort of a mainstream book, a bestseller-type thing. And we have to do another one which we just finished putting together in outline form.

TAD: What is *Thicker Than Water* about?

TAPPLY: Well, one of the main characters is a guy who was a young doctor for the Nazis in WWII. And one of the other characters is an elderly woman who was in one of the prison camps where he was during the war. It deals with the woman's daughter who is a doctor, and it deals with the obsession of this now aged Nazi guy who ends up as a CEO of a big pharmaceutical company. It takes place on three different continents, there's kidnapping and murder, witchcraft and chases and sex. It's that kind of book. It has a lot of stunts in it. It's not really a mystery *per se* and it's not a romance *per se*, but it's got elements of both.

TAD: Is there anything you'd like to do that you haven't done?

TAPPLY: I'd like to have one of my books made into a movie. I'd like to write the screenplay for one of my books. I had one experience in screen-writing and I'm fascinated by it. My agent keeps telling me that if I write one now, I have no more selling power than the guy on the corner writing a screenplay. But it is something I'd like to do. ■

THE CRIME SCREEN

BY RIC MEYERS

Three-quarters of the way through **The Shadow** I suddenly realized it. Not only does Hollywood no longer makes movies with stories in them, they actually don't know what a story is anymore. Other than the only two clearly laudable efforts in this summer of '94—*Forrest Gump* and *The Lion King*—there hasn't been a single movie I've seen that convinces me otherwise. Every one of them has shown a total ignorance of story-telling values or techniques.

Prosecution exhibit A: the aforementioned *Shadow*. This isn't the worst example of the trend, but it does have the most obvious moment when the film goes south and sinks there. It was at my cathartic point—three-quarters of the way through—when Alec Baldwin as Lamont Cranston is drinking his morning coffee and Penelope Ann Miller as the lovely Margot Lane (say hello to your sister Lois for me) presents him the newspaper. The headline screamed something along the likes of: "Nuclear Ransom! Madman Threatens City! Demands Fortune in Jewels and Art!"

Wait a minute, here. Did I miss something? *The Shadow* takes place in the late thirties, and while I hadn't been born yet, you'd think I would have seen something about this on the Learning Channel, the Discovery Channel, PBS, *or* the Arts & Entertainment Channel. Certainly my folks would have mentioned the time a madman threatened Manhattan with nuclear winter...

Yes, I know it's only a movie, and The Shadow is a fantasy character and all, but I think a film should stay believable within the two hours your butt is plunked down in the cinema seat, and that headline just tore it. Furthermore, it was out of the villain's character and completely unnecessary. Finally, it didn't help that from that moment on, the movie degenerated into a series of "huhs?" and "howzats?"

Actually, the movie was hamstrung by its plot from the outset. The condition only became terminal upon the newspaper's delivery. Up until then, the film's style and pleasant surprises were more than enough to carry it. The central character, of course, was hugely popular in pulps and radio, but the movie industry always had a problem with him. They just didn't have the technology to depict a man who could cloud men's minds. No such problem here. The Shadow's look is beautifully realized. This contemporary version had a problem, instead, with the "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?" part.

Although the Shadow's mocking laugh is well done, the plot renders it superfluous. What's the point of having a man who knows what evil lurks if the evil they present him with is a relative of Genghis Khan who wants to finish the world-conquering job his family started? No, we need political corruption, cops on the take, and the like.

It's a shame, since all the details of the superhero's legend are so well done. André Gregory (of *My Dinner with André*) and Peter Boyle are well cast as Cranston's central intelligence officer and chauffeur, respectively. Penelope Ann Miller wears the film's superlative fashions beautifully. But what's the point of establishing a psychic link between her and the Shadow if it's going to be completely forgotten about at the climax?

WILLIAM SANDERSON, SUSAN SARANDON AND TOMMY LEE JONES IN *THE CLIENT*.

The Shadow is also an excellent example of The Resolution Rule. Namely: if your ending stinks, it doesn't make a difference how good the beginning and middle was. In fact, shortly before that cursed newspaper was delivered, a friend turned to me and gave me the thumbs up sign. But when I asked how he liked the movie on the way out, his reply was succinct: "It sucked." The Resolution Rule had struck.

Ironically, James Cameron and Arnold Schwarzenegger's blockbuster **True Lies** followed the Resolution Rule, but missed the Mid-film Memorandum. To wit: it's best to have a great ending, but a non-sexist, non-sadistic middle would be a pretty good idea, too. *True Lies* is reportedly the

most expensive movie ever made—which makes sense—since Arnold got it out one year after the last most-expensive-movie-ever-made, *The Last Action Hero,* was such a flop (normally a movie of that scope and complexity would take three years to make).

The budget was big enough for three action movies, which is fitting since *True Lies* really is three films. The first forty-five minutes is a good James Bond film, the last forty five minutes is a fine Doc Savage movie, while the middle forty-five minutes is a strange remake of a French film: a spy who pretends he's an average man, an average man who pretends he's a spy, and the woman who's caught between them. I haven't seen that movie, but I certainly didn't like the Cameron/Schwarzenegger unfocused, strident version of it.

The real annoyance is that it is almost completely superfluous to the rest of the movie. If they had used the fake agent's machinations to cover Arnold's actions—making it look like the fake was the real spy, it might have led to some inspired mistaken identity stuff. Instead, Jamie Lee Curtis is duped, abused, made to do an impressive striptease (which really separates the boys from the feminists—this scene leaves no doubt as to why she is called "The Body" in Hollywood), and in the film's most miswritten scene, interrogated at length.

The only thing for sure is that James Cameron is much better at heartfelt science-fiction than he is at light comedy. His *Terminator* movies and *Aliens* carried a lot more excitement and conviction. The violence in *True Lies*—and there is plenty—has all the weight of a feather, and about as much meaning. The body count is gigantic but meaningless, because ultimately, I didn't accept any of the characters as real, and therefore I didn't care about them.

Speaking of unreal characters, **The Mask** is not a movie which requires a rule, memorandum, or even a story. The latter would have been a help, but it is not, strictly, a requirement. What this superhero tale has going for it is its source material, its star, its director, and its special effects.

Hitchcock's McGuffin has gone from being a gimmick which drives a movie into the entire movie. The titular mask comes from a chained-up treasure chest in the bay of "Central City" and it can makes any wearer into "The Mask": a turbo-driven, green-skulled, unkillable, homicidal wiseacre. If it sounds like a comic book concept, it is. This particular comic book series is quite refreshing in that it borrowed from Warner Brothers cartoons and took advantage of its medium, yet still maintained a sense of reality that anchored all the insanity.

Chuck Russell, who directed the recent *Blob* remake, became Charles Russell to helm this, and wisely toned down the homicidal aspects of the character. Otherwise he sought to translate the joys and plot of the comic intact. Unfortunately for him, live actors aren't as accommodating as drawn ones. That is especially true of the normally excellent Peter Riegert who both sleepwalked and phoned in his performance as a cop so jaded that, even when The Mask responds to the order "Freeze!" by growing icicles in mid-air, he reacts as if he's watching the 450th rerun of *Gilligan's Island.*

The exceptions, of course, are the movie's stars. The first star is Jim Carrey, the rubber-faced comic actor who sledgehammered every line of dialogue in *Ace Ventura, Pet Detective.* He was made for *The Mask,* and vice versa. Here he gets to start as a schlub, so when he transforms into the title character with the help of the SFX company Industrial Light and Magic, it was hard for me not to smile in appreciation and anticipation.

Nowadays, the viewer is lucky if there are three good scenes in any movie, and *The Mask* meets its quota, especially in its two dance numbers. In fact, it's only in the second, a frenetic rendition of "Cuban Pete" played before an audience of gun-toting cops, that the film touches its potential. From then on, Carrey takes a back seat to the movie's true superstar...his pet dog.

This is the same pooch who stole the show from Dana Carvey in the lamentable *Clean Slate,* and he struts his stuff here as well. What panache! What timing! What charisma! And when he winds up becoming The Mask during the climax, joy ran rampant in the theater. Make no mistake: *The Mask* is not brilliant or even great. But if you're looking for an amusing, imaginative video with a few surprises, go no further.

If, on the other hand, you're looking for a totally professional, well-acted, well-filmed, scrupulously-adapted John Grisham novel that drops into the pool o'cinema without causing a ripple, rent **The Client.** This is a weird one. Susan Sarandon plays Reggie Love, a misused southern lawyer who takes the case of a kid who witnessed the suicide of a mob attorney who literally knows where the body is buried.

Tommy Lee Jones plays an ambitious Government prosecutor who wants to nail a mob family who murdered a pesky politician, but he needs the *corpus delecti.* The kid knows where it is, but won't give up that information until he knows he'll be able to survive. And, except for one scene where Reggie sticks it to the sweatshop owner the kid's poor-white-trash mother works for, director Joel Schumacher transfers every plot point of the book almost exactly (of course, the Reggie of the book is middle-aged and overweight, but what's a bombshell actress between friends?).

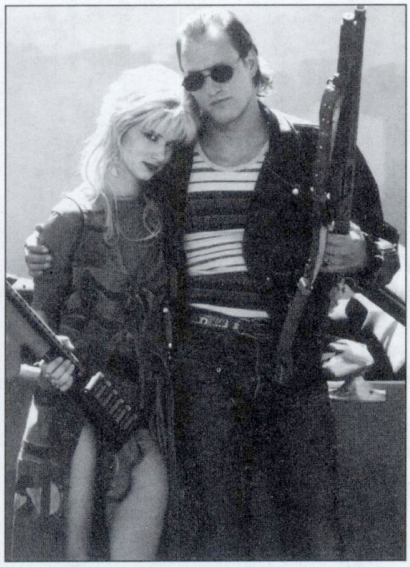
Even so—or especially so—*The Client* is one of the least compelling, teflon movies I've seen in years. I asked the whole row of people behind me at the theater to give me a thumbs up or thumbs down to help with my review. When the lights came up, I turned around to get their verdict. To a single person, every one of them had their thumbs pointing left. And, you know, they were right. Thanks guys...

Otherwise the mid-1994 cinema will go down in the history books as the great summer squandering. Some critics have called it the summer of disappointments, but any season which sees so many talented filmmakers go down so ignominiously elicits more than disappointment from me. Lawrence Kasdan, with *Silverado* and now **Wyatt Earp,** wants to make the great American Western...he just doesn't seem to know why. And how does anyone explain the seemingly infallible Rob Reiner's clichéd, racist,

totally unfunny **North**?

Then there's Oliver Stone's **Natural Born Killers.** The viewing of this one makes a good adjunct to watching Stone promote it on various talk shows. Suddenly the director/co-writer becomes the amoral, subjective character of the Australian tabloid show host played by Robert Downey Jr. in the film. Watching Stone declare that it isn't really violent and that "the kids" or "young people" laughed and "dug" it all the way through is to see a man so in love with his own cinematic style that he no longer has any interest in saying anything a mass audience could—or would want to—comprehend.

Things go pretty well for awhile. The first forty-five minutes of what Stone lovingly calls "NBK" is challenging, disconcerting, and surprising as we follow the three-week killing spree of two abused kids (Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis) who proclaim love for each other while letting their rage run rampant. The movie seems to present



© Warner Bros.

Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis in *Natural Born Killers*

the world through their eyes, filling the screen with theatrical lightning, purposely artificial gimmicks, subliminal edits, and double exposures. No scene is done with less than two millimeters, three film stocks and four lenses.

The height of this comes in the flashback to Lewis' physically and sexually abusive home life, which is presented as a profane sitcom starring an extremely compelling Rodney Dangerfield as her incestuous dad, complete with laugh track and end-of-the-episode credits. The audaciousness and effectiveness of this choice is the last real treasure to be found here, except for a moment in the second half when the ratings and shares of various mass murderers are compared. (This is the scene in which Harrelson, informed that the Manson special outranked his own, murmurs, "Well, it's tough to beat the king....") Like the title characters, the movie then takes a wrong turn into an entire gallery of grotesques.

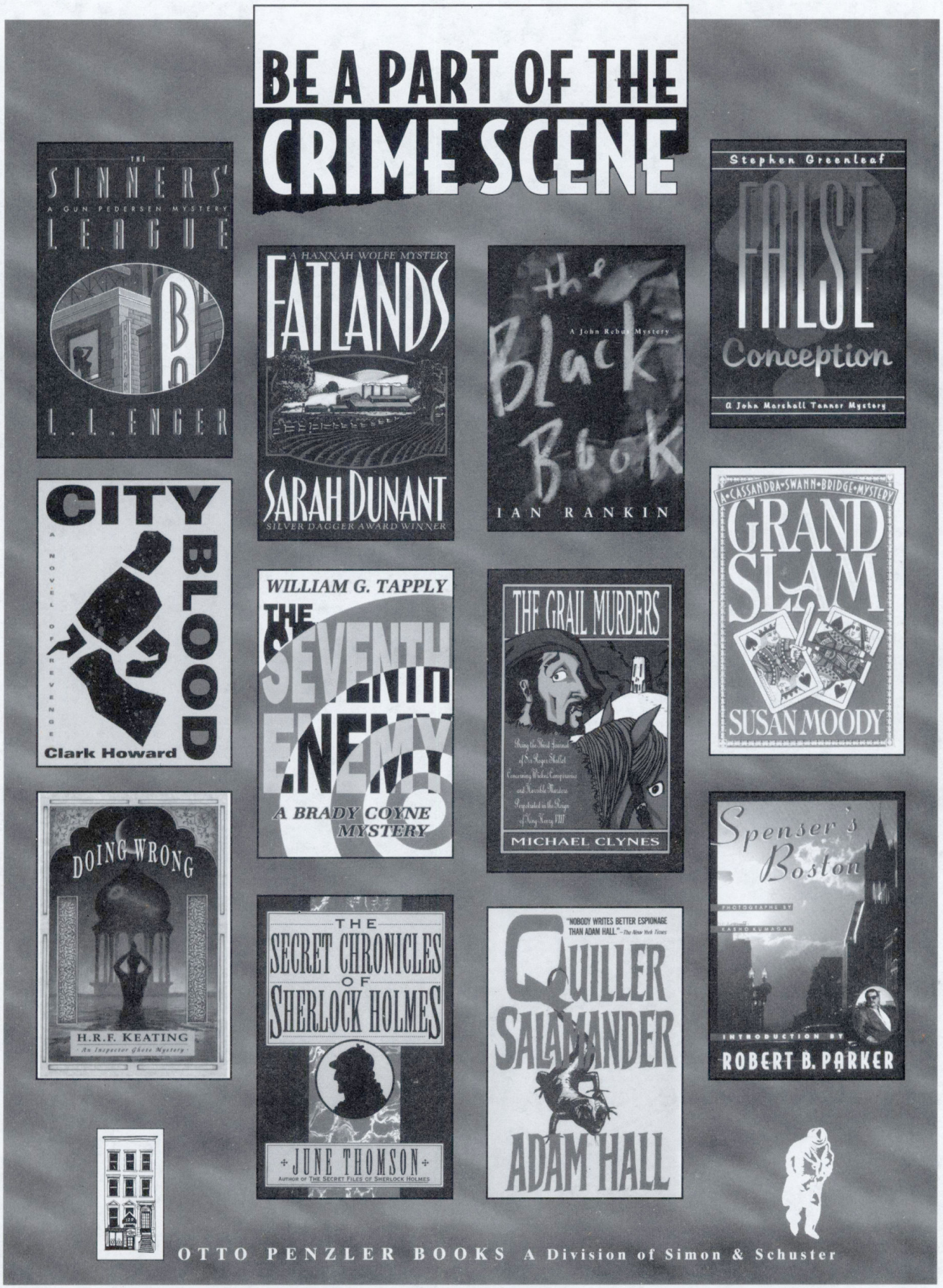
No one is more dedicated than I am to Stone's stated theme: that the media makes villains into heroes. There's enough truly disturbing material for dozens of movies, but instead of taking the theme head-on, the director opts for an orgy of empty style and a totally perplexing mid-film plot twist. The killers are captured and sent to a prison lorded over by a polyester, pencil-mustached anachronism from the fifties, played with expectorating, scenery-chewing gusto by Tommy Lee Jones. (What movie isn't he in nowadays?)

There, one year later (as a screen card states), the aforementioned host of the *American Maniacs* tabloid show decides to do a "Whatever Happened To...?" episode, featuring the now famous pair, to be telecast live after that year's Super Bowl. There's an even more ludicrous subplot in which the warden enlists the egomaniacal, secretly homicidal cop-turned-author—who originally captured the pair—to kill them during a transfer to a mental hospital for the criminally insane. By the way, we've already seen this cop strangle a prostitute—supposedly the result of seeing his mom killed by the Texas tower sniper when he was a kid.

Mind you, all of this is being filmed in the same eyeball-stretching style of the film's first half, although this funhouse cinematography has less effect the more it's used. Absurdity piles on contrivance, piles on convenience until the gathered jailbirds are inspired to riot by Harrelson's pithy answers to Downey's histrionic questions. Using this to their benefit, the killer-lovers blow away all their persecutors, escape, and, according to the end credits, live happily ever after as the great American nuclear family.

Taken as cocktail party fodder, *Natural Born Killers* gives people plenty to chew on. As a movie which effectively conveys to its audience a sense of righteous indignation and urgency, it's nowheresville. Stone does his own film an injustice by veering into self-indulgent technique, then adds insult to injury by trying to add some last-minute meaning to the jumble by slipping in climatic images of the Menendez brothers, Tonya Harding, and O.J. Simpson.

The final effect is like someone scratching his fingernails across a blackboard vaguely in the rhythm of Beethoven's *Ninth* for an hour, then declaring it an homage to Ludwig. Nice try, but no cigar. I wish *NBK* was actually about the glorification of murderers by the media (and the demeaning of victims), but it is not. Instead, it is used as window dressing for another triumph of style over content. ■


BE A PART OF THE
CRIME SCENE
THE SINNERS' LEAGUE
A GUN PEDERSEN MYSTERY
L. L. ENGER
A HANNAH WOLFE MYSTERY
FATLANDS
SARAH DUNANT
SILVER DAGGER AWARD WINNER
the Black Book
A John Rebus Mystery
IAN RANKIN
Stephen Greenleaf
FALSE Conception
A John Marshall Tanner Mystery
CITY BLOOD
Clark Howard
A CASSANDRA SWANN BRIDGE MYSTERY
GRAND SLAM
SUSAN MOODY
WILLIAM G. TAPPLY
THE SEVENTH ENEMY
A BRADY COYNE MYSTERY
THE GRAIL MURDERS
MICHAEL CLYNES
DOING WRONG
H.R.F. KEATING
An Inspector Ghote Mystery
Spenser's Boston
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
KASHO KUMAGAI
INTRODUCTION BY
ROBERT B. PARKER
THE SECRET CHRONICLES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES
JUNE THOMSON
AUTHOR OF THE SECRET FILES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES
"NOBODY WRITES BETTER ESPIONAGE THAN ADAM HALL."—The New York Times
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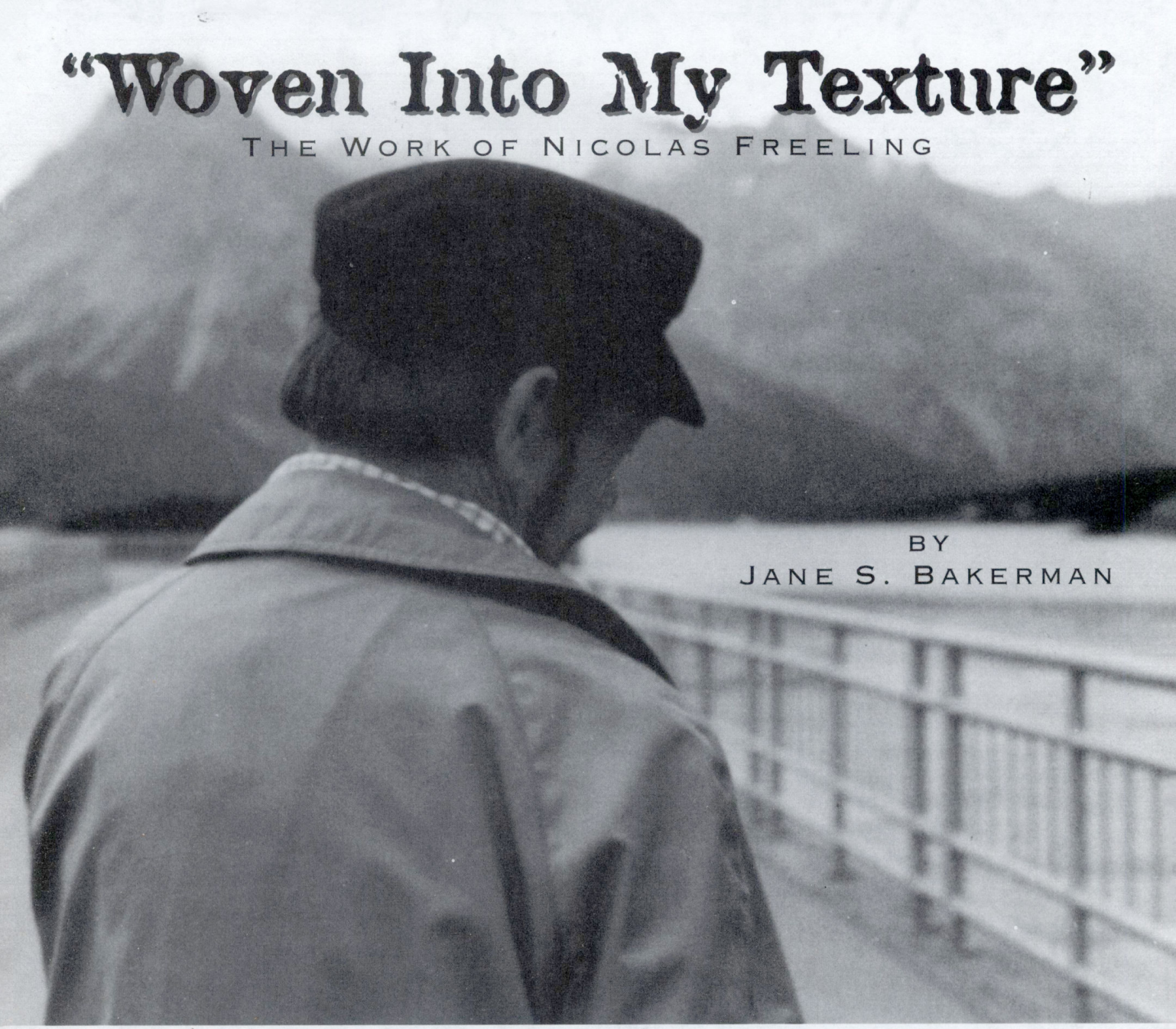
OTTO PENZLER BOOKS A Division of Simon & Schuster

"Woven Into My Texture"

The Work of Nicolas Freeling



BY
JANE S. BAKERMAN

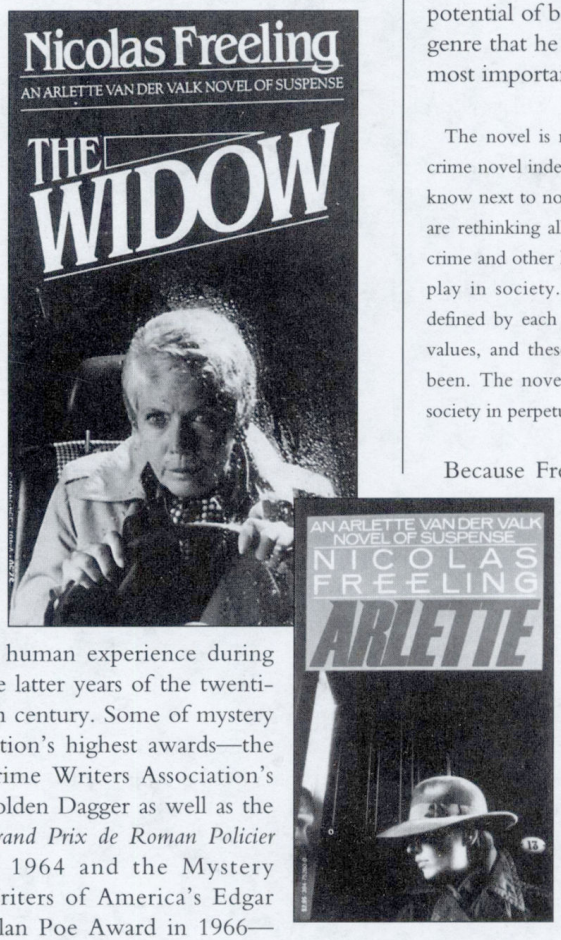
About halfway through *A Long Silence*, his tenth novel featuring Piet Van der Valk, Nicolas Freeling[1] took a bold step. He killed off the decent, redemptive Dutch police officer who enlisted millions of fans under the Freeling banner. Still, this step was only one among many bold accomplishments.

Freeling speaks of himself as a "solitary" child who read omnivorously and who eventually became, successively, a member of the military, a beachcomber, a cook, and a jail inmate while also managing to become a husband and a father.[2] The author is apparently accustomed to redefining his personal life, and in his view every change and every challenge contributes richly to his work. A passage from *The Kitchen* provides his own metaphor for his intricate, tapestry-like fiction:

> At home, where I work, I write upon a table that is a big oblong slab of pine. It was originally varnished, and was the table of a French country bistrot. I took off the varnish, scrubbed the pine with Marseilles soap, and it was a kitchen table. I wanted a table to eat from, so I took it again, and painted it with layer on layer of red, and white, and brown paint. Between the layers I dribbled and smeared, rubbed it with the heel of my hand and with fine sandpaper. At the end, it had taken on a veined and knotted appearance with scars like the cuts and burns upon a cook's hands, and I was happy with it. My children spoiled it by digging in the surface with their forks while the leisurely adults finished eating, and I took another similar table, but of hardwood, to eat off...and the painted one I took for work. Above this table on the wall hangs a drawing...of the cooks...through the kitchen window of the Restaurant Laperouse in Paris. All this is woven into my texture.

But Freeling's fans, probably less accustomed to realigning their priorities, were dismayed. Happily addicted to Van der Valk fixes at fairly regular intervals, they were propelled cold turkey into long, sad, Piet-less years of literacy. Who could replace him? No one. He was unique in their affections. Happily, Freeling sought neither to replace nor to supplant Piet Van der Valk. Instead, he offered readers companionate characters, recreating Van der Valk's helpmeet, Arlette, the protagonist of the second half of *A Long Silence* (published in the U.S. as *Auprès de ma Blonde*) and two subsequent novels, and creating Henri Castang, a French policeman featured in yet a third series.

Several Freeling novels, such as *Valparaiso* (1964, published as by F.R.E. Nicolas) and *Gadget* (1977), are non-series works but are certainly no less worthwhile. Indeed, any Freeling novel is rewarding to read singly. It is equally pleasurable to read any Freeling series as a distinct unit. Each book and each series stands alone successfully. But it is especially fruitful to read the three series as a set of related works, for they are the centerpiece of the Freeling canon, constituting a thoughtful, provocative study



of human experience during the latter years of the twentieth century. Some of mystery fiction's highest awards—the Crime Writers Association's Golden Dagger as well as the *Grand Prix de Roman Policier* in 1964 and the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1966—indicate his peers' respect for Freeling's accomplishments.

Nicolas Freeling's theme is a simple concept to state, a difficult proposition to execute. He challenges readers to consider the responsibility borne by the individual in a rapidly changing, decaying society. The action of every novel points out that everyone must do what he or she can to repair or to mimimize the damage. Other major components in Freeling's texture include (1) the employment of some useful popular fiction formula (usually the police procedural or the private-eye novel); (2) very careful attention to characterization; (3) thorough realization of setting; (4) compelling social criticism; (5) an intense scrutiny of the institution of marriage; (6) a marvelously broad range of allusion; and (7) an intriguing, risky use of the limited third-person point of view.

By his own testimony, Freeling is a serious writer who understands the potential of both the genre and the subgenre that he has chosen for some of his most important work:

> The novel is not as dead as people think; the crime novel indeed has barely been scratched. We know next to nothing about human behavior; we are rethinking all our systems relating to the part crime and other human departures from the norm play in society. Our sense of responsibility is defined by each person according to his scale of values, and these are as fluid as ever they have been. The novelist tries to keep pace with this society in perpetual flux.[3]

Because Freeling be-lieved that "the whole business of crime writing [formerly] rested upon a false premise: that it was a somehow inferior genre, not to be taken seriously," he established his own approach to the form, intending to present characters "one could care about, with problems that were ours." Freeling goes on to suggest that Van der Valk is useful in achieving this goal because the professional police officer is crucial to society, because the character is both idealistic and soundly realistic, because he is aware and wary of the power he holds as a cop, and because he possesses human weaknesses that sometimes get him into trouble.[4]

Though their personalities are very different from Van der Valk's and though they engage themselves with the world in ways rather different from his, Freeling's later series heroes also

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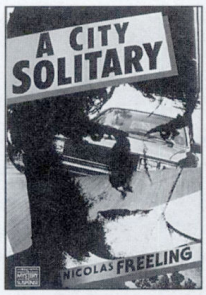
Jane S. Bakerman, a contributor to *The Armchair Detective*, also reviews books for *Library Journal* and pens a review column for *Clues* called *The Criminal Element*.

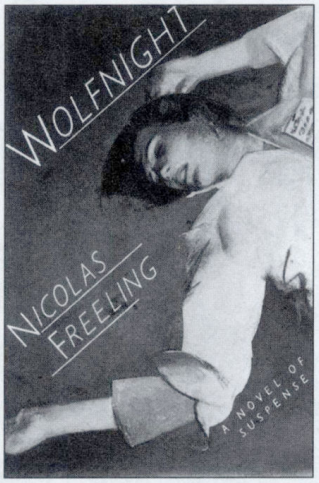
match this description. Both as individuals and as symbols of order, Henri Castang and Arlette Van der Valk Davidson usually function effectively, but they are always vulnerable physically, emotionally, and ethically. Moreover, they are aware of their vulnerability, an awareness shared by their readers. Thus, just as a criminal's behavior "raises wide moral, metaphysical, and philosophic problems,"[5] so must the behavior of his pursuer. Frequently inclined to follow his own judgment rather than the strictures of the law, the detective is tempted to become the law or, perhaps, to use an old saw, to become a law unto himself.

Freeling's perception of this insidious temptation is by no means uncommon among mystery writers, but his avowed sensitivity to its possible effect upon the structure of the crime novel (too often considered to be simply a matter of formula and imitation) is much less common. Freeling believes that like a real person, a valid character,

> ...when involved in a traumatic situation such as a crime creates behaves destructively towards himself, towards society, and towards I may add the structure of a novel.[6]

Quite possibly, it is authors' serious treatment of their protagonists' moral dilemmas that separates Freeling and other first-rate artists from lesser writers. Also quite possibly, it is Freeling's willingness to confront the disruptive force traumatic situations exert upon genre and formula that allows him such elasticity of form. In telling his stories, which reflect the tedium, the danger, the interest, and the excitement of





investigative work, Freeling reshapes established patterns.

Despite Arlette Van der Valk Davidson's vigorous protests that she is not a private detective but rather simply the proprietor of an "Advice Bureau," the similarities are very clear. Like traditional male private eyes, Arlette takes cases that clients cannot or will not take to the police, and she resolves them with much the same blend of independence and networking used by many fictional versions of the modern female private investigator. In this way, Freeling modifies the hard-boiled private-eye novel much as Liza Cody, Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton and other contemporary crime writers redefine it.

In the works of all these authors, the P.I.-as-loner is replaced with investigators whose pasts are known to the readers and whose current lives are peopled by friends and lovers as well as by enemies who are criminals and cops in about equal measure. These qualities endow the Arlette novels with some of the reassurance so vital to Golden Age mysteries. Her world is modishly disordered, but so long as Arlette continues to build healthy relationships, she is protected from the despair that perpetually threatens to overwhelm traditional hard-boiled private eyes.

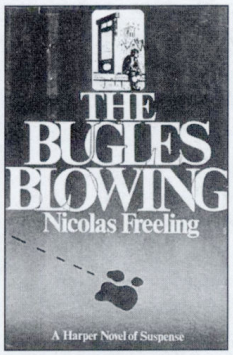
Generally considered by critics and fans to be police procedurals, the Van der Valk[7] and Castang novels are cast in the English mold in that there is slight emphasis on technical matters. The equal partner/buddies relationship so important to American police procedurals is largely missing and, perhaps consequently, squad room scenes, when they appear at all, are also relatively unimportant. Freeling does, however, make good use of his police officers' domestic lives, a device common to both English and American procedurals.

The juxtaposition of a police officer's professional and family lives and the use of crime as a symbol of the decay of modern culture are common in the police procedural. What is different about Freeling's Van der Valk novels is the positive action that the Inspector is sometimes able to take. Particularly in the early books, he does rather more than fight the holding action for which most fictional urban lawmen must settle. He sometimes makes things better. At the very least, Piet Van der Valk achieves greater understanding of human nature, and even that is a modestly positive outcome. In this fashion, the series resembles the country-house mystery in that readers discover in each novel—even the last in which Van der Valk is murdered—true closure and some degree of reassurance. Readers' most important expectation of formula fiction has been met because attention has been paid. After her successful search for Piet's killer, Arlette speaks:

> "My man," she said calmly, "I saw him lying there on the ground in the rain. And he had a

contented look. As though he knew that after all it hadn't been wasted."
Yes. (*Silence*, 223)

For Freeling, as for other writers of police procedurals, the police officer as hero is very useful because his role is simultaneously so clear-cut and so complex. The police are, after all, the keepers of order; they must respond to trouble; that is their charge under the social contract. In Freeling's work as in most police procedurals, then, the police officer represents not only order itself but also the power (or at least the will) to restore order. Furthermore, the policeman shares the ordinary citizen's craving for order and feels the ordinary citizen's need to live within the social contract, for in his personal life, he needs its security as much as anyone else. The average citizen's impulse toward order (and the safety it affords him) is strong and constant, functioning on some level even when (as sometimes happens) law-abiding individuals resist the police officer as he discharges his duty. Similarly, even though the policeman is an official arm of the state when he is on the job, personally, he, like his fellow citizens, has some reason to distrust the state and its rigidity. Who knows better than he how the system can swallow an individual? This duality is one of the strongest dynamics of the police procedural, and it is enhanced by the family-life subplots.

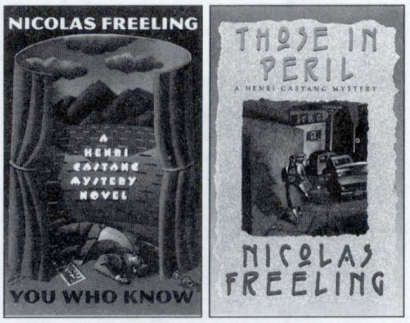


In the Van der Valk series, the Inspector's domestic history lends great interest: we learn of Arlette Van der Valk's impatience with many Dutch attitudes; we hear a great deal about the family's meals, quite a bit about their living quarters; something of their children's development and rebellions—and enough about the tensions that arise between husband and wife to make us a bit uneasy on one or two occasions. All this is standard material for the police procedural; it adds color and depth as it generates subplots.

In humanizing Van der Valk, it does still more. The family highlights make the Inspector "one of us," demonstrating that he is personally a party to the social contract, even as he is "the other," an enforcer of the contract's clauses. Like his readers, Piet Van der Valk chides his spouse, nags his children, enjoys or complains about the cooking. He is an ordinary man, struggling to do his job as father and husband. Like us, he wishes all were perpetually smooth at home; like us, he knows it never will be. But he does his best at coping with young sons who often puzzle their parents, at dealing with a wife who not only worries about the dangers of his job but also resents many of the standards that job represents, and at rescuing an adopted daughter from her disastrous early childhood. Indeed, these elements of the Van der Valk narratives move us to a very complete identification with the Inspector. Regardless of his responsibility for imposing the state's power upon individual lives, we see him as a person. Very importantly, we empathize with him fully.

FREELING WON THE BEST NOVEL EDGAR IN 1967 FOR *KING OF THE RAINY COUNTRY*

Despite occasional turbulence, Piet and Arlette Van der Valk generally live by the precept that in marriage—as in the larger society—the individual must do what he or she can to preserve order, to make things work, to make things better. Initially, Arlette centers her life upon their family. As a Frenchwoman living in the Netherlands, she often feels prickly and uneasy, unassimilated, so she takes almost no active part in neighborhood life, let alone in community functions. She leaves civic duties to her husband, a paid, professional civic worker. For his part, Van der Valk welcomes this division of labor, telling his wife very little about his cases, keeping a sharp distinction between his relatively well-ordered personal world and the violently disordered public world in which he works. Though they define their marital roles very traditionally, the Van der Valks accommodate one another, each allowing the other room to function, to grow, and to be a full partner. Consequently, their union is sound.

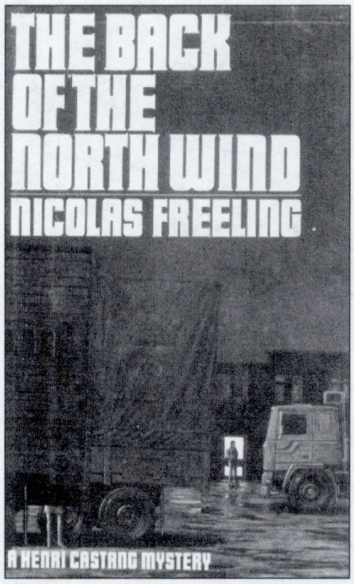


The Van der Valk family's strength is best symbolized by Ruth, their adopted daughter. Arlette evaluates the girl:

> Ruth was not an easy child, full of frightful knots and tensions, and had caused much upheaval and heartbreak in her new home. Still, that was comprehensible enough. She had never known her father, her mother had been something of an oddity, and both of them died by violence.... Coming to Piet and Arlette at around twelve years of age, she had brought a lot of this violence with her. Now in her mid-teens, she had gone in a great deal lately for subterranean adolescent smolderings, and very tiresome they had found it. (*Silence*, 97)

Yet, upon Van der Valk's death, it is Ruth who sustains and supports her mother; Piet and Arlette have done their best to create order from the chaos of the girl's childhood, and though they have not, of course, produced the perfect daughter, they have shaped a decent, nurturing, responsible young woman, no small achievement.

When the Van der Valks adopt Ruth, they assume great personal and social obligations. Caring for her represents whatever reparation society can offer to this damaged child, and it suggests (as does Arlette's ability to opt out of direct social involvement) that their home is a viable refuge from the rampant villainy on the mean streets. The



success of their endeavor reminds readers, even amid the horror and grief of Van der Valk's murder, that his life was essentially redemptive. If Piet and Arlette can raise a bastion against social decay, there is, these early novels suggest, some hope for western civilization—if men and women of good intent try very hard to protect it.

Both Arlette and Ruth, then, in their varying ways strangers in strange lands, take refuge in the Van der Valk home; Piet, the Inspector, who functions within and without the home, protects them as he protects other citizens. Though Ruth initially brings an aura of violence into the home with her, though violence sometimes pervades Piet's consciousness after working hours, and though he comes home to recuperate from both psychic and physical wounds suffered on the job, essentially the Van der Valk apartment is a haven, a safe place, a symbol of personal order amid public chaos.

For his family as for the public, Piet Van der Valk, the representative of law and order, is the chief bulwark against that chaos. Each of his cases reflects the disorder of the streets; most of his cases (as is also often true of the American private-eye novel) reflect other families in disarray—as Ruth's birth-family and the seemingly complacent, well-established burghers in *Because of the Cats*, for instance, clearly demonstrate. All of the cases also reflect a society whose members are ever more frequently bent upon destruction. In many ways, the criminals (and by extension, much of modern society) are most usefully described in Van der Valk's own words. He speaks of the Hell's Angels, who "rejected society...putting themselves outside it," investing full attention in enormous motorbikes:

> Everything else treated with contempt and derision—men, women, money, shops, institutions of any sort, but the bike carefully cleaned, polished, tuned, beautifully cared for. Sort of symbol of purity, liberty, honour. And then somehow it seems that it's not enough.... [Ultimately] they have to destroy the bike—the one thing...and themselves with it. If you go off a big bike at a hundred miles an hour there's not much left of you. If you go on pushing on a curve there comes a moment when the centrifugal force takes over, when you feel the back sliding away and know you can no longer stop it....
>
> They seem to seek that moment, to desire it passionately, that moment when the bike takes over and they know they're helpless and that they have only two or three seconds to live. They've a name for it, which they all understand because they've all been there. They call it going over the high side. (*Over*, 237-238)

Van der Valk establishes this metaphor late in the series, in a conversation which concludes *Over the High Side*; yet, this speech reflects attitudes and patterns of thought sustained throughout the novels. It demonstrates the inspector's ongoing attempt to understand the motivations behind destructive behavior. The more he learns about human nature, the greater his compassion for his fellows. Never soppily sentimental, however, Van der Valk despises the crime even when he pities the criminal.

Though some readers and critics find the stylistic elements used to convey Van der Valk's (and later Arlette's and Castang's) thoughts cumbersome, most find it intimate and extremely effective. Freeling employs a kind of stream-of-consciousness technique, and in all but the first Van der Valk novel, readers share most of the Inspector's reasoning. Though often the policeman appears to be groping for thoughts, seems to string one idea onto another by free association more than by logic, relying heavily upon intuition, that mainstay of fictional detectives, the author is, of course, pur-

A Nicolas Freeling Reading List

The Inspector Piet Van der Valk Novels

Love in Amsterdam, 1962*
(as *Death in Amsterdam* in U.S.)
Because of the Cats, 1963
Gun Before Butter, 1963
(as *Question of Loyalty* in U.S.)
Double-Barrel, 1964
Criminal Conversation, 1965
The King of the Rainy Country, 1966
The Dresden Green, 1966
Strike Out Where Not Applicable, 1967
Tsing-Boum, 1969
(as *Tsing-Boom!* in U.S.)
Over the High Side, 1971
(as *The Lovely Ladies* in U.S.)
A Long Silence, 1972
(as *Auprès de ma Blonde* in U.S.)
Sand Castles, 1989

Arlette Van der Valk Novels

The Widow, 1979
One Damn Thing after Another, 1981
(as *Arlette* in U.S.)

The Henri Castang Novels

A Dressing of Diamond, 1974
What Are the Bugles Blowing For?, 1975 (as *The Bugles Blowing* in U.S.)
Lake Isle, 1976 (as *Sabine* in U.S.)
The Night Lords, 1978
Castang's City, 1980
Wolfnight, 1982
The Back of the North Wind, 1983
No Part in Your Death, 1984
A City Solitary, 1985
Cold Iron, 1986
Lady Macbeth, 1988
Not as Far as Velma, 1989
Those in Peril, 1990
Flanders Sky, 1992
Those in Peril, 1993
You Who Know, 1994

Other

Valparaiso (as F.R.E. Nicolas), 1964
This Is the Castle, 1968
Gadget, 1977

*All publication dates are for the British first editions.

posefully developing readers' empathy with his protagonist. Actually, Van der Valk's language is always precise; his associations are always valid; his conclusions are always informed by logic, insight, and compassion. This pattern is the primary means of characterizing Van der Valk, and it functions in precisely the same two ways as the family-complications device: it makes Piet Van der Valk special (an extraordinarily wide range of allusion testifies to his great knowledge, and his compassion reveals his wisdom) even as it makes him one of us.

Van der Valk's habit of groping for idea, connection, solution, and resolution is his method of inwardly "talking" himself through problems—tricky cases, the aftertaste of sticky interviews, the condescension of superior officers, the distrust of the public. It keeps the Inspector human, available, ordinary because readers identify with it. Everyone is sometimes uncertain; everyone understands the cost of painful, painstaking effort. But Piet's precision of language and his capacity for metaphor couple with his uncanny grasp of human nature and those leaps of intuition to set Van der Valk apart, revealing the strength, introspection, and quiet courage necessary to a true defender of order and civility. All too human but nevertheless superior to and stronger than the rest of us, Van der Valk keeps the peace as best it can be kept.

Freeling stresses the parallelism between the Inspector's function at home and at work, contrasting the flawed but nurturing Van der Valk family unit to flawed and destructive families whose offspring make the mean streets meaner every day, whose inability to nurture threatens the very roots of modern European culture. Unlike Arlette, these criminals and fosterers of criminals cannot find contentment within the home; unlike Ruth, their children rage against their parents and their community; and for them, all too often there is no one to forge a workable, protective link between the private and public worlds.

Ironically, Van der Valk's strengths unite with the meanness of the streets to destroy him. Always something of a loner professionally, he is no longer an active investigator at the end of his career, but following a hunch, he pursues a case on his own. The results are fatal. Though Van der Valk's intentions were good and though he was correct in his suspicions, his method was faulty. The Inspector's murder demonstrates that one person working alone outside the system can do very little to clean up the mean streets. Intentionally or not, the maverick cop engages in vigilantism, and that, Freeling clearly indicates, is completely unacceptable. It doesn't destroy the good work Van der Valk has done in the past, but it does destroy him.

In his last conscious moments, Van der Valk reaffirms the important family-relationships motif so important to these novels: he reviews his life and finds it worthy, remembering Stendahl's comment that "there was no disgrace in dying on the street, when not done on purpose." Of course there is no disgrace. He has done well. But now the violent streets have redefined the Van der Valk family, symbol of order and of hope for the European community. Once the Inspector is dead, Freeling's fictional world is darker, even more disorderly. The day of the father-figure cop, the dogged supporter of the social contract, draws to a close in the twilight of a Dutch boulevard.

As Freeling moves from the Van der Valk novels into the Arlette and Castang series, his theme, as has been noted, remains constant, but his emphasis shifts a bit. In the Castang series, setting becomes a crucial element of the Freeling texture, and the problem of the spoiled cop becomes more important:

> The public.... is not grateful to be reminded for whom the bell tolls. The police, on an everyday level the repository of mankind's conscience, makes a damned fine whipping boy. The cop therefore is little better, in the eye of the public, than the common hangman. Worse, he is suspected of doing favors. Of pulling, stifling, blinding justice for favors.
>
> The cop knows this. Not wiser, but perhaps humbler, he lives with it. He grows a protective skin, and, accused of cynicism as well as brutality, he becomes, with fatal ease, both brutal and cynical. (*Bugles*, 42-43)

Brutality and cynicism can foster gar-

den variety corruption—kickbacks, bribes, cruelty—behaviors that are obviously exploitative, illegal, and vicious. More subtle and even more dangerous, however, is the police officer's temptation to take the law into his own hands; this impulse is rooted in deep, overriding cynicism. If a lawman cannot trust the system, it becomes easy to justify acting above or beyond the law. If the society he serves is self-destructive, it is very difficult for the streetwise cop to trust the system. And if "violence is today's Black Death, rolling inexorably over Europe" (*No Part*, 212), who can doubt that late twentieth-century culture is self-destructive?

Freeling believes that:

> The first responsibility of the writer, perhaps, is to be a devoted and accurate witness to the thoughts and doings of his times. If, though, he is to be in any real sense creative he must make discoveries. A writer has to do better than stay abreast of his times; he must run a little in front of them.[8]

He must, in other words, warn against the wrongs committed by good men for good reasons just as vigorously as he points out more obvious wrongdoing, and he must define these problems and sound these alarms in the context of the future as he foresees or imagines it.

Freeling's richly detailed settings create a portrait of postwar Europe that "puts his work in a class by itself."[9] When one considers his close attention to setting in the light of his theme, it becomes significant that the primary locality for the Castang novels has "no name; its every feature, and everyone in it, has been brought there by the four winds," as the author tells us in the Foreword to *Castang's City*. The namelessness of this central locale dramatizes the universality of its symbolism, for like Amsterdam and like Arlette Van der Valk Davidson's Strasbourg, this town represents civilization. Castang's French city is every western city in decline, where twilight is anything but romantic.

> Twilight made things sinister...the moment before darkness falls called "entre chien et loup".... when, conceivably, the werewolf could still present a blameless air of domesticity. (*Wolfnight*, 3).

While, in the tradition of the police procedural, Castang and his fascinating colleagues fight a holding action against crime and the corruption it represents, there is a steady darkening of hope from *A Dressing of Diamond* (1974) through *The Back of the North Wind* (1983). If this encroaching hopelessness is mitigated at all in *No Part in Your Death* (1984) and *Cold Iron* (1987), it is assuaged only slightly and at great cost to Castang and to Richard, his superior.

Among the many devices and incidents that indicate a growing aura of despair, two must be mentioned particularly: crime and violence directly invade the homes of the Castangs and of their friends, and the policeman and his co-workers, that remarkable group of colleagues and friends, descend to corrupt (illegal, worse, dishonorable) action to achieve justifiable, indeed essential, ends. Though readers are accustomed to observing the effect of a policeman's work upon his family life, and though they are constantly reminded by crime writers that it's almost impossible to trudge through tar without becoming grimy, the enormous impact Freeling achieves from these relatively familiar devices seems completely fresh.

Initially, the Castang household represents a triumph of the human spirit over adversity. True to Freeling's pattern, the Castangs' marriage is "international"; Vera, his wife, is Czech by birth. Despite the sometimes acid exchanges between Castang and Vera, again a standard Freeling device, readers don't really doubt the strength of their union. Both partners are strong and resilient as their battle against Vera's disability (she was originally a gymnast who was badly crippled in an accident) shows. Vera's determination and the Castangs' decision to have a child not only help to characterize the couple, but also, on the symbolic level, should counteract the horrors of the streets.

Like Arlette Van der Valk, Vera Castang supports her police officer husband (albeit often contentiously) in his struggle against the wolfnight. Also like Arlette, Vera confronts her past and comes to terms with the ongoing, painful turbulence of the present when she is alone. In *Flanders Sky*, she travels

by herself to her childhood home. She hopes to visit and to reconcile with her mother and to assuage the pain of the long-standing rift caused by her defection to the West. She finds, however, that she cannot go home again; there is no place for her there.

By now an émigré twice over (the Castangs have been posted to Brussels), Vera learns that she must make a life wherever she finds herself. The past will always echo in the present, but it need not control her. She is also reminded that each person must do not only what she must to save herself but also what she can to make things better for others. Vera's story underscores the theme of individual responsibility so important in Freeling's fiction.

But beginning with the first novel in the Castang series, *A Dressing of Diamond*, the Castangs' immediate circle is under attack by the denizens of the wolfnight; Rachel, the daughter of Colette and Bernard Delavigne, close friends of the Castangs, disappears. In other books, the Castangs' apartment is devastated and Vera is kidnapped, and the handsome home of Inspector Richard, Castang's superior, is burned. Though it is nowhere written that police officers' families and friends are exempt from trouble or crime, nevertheless, these events contrast with the pattern in the Van der Valk novels where family life affords Piet some relief from the violence he confronts at work.

Another contrast between the two series is also worth noting. As has been observed, the Van der Valks adopt a child orphaned by a chain of violent circumstances, and in so doing, they try, fairly successfully, to take overt, personal action against evil. In the second series, the Castangs' circle extends to take in, for a time, Gilbert La Touche, a confessed murderer who deeply affects Henri, Vera, and Colette Delavigne, each of whom is involved with his case. Gilbert La Touche affects all three continuing characters both personally and professionally; he represents the discarded social code of an earlier era. Though everyone clearly understands why La Touche avenged himself on a wanton wife and daughter, everyone also understands that he cut himself off from the community in doing so; he must be punished. Thus, in *The Bugles Blowing*, nothing redemptive can be accomplished; the most these sensitive, talented characters can manage is to be supportive. Even then, one wonders for whom they extend their efforts. Certainly, they care about La Touche, but also, perhaps, they act in behalf of themselves in an attempt to diminish the gathering darkness by trying to generate a little heart and a little hope.

The overall impact of episodes such as these is considerable, shadowing the Castang novels wherein the threat of despair and the consequent immobilization of the human spirit feels much more imminent than in the Van der Valk series. When the Castangs and their friends become victims of crimes, the general threat to all individuals' well-being becomes highly personalized—and this fact generates a special, dreadful strain. Henri and Vera survive, and we readers admire them for doing so. But the overall tone is often unhopeful; the question of their ability to remain spiritually and ethically intact always remains open.

As his responses to criminals *and* victims he encounters reveal, Castang is an introspective, serious person; therefore, when he falls from the grace of legality into extreme cynicism, that ultimate danger, the impact upon his self-respect is terrible. The fact that Richard, his commander, assumes responsibility for this vital decision and for the steps they take to implement it does nothing to mitigate Castang's reaction. Indeed, his awareness that their behavior is not an impetuous reaction to danger but a carefully conceived, carefully executed plan intensifies his unease.

A series of kidnappings occurs in *Wolfnight*; criminals perpetrate the first and the third, which is the kidnapping of Vera Castang. The second is engineered and accomplished by Richard's men, and it takes place in West Germany. Richard reverts to his days in the French Underground, and no matter that the threat of Fascism is imminent, no matter that he and his men do what Richard and Castang

believe must be done in the only way they can manage it, these officers of the law behave illegally, using criminal methods in criminal ways, chancing an international crisis (or worse) in the bargain. Obviously, they risk everything to implement this scheme. No one's career will survive if they are caught or even if broad suspicion attaches to them. But dire though the consequences would be, the worst result is their awareness that they behave exactly like the conspirators they foil.

For a time, there is a very real question of whether or not Castang and Richard can work or live comfortably with this memory, as the early portion of *The Back of the North Wind* clearly reveals. Having violated both their personal codes and the civil code that they serve, both men suffer spiritually, and both are aware that officialdom knows rather more than is desirable about their unauthorized foreign operation.

At the opening of *The Back of the North Wind*, it appears that the decline of Castang's city is nearly complete. Castang's friends have been attacked; his home has been invaded. Most importantly, the policeman has learned the humiliating lesson that vigilantism is no less vigilantism when carried out by a well-meaning gang than when attempted by a well-meaning individual. Who is trustworthy if he is not? His behavior has been so dangerously corrupt that it has stripped away his sense of personal identity.

The darkening tone of the Castang series may account for some critics' judgment that it is weaker than the Van der Valk series.[10] For most readers, however, the Castang novels are saved by Freeling's near-stream-of-consciousness style. Because we readers are so intimately informed of Castangs thoughts and feelings, almost as if we were partners in his investigations, we are fully aware of his concern for the future. Further, because we share his thoughts and feelings so intensely, we are (as with Van der Valk and Arlette also) almost his co-investigators. Similarly, when he falls from grace, we cannot condemn him because we are, in effect, his co-conspirators. Instead, readers retain respect for Richard as well as for Castang, understanding that anyone might yield to pragmatic temptation, understanding that the police officers are, like the rest of us, fallible. These novels clearly demonstrate the value of the Freeling style and his wisdom in creating protagonists who are very much like us.

If the early passages of *The Back of the North Wind* represent the depths of Castang's self-disapproval, then the bulk of the action seems to be Castang's and Richard's expiation for their misdeeds, an astoundingly traditional ploy and, as such, perhaps not wholly convincing. In the course of the action, both men are punished. Both will survive, but they will never be the same. Richard is no longer merely elderly; he is old. Castang is marked for life. Seemingly, however, something within Henri Castang is satisfied; he is ready to go on with his work. Like Piet Van der Valk, Castang is kicked upstairs, but unlike Piet, he is not cut off from the working police. He remains in a position to take official action, an option that, in his last, fatal investigation is denied Van der Valk.

In *Not as Far as Velma*, the official action that Castang can take is not terribly effective. The search for a missing woman, Adrienne Sergent, seems almost inconsequential in comparison to other events, and certainly that search is frustrating—few clues, many blind alleys. Still, Castang persists, and true to Freeling's world-view, this unassuming woman's fate is tied directly to international affairs.

Not as Far as Velma is unsparing in its portrait of a world where a South American counterinsurgent can burn prisoners alive, justifying himself by saying, "'you did it to Jews and we do it to Communists and it's exactly the same'" (*Velma*, 232).

Yet, despite such awful evidence that humankind at large doesn't seem to learn much by its frightful excesses, this novel strongly affirms that "In...our human circumstances, love is always stronger than not-love" (*Velma*, 234). Finding this message in the sometimes dark, nearly despairing Castang series keeps hope alive in Castang's world and in ours.

The very short Arlette series that follows the Van der Valk novels and that is interspersed among the Castang novels offers useful commentary on the roles of modern men and women, on the necessity for hope in the face of hopelessness, on the necessity for courage in the face of despair. Indeed, Arlette's story is a progression from emptiness toward affirmation, and her development can properly be taken as a model of human behavior in the last quarter of the twentieth century. She learns the value of comradeship and cooperative effort.

In developing an established character who changes markedly, Freeling practices skills he believes come with maturity:

> As you get older, I think you get much better, so that what one loses in energy, one makes up for in—well, of course, experience. There's much more resonance in what you're thinking about, much more depth in it....
>
> You are trying to make this novel better than the one before.... And to make a character develop. For example, there are whole aspects of a character that you realize that you have never touched, or that you have only touched upon very, very superficially. And in the course of the narrative, one tries to look at another such aspect of the character.[11]

Though Freeling himself stresses Arlette's early "pride in her status as a housewife" and her refusal "to be libbed,"[12] readers find her development into a public person believable. Through all three series, Freeling emphasizes family life, consistently displaying "a talent for domestic dialogue" and examining "the problem of feminine achievement and male pride,"[13] so his readers are fully accustomed to strong, interesting female characters, and first among them, of course, is Arlette. Moreover, before setting out to find Piet's killer, Arlette works through recognizable stages of grief, and, of course, her desire to punish the murderer (while humiliating the police who sloughed off the original investigation) is strong motivation. We endorse her mission even though it begins as a kind of vigilantism. We accept it because above all else, it is the primary means of Arlette's social integration, and once again, Freeling's intimate, reflective style lures us into acceptance.

As with Van der Valk and Castang, reader empathy with Arlette is very

strong. We applaud as she assumes personal responsibility by tracking down Piet's killer in *A Long Silence*. Later we cheer when she eschews vigilantism and rejects her helpers' plans to kill the murderer. We sympathize when physical therapy, the new career she trains for, becomes too unfulfilling, and we applaud the establishment of her "Advice Bureau" (*Widow*). We readers share her powers, limitations, and hopes so intensely that we share her development.[14]

As Arlette changes, we observe and learn from her steady progress, recognizing that the Arlette stories are "as much about a woman's self-discovery as...about crime." She finds herself by uniting with others. Her Dutch neighbors aid her in solving the mystery of Van der Valk's death; she makes a new, sound marriage, and in Strasbourg, she creates—through friendship and professional respect—a circle of stalwart friends and expert helpers (by no means the least of whom is Arthur Davidson, her English second husband). The Strasbourg circle, staunch, active supporters of the social contract, aid her in her work. Her work is doing what she can to mend the tattered fabric of civilization, and some readers find her "far more heroic than Van der Valk or Castang."[15]

No one, least of all Arlette, has any false ideas of how much can be accomplished. An infuriated wife abuser, hoodlums connected with organized crime, and the Argentine government all show her just how powerful evil is; nevertheless, she does what she can. As a rule, she is able to help her clients; however, she usually requires the skills of other brave, committed amateurs as well as the assistance, formal or informal, of some official. In the Arlette novels, individual responsibility and the powers of the state (as represented by the best of the state's functionaries) combine to be helpful. The help is never inconsequential, though it doesn't move mountains, though it doesn't save the world—unless, of course, the decent acts of small bands of decent people are the best means of saving the world. Freeling tantalizes us with that idea throughout the Arlette novels, his most hopeful series.

Clearly, then, Freeling's fictional world lightens and darkens in the course of his three series. Consistently, however, he depicts "strong central characters who stand apart from a conformist century, scrutinize its often petty concerns, and act always according to their own best instincts."[16]

Realist that he is, Freeling also shows us that instinct alone is not enough; each individual must do the decent thing in a constructive, honorable way. Because the means are as important as the ends, one must use the law, the state, the social contract humanely to serve individual human need. And one must do it over and over again.

As demonstrated by the Van der Valk, Castang, and Arlette novels, this code is indeed simple to state, very difficult to live by. But in Freeling's world (as, he firmly insists, in ours) it might make all the difference.

Notes

[1] A list of Freeling's work appears in Lesley Henderson, ed. *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, 3rd edition, New York: St. Martin's, 1985. Freeling's own comments and A. Norman Jeffres's discussion of Freeling's work that appear therein are also very useful. Here follows a list of the editions of Freeling's works quoted in this article:

The Kitchen: A Delicious Account of the Author's Years as a grand hotel Cook, New York: Harper, 1970.

Over the High Side (U.S.: *The Lovely Ladies*), London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971.

A Long Silence (U.S.: *Aupres de Ma Blonde*), Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1975.

The Bugles Blowing (U.K.: *What Are the Bugles Blowing For?*), NY: Harper, 1975.

Castang's City, NY: Pantheon, 1980.

Wolfnight, London: Heinemann, 1982.

No Part in Your Death, NY: Viking, 1984.

Not as Far as Velma, NY: Mysterious Press, 1989.

[2] "Freeling, Nicolas," *World Authors, 1950-1970*, 1975 ed., pp. 494-495.

[3] *World Authors*, p. 495.

[4] Nicolas Freeling, "Inspector Van der Valk," *The Great Detectives*, Otto Penzler, ed., NY: Penguin, 1979, pp. 253-255.

[5] "Freeling, Nicolas," *Contemporary Novelists*, 3rd ed., 1982, p. 228.

[6] *Contemporary Novelists*, p. 228.

[7] See especially, George N. Dove, *The Police Procedural*, Bowling Green, OH: Popular Press, 1982, p. 18.

[8] "Freeling, Nicolas," *Contemporary Authors*, 1975 ed., pp. 194-195.

[9] O.L. Bailey, "On the Docket," *Saturday Review*, 26 Aug. 1972, p. 61.

[10] Julian Symons, *Bloody Murder; From the Detective Story to the Crime Story: A History*, NY: Viking, 1985, pp. 170-171.

[11] Jane S. Bakerman, "Let the Public Decide: An Interview with Nicolas Freeling," *The Mystery Fancier*, 8:6 (Nov./Dec. 1986), p. 20.

[12] *Great Detectives*, p. 251.

[13] Timothy Foote, "Crime as Punishment," *Time*, 29 Jul. 1974, p. 65.

[14] Close identification with Arlette has another value. As has been noted, her work in the "Advice Bureau" is very similar to the work of the fictional private detective; yet, the Arlette novels generally are spared the criticism leveled against other series featuring fictional female private eyes. Despite the violence that she encounters, critics do not accuse Arlette of being lost in a man's world. Readers are so closely allied with her that false distinctions such as "man's story" or "women's fiction" simply do not pertain.

[15] Hubert Saal, "A Detective Called Arlette," *Newsweek*, 22 Oct. 1979, p. 122. See also Jane S. Bakerman, "Arlette: Nicolas Freeling's Candle Against the Dark," *The Armchair Detective*, 16 (1983), pp. 348-353.

[16] John R. Coyne, Jr., "The Last Individualists," *National Review*, 24 Aug. 1971, p. 937. ■

Report from 221B Baker Street

By

Sherry Rose Bond

and Scott Bond

Our column in this issue will really live up to its name, "Report from 221B Baker Street," because we intend to share with you some of what we found this spring when we visited the Baker Street set at Granada TV Studios in Manchester and the Sherlock Holmes Museum at Baker Street, London.

We were fortunate to have had the opportunity to visit Granada's Baker Street on two earlier occasions: once, before it was open to the public and, again, after it became part of the Granada TV Studio Tour. During both these visits, it was a working outdoor set used both as Baker Street in the Sherlock Holmes series and, with a few alterations, as any Victorian or Edwardian street set for other productions. The changes we observed this time were quite dramatic.

First and most importantly, the set is no longer being used for filming. In fact, it appears that the latest set of Sherlock Holmes adventures (four of which have not yet been seen in the U.S.) will be the last. (Jeremy Brett's health is only one of the factors contributing to this decision.) Consequently, the Baker Street set is now solely an attraction on the Studio Tour. The second, and most obvious, change is that it is now fully enclosed. It is in an enormous sound stage building. The sky above is black and the "gas" lamps are lit along the street. There appear to be buildings along both sides of the cobbled street. On one side they are merely facades of houses and store fronts but on the opposite side can be found Mrs. Hudson's Potato Shop, a pub, The Hound, (open only on weekends), the door to 221B, a photography studio (where you can don vintage clothing and become a Canonical character, even Sherlock Holmes, and have a sepia-toned photograph made), and "The Sherlock Holmes Experience" (which we'll discuss in a moment).

The street is populated by entertainers in Victorian costumes, representing Holmes, a bobby, Mrs. Hudson, and Cockney street peddlers. There was a barrel-organ and several pushcarts containing "produce," Victorian hardware and other goods scattered along the street (disguising a piano, a sound system and other necessary props). Every hour or so the inhabitants of the street performed a number of Victorian Music Hall songs and comedy turns. The earnest young people were talented and diverting. We have no Canonical evidence that such a troop of players ever entertained on Holmes' Baker Street but their performances strongly brought to mind the short-lived production of *Sherlock Holmes: The Musical.*

For purposes of crowd control (although it was relatively deserted when we were there except for a half dozen expatriate Americans up from London for the day), one enters the photography studio, goes through "The Sherlock Holmes Experience" and then moves on to the Sitting Room at 221B. In our view, the one element which was most enjoyable and which made the trip worthwhile was "The Sherlock Holmes Experience." This is a museum-type display comprised of floor-to-ceiling glass cases absolutely filled with Sherlockian artifacts, an extremely dark and foreshortened reconstruction of that infamous opium den, The Bar of Gold, and a collection of theatrical posters. Each case focuses on a different aspect of Sherlock Holmes: the Canon, Arthur Conan Doyle, Villains and Victims, Switzerland and the Reichenbach Falls, The Theatrical Sherlock Holmes, A Study in Scarlet, Illustrators of Sherlock Holmes and so on. Thus, in one case you will find Holmes' Inverness coat, deerstalker hat, syringe and violin and Watson's medical bag, walking stick and stethoscope. Another contains bound copies of all of Holmes' monographs. One had Holmes' alpenstock and the letter he left for Watson at the Reichenbach Falls. Yet a further case contains letters, books, photographs and souvenirs from the life of Conan Doyle. The collection is eclectic and samples the many and various aspects of Sherlockiana. It is a marvelous illustration of something we tell people all the time: "Whatever in the world in which you are interested, you can find in the world of Sherlock Holmes." The collection contains a certain number of obligatory items but it also surprised us with some obscure, unexpected and creative artifacts. The contents of the cases are clearly, completely, and accurately labeled and were very well displayed. A major problem, however, is that the amount of glass and the angles of the cases somewhat hampered photography.

There is a gift shop associated with the Baker Street set. It contains virtually nothing of interest except postcards illustrated with publicity stills from the

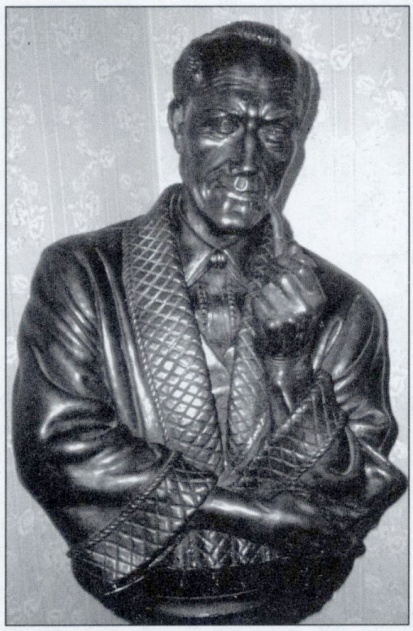
television series. There was *nothing* one could bring home that had to do with "The Sherlock Holmes Experience"—no guide, no postcards—nothing but the wonderful experience of having been there.

As we left "The Sherlock Holmes Experience," we walked around a corner and found ourselves in the Sitting Room at 221B Baker Street or, rather, that which, at Granada TV, passes for the Sitting Room. This proved to be an extremely large room with a sizable alcove or small room on the side containing bookcases and Holmes' chemical apparatus. We walked behind a barrier along the "fourth wall." On our left were the windows overlooking Baker Street; along the wall opposite us was the cluttered sideboard; to our right was the door to the hall and the chemical alcove (sic!). We were horrified that the most significant and recognizable feature of the room, the fireplace, was missing! Most of the items one associates with the Sitting Room are found above, in front of or along side the fireplace and they weren't there.

Due to its size, the room appeared to be seriously underfurnished and some of the items were only approximations of what we knew should be there. It was an adequate attempt but resembled nothing so much as the stage set for an amateur theatre production of *Sherlock Holmes*. Obviously, we would have to go elsewhere to find a really good reconstruction of the Sitting Room.

Ever since we first heard of the Sherlock Holmes Museum in London, we've heard nothing but disparaging comments about it. Since it opened several years ago, many people whose opinions we respect have visited the museum (located about a block north of the Abbey National Building Society found at 219–223 Baker Street), paid the five pounds a person admission ($7.50 to $10.00 depending upon the value of the pound) and have angrily reported that the rooms were virtually empty and that there was just a tiny display and that they felt, in their words, "ripped off." Thus, we were strongly advised against wasting our time and our money on a commercial enterprise that has no affiliation with any aspect of the Holmesian establishment.

So the matter rested until this year when, in the interests of fairness and objectivity (and admittedly, curiosity), we decided to invest the ten pounds and visit the Sherlock Holmes Museum. We were delighted that we did, because it was a morning very well spent!



A STATUE OF THE GREAT DETECTIVE AT THE SHERLOCK HOLMES MUSEUM IN LONDON.

THE SITTING ROOM AT THE MUSEUM WAS A SPLENDID RECONSTRUCTION.

Apparently, the Museum is a work-in-progress and earlier, it undoubtedly was inadequate and overpriced. (They should have given those early visitors a discount coupon for a later visit.) Now it appears that a great deal of work has been completed and a great deal of money has been spent to bring it to the level we found when we visited. The fact that it was designed to be a money-making enterprise is very clear even before you set foot in the door. A "bobby" stands guard outside. "Sherlock Holmes" strolls through the neighborhood distributing his business card. A handsome hansom cab (with the name of the Museum prominently displayed on its carriagework) is driven through areas where tourists are likely to be found. (We were there the day of the ceremony of the Trooping of the Colour so the cab was dispatched to the Whitehall/Buckingham Palace area where there were unusually large crowds).

The building itself is of the correct period but it is one of a row of houses which is smaller, narrower and lower than those further south on that part of Baker Street where Holmes actually lived. However, it is one of the few buildings on the street whose facade has not been altered and so it gives the impression of being correct. The house has been decorated inside in a style appropriate to the period with authentic pieces and excellent reproductions, from the carpeting to the wallpaper to the furniture. On the ground floor can be found Hudson's Old English Restaurant, serving traditional teas, luncheon and dinner. The restaurant consists of a pair of rooms elaborately decorated in high Victoriana. The serving staff wear modified Victorian dress. Access to the restaurant is from the tiny entrance hall.

It is in this hall where you pay your admission fee to the bobby or to the Victorian maid who directs you up the (yes!) seventeen steps to the Sitting Room on the first floor. There you're greeted by another maid who welcomes you and points out features of special interest and who is prepared to answer questions about the room and its famous occupant. Because the house itself is smaller than it should be, the scale of the Sitting Room is necessarily reduced. But that doesn't prevent it from being a splendid reconstruction. The room is wonderfully furnished and cluttered with all those items pictured or described in *The Strand*. There are very few gaffes. (Not to cavil, but the portrait of Henry Ward Beecher is supposed to be *unframed*). The maid encourages 'photo ops' by suggesting that guests sit in the velvet or the basket chair in front of the fireplace (on the bearskin rug), don an available deer-

stalker and pose with a pipe or lens (also provided). You may take as many photographs of each other and of the interior as you like. There are no ropes or barriers so all parts of the room are accessible. However, it is quite small so, if more than a few visitors were present, photography could be very difficult.

Behind the Sitting Room, on the same floor, is Sherlock Holmes' bedroom. Among the usual furnishings of bed, chest, chair, and washstand, we examined his (blue? purple? mouse?) colored dressing gown, piles of books, and photographs and contemporary newspaper clippings of famous and infamous Victorian criminals.

One flight up we found Doctor Watson's bedroom and a display containing numerous relics of Holmes' various cases, (including such items as Mary Sutherland's typewriting machine) and a collection of other unusual artifacts. There's also a board containing business cards and photographs of guests who have visited the Museum.

After thoroughly examining all the wonders of the Museum, we still had enough energy to mount to the garret where we found the gift shop. They sell a wide range of gift, souvenir and collectible items, including some things we had never seen before, which are now gracing our collection at home. They told us that they plan to open a shop in the basement, directly accessible from the street, so people can purchase Holmes-related items without having to go through the Museum.

We went to the Sherlock Holmes Museum expecting to be disappointed. Instead, we felt that we had visited a version of the Sitting Room which captured the feel of the room and which was furnished with sensitivity and accuracy. Over the years we have visited copies of Sherlock Holmes' Sitting Rooms in a variety of locations in the US and overseas and this one stands with the best of them. We thoroughly enjoyed spending several hours at *this* 221B Baker Street. The fact that you can actually enter the rooms, touch the artifacts, and photograph them to your heart's content makes it seem that you really have visited the Sitting Room of Sherlock Holmes. ■

ABIGAIL PADGETT

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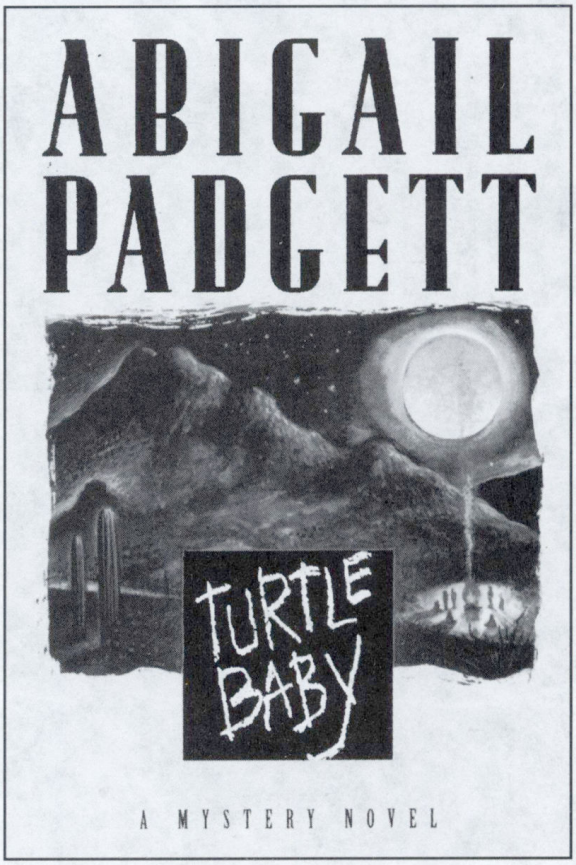

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How to Write the Perfect Mystery Play

HUMOR BY **LOUIS PHILLIPS**

I hope Warren Manzi will forgive me for being a trifle envious. The other day, I was going through a stack of old newspapers, and I came across a blurb for Mr. Manzi's Off-Broadway play, *Perfect Crime*. Some benighted critic for U.P.I. gushed: "If Harold Pinter, Tennessee Williams and Agatha Christie ever sat around a bar one night and said 'Let's write a murder mystery'—they might have come up with 'Perfect Crime'."

Wow! I thought. Any playwright alive would give his eyeteeth for words of praise such as that. But, of course, the more I thought about the blurb, the more skeptical I became—not about Mr. Manzi's play (which I did not see)—but about the ability of Williams, Pinter, and Christie to collaborate on anything, let alone collaborate upon a contraption as complicated as a mystery play.

Some reviewer—as is common in these cases—had come up with a notion that he hadn't really thought about. If the reviewer had really considered what he was saying, then this is probably how the perfect collaboration would have taken place:

Scene: A typical pub on the West End of London. Seated at a round table are three well-known authors—Harold Pinter, Agatha Christie, and Tennessee Williams. The table is littered with scraps—pieces of parchment and torn paper bags all thrown in together. Mr. Pinter raises his hand to catch the eye of a waiter.

Pinter: Oh waiter! Another round of stout.

Williams: Oh waiter! Here's my address. Come around later.

Christie: Now, we are agreed that the play opens with the maid discovering Professor Thisby's body in the study of his Cambridge home? The curtain opens and the maid screams.

Pinter: A pause and then a scream.

Christie: A pause?

Pinter: A pause and then a scream.

Williams: And then?

Pinter: Another pause.

Christie: Dear Harold, isn't that one pause too many?

Pinter: Actually it's two pauses too few.

Christie: Very well. (*She writes out the stage directions)* Maid discovers Professor Thisby's corpse. She pauses. She screams. She pauses. She dusts. Now what?

MICHAEL DAVIDSON

Pinter: She pauses once again.

Christie: No more pauses!

Pinter: But this pause, following two previous pauses, is far more significant than ordinary silence. It is silence with the sound of mystery.

Williams: I say the maid falls upon the body and eats it.

Christie: Oh, sweet Ten, isn't that a bit much, especially right at the opening?

Pinter: The maid pauses. Then she falls upon the body and eats it.

Williams: Now we are using our little gray matter.

Christie: It's not something a maid from Oxford would do.

Williams: Oxford, Mississippi?

Christie: I thought we were agreed the play takes place in Oxford, England.

Williams: Baby, I only know Southern.

Christie: But, dear boys, if the maid eats the corpse there won't be any clues left for Hercule Poirot.

Williams: Precisely. What do we need clues for?

Christie: Aren't we writing a mystery?

Pinter: Everything in life is a mystery, don't you agree?

Williams: But plays are straight-forward. All this one needs is some mendacity.

Pinter: I wouldn't use that word in any play of mine.

Williams: I wouldn't go without it.

Christie: Hercule Poirot arrives on the

Essays and articles by Louis Phillips have appeared in *Emmy, The Armchair Detective, Playbill, Games, Family Circle, Smithsonian,* and many other publications

scene. With mendacity.

Pinter: Not on my dead body.

Williams: Fine. The detective gets drunk and makes a pass at the butler.

Christie: My Hercule?

life in the second act, and then Hercule arrives to celebrate the professor's birthday. Although the professor doesn't know it's his birthday.

Williams: The maid is frigid; the corpse has been ravaged; the nightingales sing; the detective is impotent.

The detective gets drunk and makes a pass at the butler.

Pinter: I've written out a few lines of dialogue.

Poirot: Oh!

Maid: Oh?

Poirot: Oh.

Maid: (*Pausing. Count to twenty*) Oh?

Butler: Oh.

Christie: Please, no.

Pinter: No, it's "Oh. No. Oh no." All the mystery is in the silence.

Williams: The mystery should lead to necrophilia...The maid gets it on with the dead Thisby.

Christie: I'm getting ill to my stomach.

Pinter: The sausages at this pub aren't very good.

Williams: The maid confesses, and Hercule turns to the audience and says "I could never solve a single crime if it were not for the kindness of strangers." Then he rapes the maid.

Christie: My Hercule?

Pinter: Let's bring the corpse back to

Christie: My Hercule? Can't Hercule look at the maid in the study and say "There are things in the Comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please?"

Pinter: Aaarrrgfgh.

Christie: What's wrong with that?

Pinter: Please no literary allusions. And no complete sentences! People in real life are hardly articulate....Tennessee, come back here. Where are you going?

Williams: Baby, I got a waiter to meet. Do what you want with the play. But I promised the part of the detective has been promised to Anna Magnani.

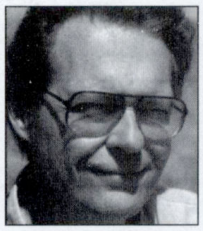
Christie: My Hercule?

Williams Exits.

Pinter: The detective will be a down and out labourer and will speak with a Cockney accent. The murderer will hide in the dumbwaiter and...

Pinter, alas, never gets to finish his plot outline, because Ms. Christie takes out a silver-plated derringer and plugs him between the eyes. She pauses, then, in tears, races from the pub. For some reason the manuscript to the play disappears and never resurfaces.

The End



What About Murder?

By Jon L. Breen

Adrian, Jack, ed.
Crime at Christmas: A Seasonal Box of Murderous Delights
Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Equation, 1988. 224p. Illus., bibl.

Of the many anthologies of yuletide mystery, this one must reside with Thomas Godfrey's *Murder for Christmas* (see *WAM 2* #404) at the top of the heap. Following a mock-Scroogian introduction, Adrian provides expansive notes of one-to-two pages each on the eighteen stories and their authors, combining biographical information, critical comment, and bits of fascinating literary history, all with the kind of chattily learned enthusiasm that characterized Frederic Dannay's story introductions in the early days of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. The stories by James Melville and Bill Pronzini are original to this volume. Authors of the mostly unfamiliar reprints are Nicholas Blake, John Dickson Carr, Sherlockian parodist Peter Todd (Charles Hamilton), Edward D. Hoch, Peter Lovesey, Ethel Lina White, Carr acolyte Joseph Commings, Edgar Wallace, Cyril Hare, Margery Allingham, Will Scott, Robert Arthur, Julian Symons, "Herlock Sholmes" (an unknown scribe continuing Todd-Hamilton's parody series), Anthony Burgess, and James Powell. Following the final story, the editor provides the recipe for "Biggles's Apple Snowballs," following a short consideration of the eating habits of fictional detectives and an appreciative essay on W.E. Johns, creator of boys'-book flying ace James Bigglesworth. Brian Denington provides the plentiful, seasonably charming illustrations. In a thoughtful gesture other editors mig ht imitate, Adrian provides a list of the original periodical sources of the stories separately from the acknowledgements page.

Obviously, this book should have been covered in *What About Murder? (1981-1991)* (Scarecrow, 1993), but I had not seen a copy. My thanks to Jack Adrian for helping me remedy the lapse.

Cody, Liza, and Michael Z. Lewin, eds.
1st Culprit: A Crime Writers' Association Annual
London: Chatto & Windus, 1992. New York: St. Martin's, 1993. 249p. Illus.

2nd Culprit: A Crime Writers' Association Annual
London: Chatto & Windus, 1993. New York: St. Martin's, 1994. 311p. Illus.

The reference value of the first volume of this lively anthology series is limited to a one-page historical note on the British Crime Writers' Association by Nancy Livingston and two pages of very brief notes on the contributors. Robert Richardson provides the CWA page in *2nd,* which has four pages of somewhat more informative biographical notes and two non-fiction articles: Eric Ambler's "Exquisitely Gowned—Revising My First Novel Fifty Years On," previously published to introduce the 1989 first American edition of Ambler's 1936 novel, *The Dark Frontier,* and Carole Rawcliffe's "Dishonourable Members," a historian's account of criminal MPs. Tony Hillerman's "First Lead Gasser" includes the author's note that accompanied it in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.* Illustrations to both volumes consist of the cartoons of Clewsey, a mysterious contributor to the CWA newsletter *Red Herrings.* Other unusual

features include a four-part puzzle mystery, "The Christmas Crimes at 'Cinderella'," by Simon Brett in *1st* and a "Cryptic Crime Acrostic" by Sarah Caudwell and editor Lewin in *2nd.*

CADS: An Index to Issues 1–20
(*CADS* Supplement 2.) South Benfleet, Essex: Bradley, 1993. 51p. Illus.

CADS (an acronym for Crime and Detective Stories) is the longest running and most distinguished British crime fiction fanzine, debuting in July 1985 under the editorship of Geoff Bradley. Deeck has indexed the first twenty issues, including the letter column, by author, title, and subject in the same format used in his indexes to *The Mystery Fancier* and *The Armchair Detective* (see below). A section of unnumbered pages after the index reproduces the covers of the issues, four to a page. Some of the more frequent contributors apart from indexer Deeck and editor Bradley, both prolific reviewers, include John Cooper, Martin Edwards, Ian HGodden, Douglas G. Greene, L.W. Jenkinson, H.R.F. Keating, Marvin Lachman, Ethel Lindsay, Tony Medawar, Angela Morgan, B.A. Pike, Philip L. Scowcroft, and Peter Tyas. (For those interested in the index and/or subscriptions to *CADS,* Bradley's address is 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex, SS7 1PA, U.K.)

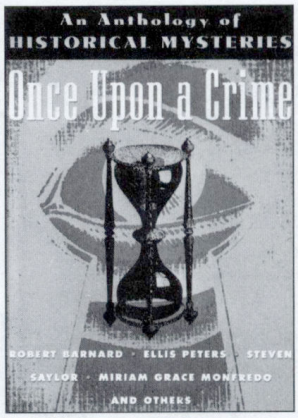
Deeck, William F., and Steven A. Stilwell
The Armchair Detective Index (Volumes 1–20) 1967–1987
New York: The Armchair Detective, 1991. iii, 178p.

This revision and expansion of the original *TAD* index (see *WAM* #34), which had been compiled by Stilwell alone, continues in the same format while more than doubling the length. As before, contents are indexed by author, title, and subject, including (selectively) the letters column. Book reviews are indexed by author, title, and (except when covered in a regular column) reviewer. The use of WordPerfect to alphabetize the index led to some changes, not all desirable to the compilers, including not interfiling *Mcs* and *Macs*. The new edition carries a dedication to Charles Shibuk, who contributed his "Paperback Revolution" column to all eighty of the issues indexed.

Gerald, Marc, ed.
Murder Plus: True Crime Stories from the Masters of Detective Fiction
New York: Pharos, 1992. 324p.

In an eleven-page introduction, Gerald, who in 1988 became managing editor of *True Detective* and its various stablemates, recounts his experiences and ruminates on the recent popularity of true crime in books, documentary films, and TV tabloids, while bemoaning the trend's failure to give fresh popularity to the venerable magazines. Included in the introduction are a portrait of Art Crockett, Gerald's boss and a one-time crime fiction writer turned long-time crime fact editor, names of some of the recent years' contributors (including the now bestselling Ann Rule), an account of the history of the line, beginning with the founding of *True Detective* in 1924 by Bernard Macfadden, and a summary of how crime fiction writers contributed. The 21 individual story notes are substantial and informative, combining biographical data and critical comments. Contributors range from the very famous (Jim Thompson, Harlan Ellison, Erle Stanley Gardner, Robert Bloch) to the relatively little-known (Charles Burgess, D.L. Champion, Robert Faherty) with screenwriter Nunnally Johnson the most surprising inclusion. Leslie Ford and Craig Rice are the only female writers represented.

Gerald notes that Dashiell Hammett's contribution, the Continental Op story "Who Killed Bob Teal?" (1924), is probably a work of fiction, and the extensive dialogue in many of the other stories suggests considerable fictionalization. Gerald is mistaken in claiming the Hammett story has never been reprinted: it appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* July 1947, and in the same year's *Dead Yellow Woman,* a Mercury paperback collection of Hammett stories edited by Queen. Also, the Lionel White novel that Stanley Kubrick filmed as *The Killing* (1956) was *Clean Break,* not *Clean Slate.*



Hutchings, Janet, ed.
Once Upon a Crime: Historical Mysteries from Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine
New York: St. Martin's, 1994. xiii, 225p.

The early *EQMM* anthologies, especially those from the forties, had long, enthusiastic introductions and extensive notes on the individual stories (for examples, see *WAM 2,* #495 and #498), but long before the death of original editor Frederic Dannay, the introductions had become brief and perfunctory and story notes of any kind a rarity. Subsequent editors have shown little inclination to change the pattern, but the volume in hand is an exception. A three-page introduction speculates intelligently on the reasons for the increasing popularity of historical mysteries, and the notes on the thirteen stories, though brief, are thoughtful and informative. Contributors range from Theodore Dreiser to magazine regulars like William Bankier, Edward D. Hoch, Lillian de la Torre, and James Powell to newer writers Steven Saylor, Terry Mullins, and Miriam Grace Monfredo.

Melling, John Kennedy
Alchemy of Murder: A Clinical Survey of Successful Women Crime Writers
Foreword by Gwendoline Butler. N.p., privately printed, 1993. 16p.

A self-published chapbook in the format of the author's *Murder Done to Death* (see *WAM 2* #83), this entertaining scattergun approach to its subject was limited to 250 copies. Butler's foreword makes a wealth of good points in its brief page-and-a-half space, but it closes with a claim such a short monograph would be

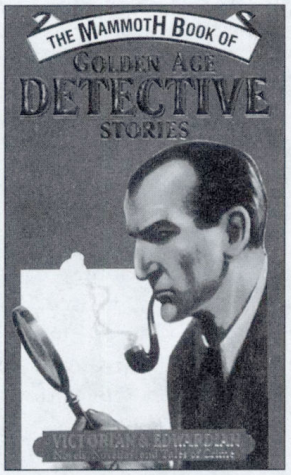
hard-pressed to bear out: that "Melling has catalogued and done justice to all the principal writers of detective fiction."

The first three-page chapter deals with detection and gothic fiction through World War I; the second with the career of Agatha Christie. A longer third chapter leads off with a discussion of "Silly Assery" and contains brief discussions of British writers Margery Allingham and Gwendoline Butler, then briefer still discussions of Daphne du Maurier, Elizabeth Ferrars, Ngaio Marsh, Gladys Mitchell, Dorothy L. Sayers, Jean Stubbs, Josephine Tey, and June Thomson. Americans accorded brief consideration are Marian Babson, Mary Higgins Clark, Lillian de la Torre, Mignon G. Eberhart, Patricia Highsmith, Dorothy B. Hughes, Margaret Millar, Dell Shannon, Phoebe Atwood Taylor, and Lee Thayer. The final chapter concerns the attraction of women writers to medical backgrounds and poison as a weapon, and looks at the work of Josephine Bell, Christianna Brand, Edward Candy, P.D. James, Helen McCloy, and others.

Melling's rambling style and packrat memory seem constrained by these thin chapbooks. Readers who long for a lengthier demonstration of his erudition will be pleased to know a full-length version of *Murder Done to Death* will be published by Scarecrow Press.

Moffatt, June M., and
Francis M. Nevins, Jr., compilers
Edward D. Hoch
Bibliography 1955-1993
Third edition. Introduction by Marvin Lachman. Downey, CA: Moffatt, 1993. 94p.

This third edition only two years after the 1991 original (see *WAM 2* #268) suggests an annual revision is planned, and certainly Hoch is a prolific enough writer to justify it. The title is a slight misnomer, since the coverage actually extends into early 1994. The change to an 8 1/2 x 11 loose-leaf format accounts for the smaller page count. The abbreviations guide no longer gives the number of stories to date in each series, but the information is still provided in the concluding bibliography by series character. Simon Ark is stuck on 48, but the number of Captain Leopold stories has increased to 92, Jeffrey Rand (for some reason left out of the rankings we provided in *WAM 2)* to 70, Nick Velvet to 68, and Dr. Sam Hawthorne to an Ark-tying 48. (Copies may be available from Moffatt House, Box 4456, Downey, CA 90241–1456—and who knows? By the time you write, a fourth edition might be available!)



Smith, Marie, ed.
The Mammoth Book of Golden Age Detective Stories
New York: Carroll & Graf, 1994. x, 517p.

Smith's Golden Age, as delineated in her three-page introduction, is not the between-wars period usually so designated but the Victorian and Edwardian period, advanced convincingly as the great period of the detective *short* story. She expresses an intention to choose relatively unfamiliar stories—and, aside from the very well-known Sherlock Holmes stories, "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "His Last Bow," that bookend the collection, has done so. Though the expected writers appear—Zangwill, Green, Morrison, Hornung, Leblanc, Futrelle, Reeve, Freeman, Chesterton, Post—most are represented by lesser-known tales. Smith also has looked for stories that, contrary to the period's rule, actually play fair with the reader. The story notes are brief but informative. The one major irritant is that, though Smith states the stories are arranged in roughly chronological order, the exact dates of first appearances are not always given—and, since the stories are all public domain, the usual permissions page is absent. ■

NOVEL VERDICTS

BY JON L. BREEN

Explanation of symbols:

A: All or more than three-quarters of the book devoted to courtroom action.

1/2: One-half or more devoted to courtroom action.

1/4: One-quarter or more devoted to courtroom action.

B: Relatively brief courtroom action; less than a quarter of the book.

C: A collection of short stories or novelettes.

As I write, and (I'm willing to bet) as you read, the O.J. Simpson case is very much in the news. I've heard more than one Los Angeles radio talk show host, in the course of exploring every conceivable angle of the case even when there is nothing new to report, take a hard whack at defense attorneys. How can they do what they do, giving all their skilled and learned efforts to save clients they surely know are guilty? What kind of people are they?

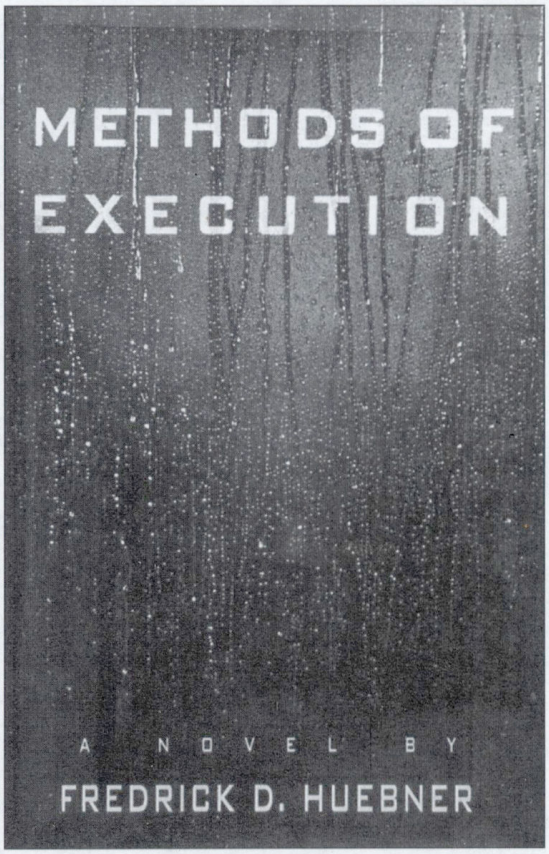
Since the broadcasters asking these questions claim to understand and support our adversary system of criminal justice, I believe they are way out of line in their implied blanket criticism of defense advocates. Deplore specific ethically or legally questionable actions of specific attorneys, certainly, but don't criticize a whole branch of a profession simply because they do a necessary job you believe is distasteful. It would be as if I as a meat-eater—who therefore must philosophically approve and support the activities of a slaughterhouse worker though I would never have the stomach to carry them out myself—were to take to the airways talking about what awful people slaughterhouse workers must be. Or, knowing that someone must collect the garbage, maligning garbage collectors as a group rather than expressing gratitude someone is willing to take on the job.

The excuse for this uncharacteristic soapbox-mounting is the first book considered below, which sympathetically depicts lawyers trying to save the life of a real scumbag because they believe he is not guilty of the crimes he was convicted of.

Huebner, Frederick D.
Methods of Execution
New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. **(B)**

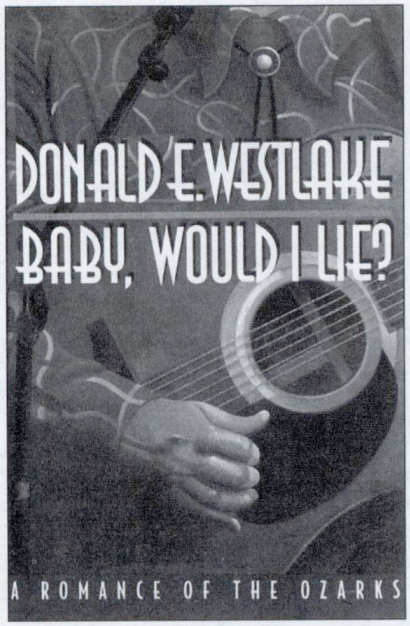
Seattle's Matthew Riordan has given up law in disgust and turned to carpentry, but former lover Liz Kleinfeldt lures him out of retirement to help her appeal the death sentence of convicted serial-killer/rapist Robert Polhaus—not on the basis of her anti-capital punishment sentiments but on the theory he didn't really commit the crimes. In the old days, the client the good guys are trying to save would be an innocent victim, but today things aren't that simple: Liz thinks Polhaus is not guilty because he has a history of being a "hitter" and this killer strangled his victims without gratuitous violence.

There is not much trial action here—a seven-page hearing on a motion to disqualify Riordan as Polhaus's lawyer, mostly argued off the record in the judge's chambers and an ending with Riordan about to begin his argument before the Washington State Supreme Court—but the novel is steeped in legal procedures and ethical dilemmas, besides being a fine example of the pure whodunit. After a surprisingly clunky opening, in which Matt and Liz tell each other things they already know and sometimes describe actions like characters in a radio play, the writing becomes highly effective.



Maron, Margaret
Shooting at Loons
New York: Mysterious, 1994. **(B)**

The quotient of courtroom action in the third Deborah Knott novel is even smaller, at about ten pages, than in its predecessor, *Southern Discomfort* (1993), but one sequence is particularly memorable: in a prosecution for the theft of a bicycle, an emotionally troubled young woman will not address the court directly but testifies through a hand puppet—and Judge Knott can't understand why no one else in the court-



room finds this odd. The other principal trial action involves a pair of brothers accused of "driving while intoxicated, impeding traffic, and unlawfully discharging a firearm to the public endangerment"—they shot at a retread from a truck tire, mistaking it for an alligator. Again, the entertaining court scenes are tangential to the main mystery plot.

. . . . . .

Westlake, Donald E.
Baby, Would I Lie?
New York: Mysterious, 1994. **(B)**

The central event of this satirical novel is the trial in Forsyth, Missouri, of country singer Ray Jones for the murder of prostitute Belle Hardwick. This event is visited by a swarm of hungry media representatives, some from *Weekly Galaxy,* the sleazy tabloid that was at the center of the author's 1988 novel *Trust Me On This*. The main characters of that novel, Sara Joslyn and Jack Ingersoll, have moved on to a somewhat more respectable periodical, *Trend: The Magazine for the Way We Live This Instant*. The trial is covered from jury selection to verdict, in some thirty pages of scattered snatches. Most notable legal events are the cross-examination of the defendant, the closing summations, and (outside of court) the use of a "shadow jury" by Jones's defense team. The finishing surprise is a dandy, and Westlake's wit and comedic sense are sharp as ever. ■

Murder on the Orient Express, PARAMOUNT, 1974

Yankees on the Orient Express

by

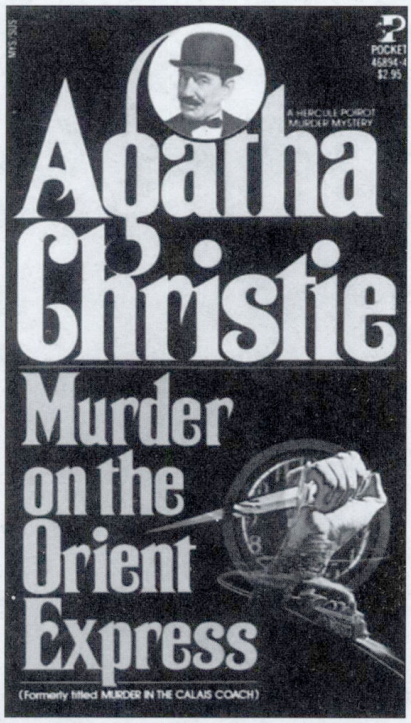
Kristi Vagstad

Both in speech and character, Americans were seen in caricature during the Golden Age of British detective fiction. And nothing illustrates this better than a ride on Agatha Christie's Orient Express...

British detective fiction, particularly during its Golden Age between the two world wars, is routinely criticized for its xenophobic tendencies and its stereotypical characters. The validity of this criticism cannot be argued, and Americans were not exempt from this blanket libel.

Americans tend to see themselves as geographically separate units, not only linguistically but politically and socially as well. We distinguish the North, the South, the West Coast, etc., and depending upon where one lives, all sorts of stereotypical images are conjured up when speaking of the rest of the country. But, judging from these stories, the British lacked this regional focus and tended to merge disparate characters of the movie screen, such as cowboys and gangsters, into a single conceptual reality. Writers of this period rarely identified which regional dialects were spoken by fictional characters, nor did they attempt to phonetically reproduce "American" speech, confining themselves for the most part to the expression of "Americanisms" which clearly distinguished "them" from "us."

Here we will attempt to analyze dialogue and narrative as it reflects British attitudes of the time toward America, with a focus on *Murder on the Orient Express,* written by Agatha Christie in 1934.[1] Christie is perhaps the most notorious of all mystery writers for her typecasting, but Americans do not fare as badly as other "foreigners" in her novels, probably because she herself was half



American. Judging from her books, one might conclude that Americans in general, and American women in particular, are loud and overbearing, lack any sense of dignity, and have a gnawing desire to Americanize everyone and everything—but are at heart rather kindly disposed.

There are a total of five native-born Americans in *Orient Express,* including one of her rare American villains. The story involves the murder of a man on a train by twelve people who decide to execute him when he escapes justice at the hands of the law. The twelve include people of several different nationalities and classes who are in one way or another connected with the family of a three-year-old child (Daisy Armstrong) who was kidnapped and murdered by the villain. Tragedy followed tragedy in the family as a result of that crime. The American characters are:

*Mr. Cassetti, (*alias *Samuel Edward Ratchett):* wealthy professional kidnapper.

Cyrus Bethman Hardman: operative for a New York detective firm, posing as a traveling typewriter ribbon salesman.

Helena (Goldenberg) Andrenyi: young aunt of Daisy, married to a Hungarian diplomat.

Hector Willard MacQueen: son of the district attorney who handled the Armstrong case, posing as an adventurer turned secretary to Ratchett.

*Mrs. Goldenberg (*stage name *Linda Arden,* alias *Mrs. Carolyn Martha Hubbard):* tragic actress, grandmother of Daisy, posing as an American tourist.

This book is particularly interesting in the context of linguistic stereotypes because three of these five characters assume roles outside their own class at the beginning of the book and revert to their "natural" roles when they are exposed in the end. Thus we have a British writer's notion of American stereotypes along with her idea of "natural" American dialogue.

That Christie is aware of the ethnocentricity of her time is evident in this story. Because of the unique reversal of roles in the plot structure—in which the killers are the heroes and the victim

is the villain—Christie cannot present the usual negative stereotypes of the foreigners involved. So she has a bit of fun parodying the attitudes of her countrymen as well as the Americans in the dialogue. For example, we are introduced to Mrs. Hubbard through the following monologue:

"—and so my daughter said, 'Why,' she said, 'you just can't apply American methods in this country. It's natural to the folks to be indolent,' she said. 'They just haven't got any hustle in them—' But all the same you'd be surprised to know what our college there is doing. They're got a fine staff of teachers. I guess there's nothing like education. We've got to apply our Western ideals and teach the East to recognise them. My daughter says—"

The contrast in attitudes among the passengers toward America is striking. All of the "foreign" characters express varying degrees of admiration for Americans:

"They are very good, the Americans. They give much money to found schools and hospitals. And they are very practical." (Swedish servant)

"Only in America do they teach you the proper way to sell." "...in a great civilization such as America—" (Italian servant)

"It must be a fine country." (German servant)

"An extraordinary country, America." (Hungarian diplomat/aristocrat)

"A curious country, America. I should like to go there. It is so progressive..." (Greek doctor)

But the two British characters who voice an opinion have different views. They don't like Americans at all. The proper English valet says, "Shall we put it that I don't care very much for Americans, sir?" Christie's recognition that the more astute Americans are aware of this prejudice is evident in MacQueen's statement referring to the valet: "He's a Britisher and as he calls it, he 'keeps to himself.' He has a low opinion of Americans, and no opinion at all of any other nationality."

The prejudice of the inevitable Indian colonel is better defined. He says, "I don't as a rule like Americans—haven't any use for 'em—but I like this young fellow (referring to MacQueen)...That's the worst of Americans—they're so sentimental and idealistic." The feeling seems to be mutual as MacQueen says of the colonel, "I don't as a rule cotton to Britishers—they're a stiff-necked lot—but I do like this one."

The contrast of the "reserved" Englishman and the "friendly" American is more than just a stereotype expressed by two characters pretending to be strangers, however. This characterization surfaces repeatedly in Christie's work and is clearly perceived as a cultural reality. For example, in *Evil Under the Sun*,[2] an American character (Mrs. Gardener) says: "If there is a fault about the British it is that they're inclined to be a bit stand-offish until they've known you a couple years."

It is interesting that the entrenched prejudice against Americans which is illustrated by Christie's work is also recognized in Georgette Heyer's books. But here the hostility is confined to the older generations and is totally absent in the young. Furthermore, the prejudice appears to be linguistic rather than social. Below, an elderly matriarch (Emily) expresses her distaste for an "American's" business proposal, and her nephew agrees to reject the offer. The nephew concludes:

"Not that Roberts is an American. He has lived some years in the States, but he is of English birth."

"That's neither here nor there," said Emily. "He dined here last week, and I didn't take to him. What's more, he talks like an American. That's enough for me."[3]

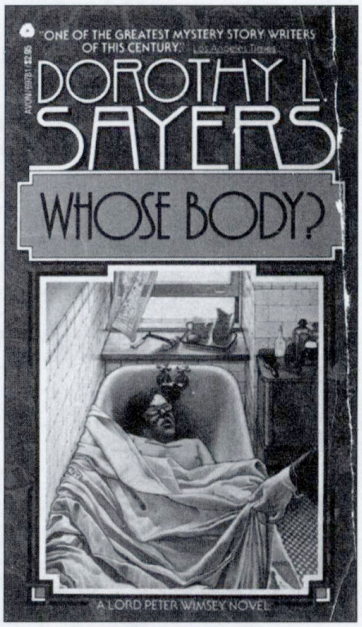
This disparity in the perception of the source of the prejudice may reflect the twelve-year gap in the ages of the two authors. Perhaps Christie identified more strongly with the "conservative" Victorians while Heyer identified with the "enlightenment" of the succeeding generation.

In any event, the notion of America as an uncivilized and corrupt society is quite prevalent in the period. In *Murder in the Orient Express*, this is implicit but perfectly evident in the explanation given by the detective (Poirot) of the kidnapping which occurred in the United States. In the following passage, referring to a French nursemaid, the brutality and the lack of ordinary human perception among the police is clear:

"The police were convinced that she had some knowledge of the crime. They refused to believe her hysterical denials. Finally, in a fit of despair the poor girl threw herself from the window and was killed. It was proved afterwards that she had been absolutely innocent of any complicity in the crime."

In the following passage, corruption in the judicial system is portrayed as commonplace:

"...[B]y means of the enormous wealth he had piled up, and owning to the secret hold he had over various persons, he was acquitted on some technical inaccuracy."



And the inevitability of mob violence is assumed as Poirot continues here:

"Notwithstanding that, he would have been lynched by the populous had he not been clever enough to give them the slip."

The lack of propriety among Americans is also standard treatment in Golden Age detective fiction. For example, in Dorothy Sayers' *Whose Body?*[4] a representative American tycoon is portrayed as absolutely ruthless when it comes to business matters. In this case the detective (Wimsey) thinks it "exceedingly possible" that an American might kidnap a business rival in order to put through a deal without competition. Certainly he is not in the least concerned with the human impli-

cations of this project. When Wimsey arrives, the American "postponed for a few minutes the elimination from the map of a modest but promising farm..." However, he was a "perfectly hospitable gentleman" (if somewhat gauche) at a social level. Here also we are confronted with the "sentimentality" to which Christie's Indian colonel alludes. With Sayers' American character, "like many of his nation, if he had a weak point, it was the British aristocracy." During the brief interview with Wimsey, he volunteered a large donation to restore a church roof because, "It's a very sad thing when these fine old antiques begin to wear out."

To most British fictional characters, an American is immediately recognizable, even before he speaks. In introducing MacQueen and Ratchett in *Orient Express*, Christie writes: "These two sat at a table not far away. The younger was a likable-looking young man of thirty, clearly an American." Even after the Golden Age, the British could still identify an American on sight. In 1951, in *The Daughter of Time*,[5] Josephine Tey writes: "He was a tall boy, hatless, with soft fair curls crowning a high forehead and a much too big

tweed coat hanging unfastened round him in negligent folds, American-wise. Indeed, it was obvious that he was in fact an American."

In *Orient Express,* with its conscious stereotypes, it is surprising that there is no linguistic distinction made between the "evil" and the "good" characters. Since it is known from the outset that Ratchett/Cassetti is a villain, it is unnecessary to standardize his speech to conceal his villainy, yet his dialogue contains no distinct Americanisms. This is particularly surprising since he is a professional criminal with a predictably Italian name. The only vocal clue to his character is the "queer, soft, dangerous quality" of his voice. It is more the content of his conversation and his possession of a handgun that marks him as an American. The emphasis on the "almighty dollar" is always a major feature of British-made Americans. Below, Ratchett is asking Poirot to protect him from an unnamed enemy:

> "I fancy you're the man for my money, Mr. Poirot. And remember—*big* money."

And after Poirot's first refusal:

> The other looked at him shrewdly. "Name your figure, then," he said.

Another refusal.

> "You've got pretty good nerve," said Ratchett. "Will twenty thousand dollars tempt you?"

And finally:

> "If you're holding out for more you won't get it. I know what a thing is worth to me."

Various descriptions of the Ratchett character suggest that Christie meant to emphasize her contention that evil is a recognizable entity in itself by downplaying his dialogue.

> From a distance he had the bland aspect of a philanthropist....Only the eyes belied this assumption. They were small, deep-set and crafty....There was a strange malevolence, an unnatural intensity in the glance.

She uses the other characters to stress this obvious malignance:

> "I could not rid myself of the impression that evil had passed me very close." (Poirot)
>
> "There's something *wrong* about that man..." (Hubbard)
>
> "He was, I am sure, a cruel and dangerous man. I must admit, though, that I have no reason to advance for my opinion." (MacQueen)

Hardman is also unexpected in character, although his dialogue is more predictable. As a traveling salesman, he is portrayed as a friendly, aggressive man who chews gum and dresses badly and speaks in a "loud, nasal voice." The following is representative of his dialogue in this disguise:

> "You've got to put it over *big*."
>
> "Too bad, ma'am."
>
> "That's all right by me. Guess that's the only way to tackle the job."
>
> "Okay. That's me!"
>
> "Put me wise."
>
> "Guess I'd better come clean."
>
> "You'd have said a mouthful if there was anything I did know....That's what makes me sore. I *ought* to."

In reverting to his private detective character:

> Mr. Hardman sighed, removed the chewing gum, and dived into a pocket. At the same time his whole personality seemed to undergo a change. He became less of a stage character and more of a real person. The resonant nasal tone of his voice became modified.

But all in all, Hardman's actual speech pattern doesn't change much:

"Mr. Ratchett put me wise to the situation. He showed me a couple letters he'd got."

"Somebody *did* get him. I certainly felt sore about it."

"Sure. He had it all tapped out."

"No, he was kinda reticent about that part of it."

"I don't get you."

"I was away out West when that case came in."

"I'm plumb certain..."

"—I felt a mite nervous, you understand—but it was only the American dame. She was raising hell about something or other."

"And nothing *doing*. Just hanging about and killing time."

"Just exactly what's up on this train? It seems bughouse to me."

"Can you beat it?"

Hardman is the only member of what might be labeled an American lower class, and the type of person with which Christie was probably not personally familiar. But Hardman is not the typical "private eye." It seems likely that the character was a conscious reaction to the hardboiled detective school gaining prominence in America at the time. As a genial, easy-going, sentimental man who could shed quick tears over the mere thought of a lost love, he is a far cry from Sam Spade and his ilk. Christie's major concession to the hardboiled dick rendered immortal by Dashiell Hammett is Hardman's alcoholic tendencies, discovered when his luggage is searched. "I can't say prohibition has ever worried me any," he comments. The origin of Hardman's "dialect" is not clear. It lacks the running jargon and the bad grammar typical of Hammett's dialogue. For example, the following is excerpted from a single conversation in *The Thin Man*[6] between the detective and some petty criminals:

"I'm sorry I lost my noodle and cracked down on you."

"Have you seen him since she got knocked off?" (detective)

"Was she Gypping him?" (detective)

"She was getting dough somewheres."

"[H]e took it on the lam."

"Balls!"

"I don't know as I'd want to be mixed up with that dame. She's mean medicine."

"[S]he touched me for a couple hundred to blow town."

"[T]hey got nailed trying to shake down some bird."

"Search me."

Nor does it seem to be derived from gangster movies, since it shares virtually no terminology with Heyer's version of "American film talk." In *They Found Him Dead,* an upper-class British youth idolizes Americans and adopts the language he learns from the movies. His dialogue includes the following:

"Sez you."

"Nix on that! I've got the drop on you, and don't you forget it!"

"[I]f you're looking for the gat I reckon you got another guess coming to you."

"Nothing doing."

"Oh, can it!"

"Baloney."

"Attababy!"

"Say, sister, you're a peach!"

"Say, wise guy."

"Get a load of this, now."

"Say buddy! I got a swell idea! Only I must have some dough!"

Hammett and the gangster films seem to have more in common with each other than Christie's Hardman has with either of them. Although he uses a few of their characteristic clichés (*dame, bughouse, get* [to kill], *put me wise*) Hardman's dialogue is marked more by what might be termed "general Americanisms" (*kinda, what's up, sore,* etc.) or even some idioms that seem distinctly out of character (*mite, plumb, hanging about, away out West*). In fact, his speech is quite standard except for the admixture of an odd assortment of colloquial expressions. It is more quantity than kind that distinguishes his speech from the higher-class American characters in the book. This characterization contrasts with Christie's usual portrayal of the British lower classes, in which she typically illustrates their ignorance through their dialogue:

I found constable Hurst in charge of operations.

"No sign so far, sir," he reported, "and yet it stands to reason that this is the only place for a cache."

His use of the word *cache* puzzled me for the moment, as he pronounced it *catch,* but his real meaning occurred to me almost at once.

"Whatimeantersay is, sir, where else would the young woman be going, starting into the woods by that path...And the answer is to be found in this here barrow—or else why was he forever messing about with it?"

"A *raison d'être* for prowling about," I suggested, but this bit of French was too much for the constable.

He revenged himself for not understanding it by saying coldly, "That's the h'amateur's point of view."[7]

Christie's unfamiliarity with details of American dialects, coupled with a desire to avoid the hardboiled stereotype, probably accounts for Hardman's odd linguistic features.

In considering British attitudes toward Americans, Helena Andrenyi is most significant in that she is married to a Turk, apparently with Christie's full blessing. This is probably due to the fact that Helena *is* an American, and not British. In Christie's work, and in Golden Age detective fiction in

PARAMOUNT, 1974

Albert Finney played Hercule Poirot in Sidney Lumet's 1974 version of *Murder on the Orient Express*. The all-star cast also included Anthony Perkins, Vanessa Redgrave, Sean Connery, Ingrid Bergman, Michael York, Jacqueline Bisset, Lauren Bacall and Richard Widmark.

general, it was considered very "unsuitable" for an English girl to marry anyone other than a British subject. But unchecked mingling of nationalities is depicted as the norm in the United States, as indicated by Poirot's observations concerning the passengers of the Orient Express:

"The company was interesting because it was so varied—representing as it did all classes and nationalities..."

"I tried to imagine whether such an assembly was ever likely to be collected under any other conditions. And the answer I made to myself was—only in America. In America there might be a household composed of such varied nationalities—an Italian chauffeur, an English governess, a Swedish nurse, a German lady's maid, and so on..."

Linguistically, Helena is not well represented because she pretends she can't speak English until Poirot exposes her near the end. Thus her early dialogue consists of translations from French. When she breaks abruptly from French into English, however, we can assume that this initial outburst represents the epitome of American upper-class speech:

"I was so scared—absolutely dead scared, you understand. It had been so awful—that time—and to have it all raked up again. And to be suspected and perhaps thrown into prison. I was just scared stiff, M. Poirot. Can't you understand at all?"

The use of "scared" for frightened, and the cliché "scared stiff," meaning terrified, are the only American idioms used here, suggesting that "scared" is considered so diagnostic of American speech that nothing else is necessary to illustrate Helena's agitation and her Americanness. The fact that she is American, despite her superior social status, probably explains why she would revert to such "common" language to begin with. "Scared" is also part of Mrs. Hubbard's vocabulary—"I'm dead scared of that man"—and their joint use of a slang form not used in

England may illustrate a belief that Americans are essentially crude by nature, no matter what their class.

Hector MacQueen is the most confusing of the *Orient Express* characters in a linguistic sense, because he seems to mix British and American clichés freely in his dialogue, although he is making no pretense of being English, and would not be expected to emulate their speech when he professes to dislike them. For example:

> "I say, sir," said the young man suddenly. "If you'd rather have the lower berth—easier and all that—well, that's all right by me."

Here, "I say" and "all that" have a distinctly British tone to them, while "that's all right by me" sounds American. MacQueen does resemble a stock British character in much of Christie's fiction, however, and it may be that she unconsciously inserted elements of British dialogue into MacQueen's speech from time to time. But MacQueen also frequently speaks in a stilted literary manner which is usually reserved for English butlers. Thus he says:

> "He was quite pleasant in his manner."
> "There had been a long vexatious correspondence on the subject."
> "If I'm not being unduly curious..."

While at other times he says such things as:

> "What's up on this train?"
> "...[S]eems I'm kind of incriminating myself."
> "Sure. Get right on with it..."

Since the same degree of formality among characters is maintained throughout the book, this duality cannot represent an effort to differentiate formal and informal American speech patterns. None of the others speak in such an unnatural manner. Perhaps Christie meant to suggest that an American would expect a personal secretary to speak in a highly formalized way but would be incapable of maintaining the façade consistently.

The part of Mrs. Hubbard, played by what turned out to be a famous American actress, is meant, like Hardman's traveling salesman disguise, to be a cliché. But Poirot describes the role as "the perfectly natural, slightly ridiculous American fond mother," and Christie uses a close approximation of the character in other "straight" stories, suggesting that Mrs. Hubbard *is* the American tourist in the minds of the British public of that period:

> "I'd gotten into bed and gone to sleep, and suddenly I woke up—everything was dark—and I knew there was a man in my compartment. I was just so scared I couldn't scream, if you know what I mean. I just lay there and thought, 'Mercy, I'm going to be killed!' I just can't describe to you how I felt. These nasty trains, I thought, and all the outrages I'd read of. And I thought, 'Well, anyway, he won't get my jewelry'—because, you see, I'd put that in a stocking and hidden it under my pillow—which isn't too comfortable, by the way; kind of bumpy, if you know what I mean. But that's neither here nor there. Where was I?"

The actress herself is viewed as the exception to the "normal" garrulous American female. The "real" Linda Arden, who spoke in a "soft, rich, dreamy voice," was an ideal woman—pure and self-sacrificing:

> "If it must all come out, can't you lay the blame upon me only? I would have stabbed that man twelve times willingly. It wasn't only that he was responsible for my daughter's death...It was more than that. There had been more children kidnapped before Daisy, and there might be others in the future. Society had condemned him—we were only carrying out the sentence. But it's unnecessary to bring all these others into it. All these good faithful souls..."

This woman is quite different from the self-centered, promiscuous, neurotic actress typical of Christie's work. Below, two elderly women discuss an actress who is moving into their village[8]:

> "Being unspoiled and natural. You learn how to do it and then you have to go on being it all the time. Just think of the hell of it—never to be able to chuck something and say, 'Oh, for the Lord's sake stop bothering me.' I dare say that in sheer self-defence you have to have drunken parties, or orgies."
>
> "She's had five husbands, hasn't she?" Miss Marple asked.
>
> "At least. An early one that didn't count, and then a foreign prince or count, and then another film star...And then Isidore Wright, the playwright. That was rather serious and quiet, and she had a baby—apparently she'd always longed to have a child—she's even half-adopted a few strays—anyway this was the real thing. Very much built up. Motherhood with a capital M. And then, I believe, it was an imbecile, or queer or something—and it was after that that she had this breakdown and started to take drugs and all that, and threw up her parts."

If anything, the American female in Christie's "straight" stories tend to

be even more ridiculous than Mrs. Hubbard, and serve more for comic relief than any serious function. In *Evil Under the Sun,* Mrs. Gardner is a very close facsimile of Mrs. Hubbard and speaks in the same nonstop, inane fashion:

> "These girls that lie out like that in the sun will grow hair on their legs and arms. I've said to Irene—that's my daughter, Irene, I said to her, if you lie out like that in the sun, you'll have hair all over you, hair on your arms and hair on your legs and hair on your bosom, and what will you look like then? I said to her. Didn't I, Odell?"

American men, on the other hand, are nearly always taken more seriously. Even Hardman has a certain crude dignity to him, and MacQueen, as mentioned earlier, compares favorably with one of Christie's more sympathetic British types. In *Evil Under the Sun*, Mr. Gardner is portrayed as unusually astute and infinitely patient, but strangely blind to the inadequacies of his wife. In contrast to her prattle, his conversation is very sparse and consists primarily of gentle agreement with his wife's babbling when called upon to do so ("Yes, darling"). But when questioned directly concerning the murder victim in the story, he is the only person to correctly assess her character:

> He glanced cautiously round and lowered his voice. "Well, M. Poirot, I've heard a few things that have been kind of going around, if you get me, especially among the women." Poirot nodded. "But if you ask me I'll tell you my candid opinion and that is that that woman was pretty much of a darned fool!"

His steadfast devotion to his wife leads an Englishwoman to exclaim (in their absence): "American husbands are wonderful!"

This affection for American men is probably due to the fact that Christie's father was American and she had some very fond memories of him[9]; but it may also be that her own limited contact with Americans did give her the impression that American women are silly and American men are gentle but shrewd. Christie has admitted that she often based her characters on the chance observation of strangers; and it is possible to recognize the same "types" found in her novels in people described in her autobiography.

The American language in *Murder on the Orient Express* is difficult to analyze, in part because it was written fifty years ago, and also because the particular dialect is not identified. The context of the story implies that the American characters lived in the vicinity of New York, since the detective firm which investigated the kidnapping was based there, and because one would expect a tragic actress of the period to live in New York. But there are no diagnostic New York—or even Eastern—forms in the dialogue.

Words such as *okay, kind of* or *kinda, darned, mad* (angry), *get* (understand), and *sure* (certainly), are common American designators in all British detective fiction, and are certainly (*sure*) legitimate, but they lack a regional focus. In fact, those words that do have some sort of regional association in Christie—*mercy* (exclamation), *cotton to, mite* (a little), *frightful, plumb* (completely)—are more often identified with the South, or possibly the frontier West, than with New York. These idioms, along with the gangsterisms and occasional phrases that sound rather un-American, indicate that Christie and many of her contemporaries did not have a clear grasp of the complexity of American English and were thus over-inclined to generalize. (Of course, the reverse is true as well: Americans attempting to reproduce unfamiliar British dialects confuse them and often overuse clichés.) An American speech is often described as nasal or drawling and is frequently depicted as sparsely punctuated with a great number of conjunctives.

It seems clear that both the speech and the character of Americans were seen in caricature during the Golden Age of British detective fiction. This was due in part to the conventions of the genre but was also a product of the times. Christie not only wrote in stereotypes, but she saw the people she knew as types as well. She believed in good and evil and thought people were born to be one or the other.[9] Thus, although she could recognize and mock the attitudes of people toward each other in *Murder on the Orient Express* and other books, she seemed to think that, after all, this was a legitimate point of view. Her phenomenal popularity suggests that many of us secretly agree with her.

---

[1] Original title: *Murder in the Calais Coach* (Dodd, Mead, 1934).

[2] Pocket Book edition, 1969. Original publisher: Dodd, Mead, 1940.

[3] Georgette Heyer, *They Found Him Dead* Original publisher: Doubleday, 1938.

[4] Dorothy L. Sayers, *Whose Body?* Original publisher: Harper and Row, 1923.

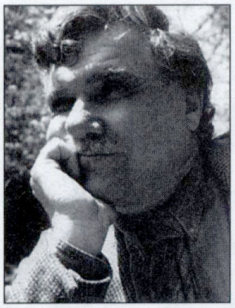
[5] Josephine Tey, *The Daughter of Time* (William Heinemann), 1951.

[6] Dashiell Hammett, *The Thin Man* (Grosset and Dunlap), 1933.

[7] *The Murder at the Vicarage.* Original publisher: Dodd, Mead, 1930.

[8] *The Mirror Crack'd.* Original title: *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* (Dodd, Mead, 1963).

[9] Agatha Christie, *An Autobiography* (Collins, 1977). ■



Dial N for Nonsense

BY

LOUIS PHILLIPS

The Jail in Dodge City in 1872

"NOBODY IN DODGE CITY SEEMS TO HAVE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO HAVE A TOWN MARSHAL, OR SOME SORT OF POLICE OFFICER, ALTHOUGH SEVERAL SALOONKEEPERS GOT TOGETHER TO PROVIDE WHAT THEY CALLED A LOCKUP. THIS DODGE CITY JAIL WAS NOTHING more or less than a hole dug about fifteen feet deep in the ground. Into it were lowered troublesome drunks, and there they stayed until they had sobered."
—from Stewart H. Holbrook, *Wyatt Earp: U.S. Marshal*
(Random House, 1956).

TAD Jokebook
Q: What's the least dangerous kind of robbery a burglar can undertake?
A: A safe robbery, of course.

Master to Master?
On the banks of the Irriwaddy,
Hercule Poirot discovered the body
Of a beggar who had been seeking alms.
Sighed Poirot: This is a case for Sherlock Holmes.

From *Harp*
The following information was recorded by John Gregory Dunne, under the heading "Notes Written in a Lousy Italian Restaurant" in *Harp* (Simon & Schuster, 1989):
Headline from the *International Herald Tribune:*

Virginia Air Conditions Death Chamber
Richmond, Va. (UPI)—The Corrections Department is airconditioning the State Penitentiary's death chamber to make it "more comfortable for everybody," it was reported today.

Dunne's comment: No Sweat.

The Poor and Justice
"Among the poor, the police are never regarded as the upholders of the common law, but as agents of the rich to oppress those without property."
—Liam O'Flaherty in his short story "The Puritan"

Master to Master Redux
In the September 10, 1994 issue of *Midwest Chesterton News,* edited by John Peterson, there is a letter to the editor from Matt Anger of Arlington, Virginia. In his letter, Mr. Anger points out that in the 1944 Sherlock Holmes film, *The Scarlet Claw,* a slightly inebriated Dr. Watson says, "I well recall a short story by that brilliant author, G.K. Chesterton, in which the murder is committed by a postman. I refer, of course, to 'The Invisible Man.' A brilliant bit of deduction on the part of Father Brown." ■

BASIL RATHBONE (LEFT) AND NIGEL BRUCE IN THE SCARLET CLAW (1944)

SOUNDS OF SUSPENSE

BY DICK LOCHTE AND TOM NOLAN

Anthony Boucher and Denis Green
The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Volume 25
original radio broadcasts
(Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 1 hr.)
These two radio shows from the 1940s, "The Night Before Christmas," starring Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Watson, and "The Darlington Substitution," with Bruce and Tom Conway as the superior sleuth, are two gems—amusing and clever. In "Christmas," loosely adapted from "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," Watson finds himself the possessor of an assortment of stolen goods. "Substitution" finds Holmes hired to discover the true mother of a young man who may be the heir to a fortune.

Michael Covino
The Negative
performed by Eliott Gould, Michael Nouri and Shelia Caan
(Soundlines Entertainment, 3 hrs.)
This droll, darkly funny mystery begins with the theft of the negative of genius director Doug Lowell's multi-million dollar epic by the over-educated son of a Mafia boss and a loopy college film prof. It includes the kidnapping of two bickering television movie critics and a considerably more lethal plot hatched by the filmmaker. The alternating narrators work well and sound effects are used to make the presentation more like a drama than a reading.

Sue Grafton
A Is for Alibi
read by Mary Peiffer
(Books on Tape, 8 hrs., unabridged. Toll-free rental or purchase: 1–800–626–3333.)
A woman convicted of poisoning her husband—a Southern California divorce attorney for whom private detective Kinsey Millhone once worked—hires Millhone to find the real culprit in this 1982 debut novel in Grafton's successful "alphabetical mysteries" series. Reader Peiffer lacks some of the pizzazz of Judy Kaye, the Tony-winning actress who performs abridgments of Grafton's books for Random Audio; but her straight-ahead delivery has its own exuberant charm. The main lure is the chance to hear Grafton's prose in its unexpurgated entirety, including some of the quirkiest and wittiest descriptions in the business. Books on Tape gives you everything—even the jacket copy and blurbs. Other Millhone entries also available from B.O.T., as of this writing: *"B," "C," "D," "I"* and *"J."*

MICHAEL NOURI (LEFT) IS ONE OF THE READERS FOR *THE NEGATIVE* BY MICHAEL COVINO. HARRY HAMLIN READS STEVE MARTINI'S LEGAL THRILLER *UNDUE INFLUENCE*.

James W. Hall
Hard Aground
read by J. Michael Lee
(G.K. Hall & Co., approx. 12 hrs., unabridged. Toll-free order: 1–800–223–6121.)
Hall's darkly amusing 1993 novel is set in Miami, and the city's tangled history plays a part in the bizarre and deadly caper in which the book's several characters are caught. Among these are the Tyler brothers: Hap, the surfboard-carver given to taking dubious directions from what he believes is the voice of his late grandfather; and archaeologist Daniel, whose knowledge of a legendary sunken treasure leads to his murder. With Daniel gone, Hap tries to work his way through a dangerous maze filled with thugs and weirdos all intent on getting the gold. He's aided by his brother's ex-girlfriend, a newspaper reporter whose mother is one of the principal villains; and by a quirky homicide detective given to metaphysical musings. Gothic comedy and nasty fun are the Hall-marks of this raunchy, sexually explicit and graphically violent novel in which the bad guys have some of the best lines. J. Michael Lee does an excellent job of bringing Hall's diverse cast to life.

Steve Martini
Undue Influence
read by Harry Hamlin
(Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 3 hrs., unabridged.)
Martini is among the better attorneys-turned-authors to come in the wake of Scott Turow and John Grisham. This 1994 novel marked the third appearance of his fictional advocate Paul Madriani,

who practices law in an unnamed West Coast city. In it Madriani honors a deathbed promise to his deceased wife by looking out for her little sister, Laurel Vega, first by representing Laurel in a nasty child-custody battle, then by defending her against a murder charge. Martini's characters (including an obnoxious legislator, Madriani's humorously pessimistic law partner and a hardnosed cop with a long-standing grievance against Madriani) are well-drawn. His dialogue and descriptions are crisp and entertaining. Best of all are his courtroom scenes, where the lawyer counters a seeming preponderance of damning evidence with a potentially winning defense. Less engaging are two action sequences, the second of which leads to a final and perhaps not entirely satisfying twist. Hamlin (who was part of the series "L.A. Law" in its prime years) gives the adaptation a serious—maybe a bit too serious—rendition.

Ruth Rendell
The Fall of the Coin
read by Simon Jones
(Durkin Hayes Audio, 77 mins.)

Cruel ironies twist the plots of these three (apparently unabridged) Rendell stories into generally grotesque endings. The mutual fate of a hectoring wife and an alcoholic husband hinges on "The Fall of the Coin" into a faulty gas heater. "You Can't Be Too Careful" is the ultimately useless motto of a young career woman neurotically obsessed with personal safety. "Almost Human" almost describes an aging hit man who hates people but loves dogs. Simon Jones brings his own considerable gift for irony to his rousing readings of these brilliantly mordant tales.

Anthology, edited by Marie Smith
Ms. Murder
read by Juliet Mills
(The Publishing Mills; approx. 5 hrs., unabridged.)

Female detectives, from the adept to the inept, are the unifying element in this imaginative 1989 anthology. The eight unabridged stories on this 1994 tape range from traditional puzzles solved by familiar heroines like Agatha Christie's Miss Marple ("Tape-Measure Murder") to revisionist crime stories which mock the very notion of village sleuths such as Miss Marple (Ruth Rendell's "Paintbox Place"). Mignon G. Eberhart's Susan Dare ("Easter Devil") is another relatively familiar character; but few will know Susan Tabbitt, the would-be gumshoe in an out-of-the-way Dorothy Sayers short ("Scrawns"). Golden Age tradition rules as Gladys Mitchell's Beatrice Lestrange Bradley handily solves a locked-lighthouse mystery ("A Light on Murder"). Similarly, Selena Mead cracks a cryptic code and foils a band of terrorists in Patricia McGerr's "The Writing on the Wall." A more psychological approach is used by Miss Phipps in Phylis Bentley's "Miss Phipps and the Invisible Murderer." Old and new methods combine in "The Case of the Parr Children," where Antonia Fraser's investigative TV reporter Jemina Shore flushes out a suspect with a device drastic enough to give King Solomon pause. British actress Juliet Mills performs all of the above with gusto. ■

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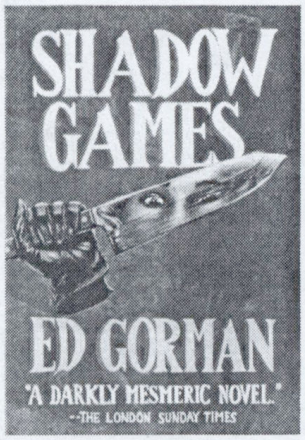

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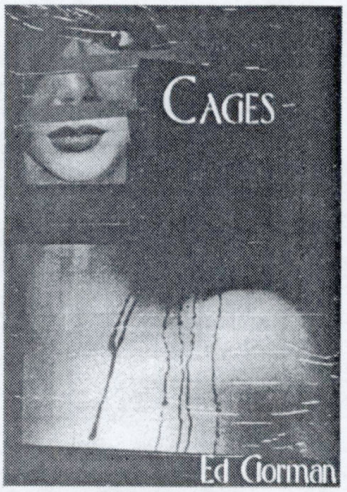

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–San Francisco Examiner

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Armchair Reviews

General

Banjo Boy
by Vince Kohler. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. $19.95

Imagine placing a wager that you can find a murderer before the police and if you succeed, thus win the sexual favors of an attractive deputy district attorney. That's the task for Eldon Larkin, the not-so-intrepid reporter for Oregon's South Coast *Sun*. Someone, possibly with mob connections, has slain a 452–pound low-life at point-blank range with a shotgun. Larkin may thrill to the chase, but he is not your stereotypical tough-guy reporter. He has ongoing problems with women and cars, and prefers ice cream and fly-fishing to booze and boxing.

Larkin's investigation into the Archie Loris murder takes him into Port Jerome's seamy underside, where he rubs elbows with pornographers, prostitutes and gamblers. As he draws closer to the murderer, the prostitute is badly beaten, a kindly fellow fisherman trying to help is killed, and the lives of Melissa Lafky (the deputy D.A.), Gordon Clete (a gay piano player) and Larkin himself are on the line.

Think you've seen it all as far as mysteries are concerned? Both Loris' murder and the identity of the killer hinge on topiary.

A cover blurb refers to this as "the wackiest Eldon Larkin yet," but I beg to differ. Although the novel utilizes a great deal of wit and satire, I find it more restrained and palatable than Vince Kohler's first two Larkin books. Kohler writes an entertaining story that reads well. Still, it relies rather heavily on chance encounters of characters who turn out to be important, including the killer. That said, if Kohler would do something about Larkin's editor's incessantly annoying expression "Dee-de-dee," he will have won me over as an unqualified fan. In any case, if you're looking for a different kind of story, in an unusual setting and written with a unique sense of humor, give Vince Kohler a try.

—Douglas G. Simpson

The Cheetah Chase
by Karin McQuillan. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994. $20.00

The Cheetah Chase is the third Jazz Jasper mystery. I've read the second, *Elephants' Graveyard,* but not the first. I'm hoarding *Deadly Safari,* as a special treat for whenever I'm in the mood for a superbly written, socially conscious African adventure mystery.

As with the previous novels, the real subject of *The Cheetah Chase* is the imminent destruction of Africa's wildlife. This does not mean that the book is not an exciting mystery—it is. From the opening scene, in which Jazz witnesses the agonizing death of her friend Nick Hunter, to her final confrontation with his killer, there's enough action and suspense to satisfy the genre's most demanding aficionados.

But the major focus—the mystery that Jazz cannot solve in the end—is whether the cheetah as a species will survive into the twenty-first century.

All of Africa's wildlife is endangered, the cheetah doubly so. Scientists theorize that sometime in the past—about ten thousand years ago—every cheetah on earth was killed (how is not known) except for one pregnant female. This means that all cheetahs are genetically the same, like identical twins. A threat to one (such as a devastating disease) is a threat to all. Moreover, this genetic sameness results in an extremely low reproductive rate.

Bad enough, without poaching by impoverished (and often simply greedy) Africans. Add bloodthirsty Arab billionaires on hunting safaris, and no wonder the great cats' plight is so perilous.

All of this provides background for *The Cheetah Chase.* Read it on any level you choose: as murder mystery, African adventure, or environmental tract. The characters are real, the action compelling, and the theme provocative.

—Edward Lodi

Dead to Rights
by Anna Maxes. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. $20.95

This first novel of Maxes' starts with action on page one and never stops. A small college never-win women's softball team has just beaten the four-time national champion but no one's elated because one of the losing players has unexpectedly collapsed and died.

Regina Lichtmann, the College and University Athletic Association's chief investigator, is at the game and as a routine matter interviews Pierce Nolan, the no-nonsense (translates to "dragon lady"), tough winning coach. During the exchange Reggie is jarred by Ms. Nolan's observation that Lichtmann is a Jewish name but intrigued by Nolan's single-minded ambition. In addition, Reggie is puzzled by the inconclusive medical findings in the player's death.

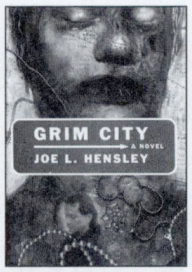
As Reggie looks at Nolan's team roster, she notes that it has an unusual number of first year students who are older than the usual and whose academic records are likely to guarantee non-graduation from the college. Thus far the plot looks to be about the straightforward corrupt business of college athletics. But the story takes on a twist and brings in "The American Dream Society," a think tank on the surface but with strong undertones of the Klan and the John Birch Society. As it develops, it seems the society and its financial backer are responsible for getting underprivileged minority kids, who are in trouble, a chance to make good. This definitely seems strange. Reggie's curiosity and sleuthing uncovers much of what's under the proverbial rock and justice prevails.

There are at least two separate themes about our society's immorality at work here but Maxes weaves them skillfully in an action-filled plot and with an unexpected twist. The reader senses neither a pulpit nor a soap-box because of the clever writing and good story line. Yes, this is a good one and of course, we'd like to hear more from Anna Maxes.

—*Maria Brolley*

Grim City

by Joe L. Hensley. New York: St. Martin's, 1994. $19.95



Hensley retired from the Indiana judiciary a few years ago but his second career as a mystery writer is still flourishing. The protagonist of his latest novel is Jim Carlos Singer, who quits the CIA-like agency he works for after being tortured and sexually mutilated by terrorists while on a spy mission in Mexico. He completes law school, passes the Kentucky bar and settles in Grimsley City (Grim City for short), which except for being on the other side of the Ohio River is virtually the same town as Bington, Indiana, where most of Hensley's books are set. While struggling to build up a practice, Singer has to cope with the hit-and-run murder of his father in a riverside parking lot and with a string of harassing letters and phone calls which may or may not be from his old compadres in the spook business.

Then for no apparent reason he's asked to work part-time as probation officer for local judge Simon Daggert and to sit in on a murder trial vaguely reminiscent of Hitchcock's 1947 *The Paradine Case*. Beautiful Shirley Kentner is charged with enticing her youthful Mexican lover to torture to death her wealthy and much older husband, and it's soon clear that Daggert is obsessed by the defendant before him—and that he wants Singer to play P.I. behind the scenes and get her off.

A trial judge himself for many years, Hensley keeps his courtroom scenes low-key and avoids the melodrama typical of current legal thrillers. (In a brief Afterword he explains that the novel's rules of law come in more or less equal parts from Kentucky, his native Indiana and his own imagination.) Non-courtroom action is minimal even where the book seems to cry out for more, as during the climactic face-off between Singer and the *Cliffhanger*-esque secret mastermind of the terrorist group that maimed him. The plot turns out to hinge on an eyeball-popping coincidence and some of the complications are resolved a bit cavalierly. For my money Hensley's best novel remains *Robak's Cross* (1985) but *Grim City* is his longest and most ambitious, rich in complex characterizations and in the knowing depiction of political and sexual intrigues in the fishbowl of a small midwest community, and with more than enough legal shenanigans to satisfy devotees of the courtroom whodunit.

—*Francis M. Nevins*

Dead Dog Blues

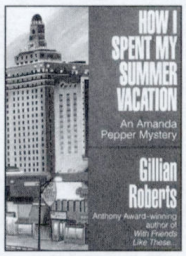
by Neal Barrett, Jr. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. $20.95

Jack Track is town constable of Pharoah, a north Texas town where cars and football are typical topics of conversation. Track's normal duties consist of pointing drunks in the direction of their homes and routing squirrels from roof gutters. But things change when a dead electric dog turns up, and it's owner, Max, Pharoah's richest citizen, is found immortalized on the gridiron with a pole shoved up his most intelligent body part.

Track has got his own problems, what with his romance of yogurt tycoon Cecily, and the advances of Max's widow, Millie Jean, not to mention Millie Jean's daughter, Smoothy, who at twelve has been around the block more times than the Good Humor man. There's also lifelong enemy and racist deputy Deke to contend with, and a dogged FBI agent named Hess, along with a whole gallery of deceptively homespun characters whose eccentricities could be listed in the index of the Barry Gifford cookbook. As the murders continue to pile up, the reader takes pleasure in the trip through this very strange town.

Neal Barrett, Jr.'s *Dead Dog Blues* reads like an anti-cozy, as death comes calling on these not-too solid citizens. The mystery element has been carefully handled, and the twists keep coming to the end, but the real treasure is in the characterizations, and in Barrett's acidic style. He shifts sub-genres deftly, even throwing in some Grand Guignol for the climactic meeting between killer and protagonist. As for the protagonist, Track is a man with a past, definitely not who he appears to be. Like his friend Earl Murphy, a wealthy man who lives by the riverbank in his Aston Martin Lagonda, there's more dimension to him than meets the eye. Barrett would be doing us a favor if he were to take us back to Pharoah for another ride.

—*George Pelecanos*



How I Spent My Summer Vacation

by Gillian Roberts. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994. $20.00

With the school year now over at Philly Prep, Amanda Pepper is really in need of R and R, so when her photographer friend Sasha gets an all-expenses paid assignment in Atlantic City, Mandy accepts her offer to share the free room at the casino hotel. It looks like a cheap way to get a few days at the beach. But on the first night, Amanda returns to their room to find cops, a battered corpse, and Sasha in jail.

It's up to Amanda to exonerate her pal, and luckily she gets the help of her detective boyfriend, Mackenzie. Solve it they do, but not before there is another murder, Mackenzie is shot, and Mandy is knifed.

This is number five in a successful series starring the Philly teacher, and their strength lies in the author's writing style and characterizations. The plots would only garner a grade of C, but

PAST CRIMES

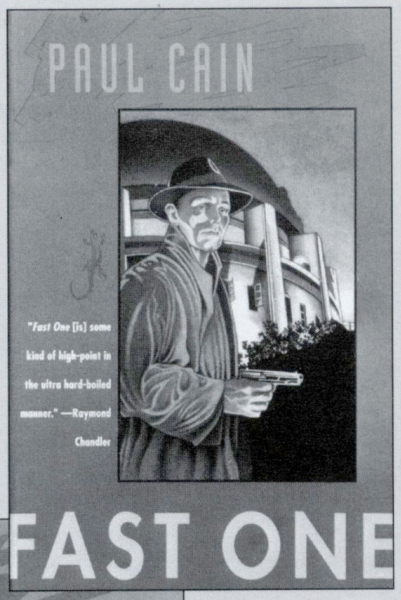
by

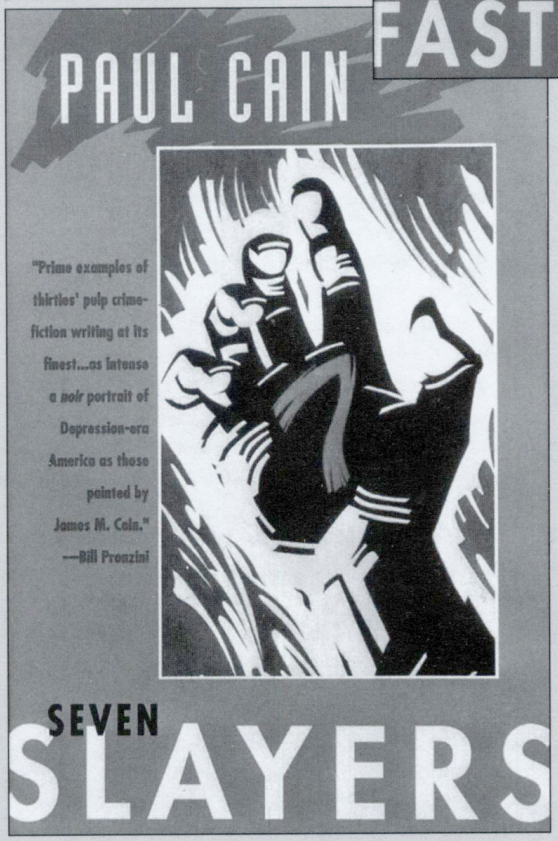
Charles L.P. Silet

Fast One
by Paul Cain. New York:
Vintage Crime/Black Lizard, 1994. $9.00.

Seven Slayers
by Paul Cain. New York:
Vintage Crime/Black Lizard, 1994. $9.00.

Paul Cain just may have been the hardest-boiled pulp writer of them all. Unfortunately, his career was extremely short, and his output of crime fiction consisted almost entirely of the eighteen stories that between 1931 and 1936 he wrote for *Black Mask,* stories he later re-fashioned and published as *Fast One* and *Seven Slayers*. Both books attest to Cain's economy of style and darkness of vision. In the introduction to an anthology of *Black Mask* fiction, *The Hard-Boiled Omnibus* (1946), Joseph T. "Cap" Shaw, the magazine's legendary editor, paid tribute to Cain by remarking on the authenticity of his characterization and action and by commenting on his tough, brittle prose. Shaw wrote that where Dashiell Hammett had paused at the threshold of "grim Hardness," Paul Cain had gone all the way.





Paul Cain was one of several pseudonyms adopted by George Carrol Sims, who was born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1902. In 1918, he moved to Los Angeles with his mother after his parents' separation, and by the 1920s, using the name George Ruric, he was working in the film industry as a production assistant for which he received credit on Joseph von Sternberg's first film, *Salvation Hunters* (1925). In the 1930s, as Peter Ruric, he became a screenwriter; a job he worked at on and off for the next decade. Throughout the '40s and '50s, Sims lived abroad and in New York, occasionally returning to Hollywood to do some minor TV script work. He died of cancer, penniless and unknown, in Hollywood in 1965.

Although he did write a few other short stories, Paul Cain's reputation as a writer of crime fiction rests primarily with his work for *Black Mask* and his two books. In 1932, he published *Fast One,* a novel compiled from his stories featuring the gambler, Gerry Kells. Even at the time of its publication, the novel was hailed for its bitterness and gloom. *The Saturday Review of Literature* described it as the "hardest-boiled yarn of a decade." Another critic was prompted to remark that Cain had pared down the prose in his fiction so much that there was no where else to go.

The novel traces the brief and violent career of Kells, a gunman and gambler from New York, as he tries unsuccessfully to muscle in on the west coast mob scene. The narrative is peopled by corrupt politicians, crime bosses, blackmailing women, an assortment of other underworld types, hit men, pimps, and petty crooks. Kells' trail is strewn with corpses, as one by one those around him die in a variety of gruesome ways. Although he tries desperately to escape from his pursuers, there is only one exit from the world of *Fast One.*

Seven Slayers is a collection of short stories which was first published as a digest-sized paperback in 1946. The book also was cobbled together from Cain's *Black Mask* short fiction and features more than a half dozen killers of varying psychoses: fallen cops, dope dealers, private eyes, shyster lawyers, con men, and a bevy of females, "of some virtue or no virtue at all." Most of the characters lead dead-end lives which are riddled by corruption and murder and betrayal, and whether guilty or not, they become entrapped in a nightmare world—often of their own making. These stories are brief prohibition-era morality tales in which conventional goodness and virtue seem out of place or at least ineffectual. Taken together they provide us not only with a grim portrait of a dark period in modern American life but also with some extraordinarily fine *noir* writing.

During the 1930s few writers crafted prose as spare as Paul Cain, and none wrote about a universe as dark. He deserves to be rediscovered and to assume his rightful place among the finest crime writers of his generation.■

hardly a sentence goes by without some clever little semantic twist.

For instance, when the crowd mistakenly thinks Mandy has been wielding the knife, an onlooker yells to the cop, "She's the knife girl." A disheartened Mandy thinks "knife girls finish last." She also refers to Mackenzie, with whom she has an uncertain relationship, as her "insignificant other." And when a pupil working on the Boardwalk is confused upon seeing her in that setting she thinks: "He had the common student delusion that when school wasn't in session, teachers were deflated and stored in trunks along with the basketballs."

Well-drawn characters abound: Georgette is a homeless beachcomber of uncertain age who is reading *War and Peace*; Lucky is a worldly-wise five-year-old who spends most of his waking hours outside the casino where his oblivious mother gambles; Lala is a cagey clotheshorse intent upon marriage to any available sugar daddy. These and half a dozen others populate Amanda's temporary Atlantic City world and make it a wild and wonderful place for the reader's visit.

Plot-wise, though, the whole thing is one long series of coincidences, a flaw that detracts from the fine writing. But don't let that stop you, Amanda is a sleuth you'll like—a lot.

—Donald H. Buck

The Knotted Strings

by Jake Page. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995. $20.00

In Santa Fe, New Mexico, the stream of tourists is flowing wide and deep, augmented this year by a movie company's cast and crew who have been given permission to film a script based on a true incident—the 1680 Pueblo Rebellion in which various Indian tribes living along the Rio Grande River joined together to defeat the invading Spaniards.

Luis Rodriguez, the Governor of the Pueblo of Santo Esteban, who approved the filming on tribal lands, is besieged by a faction of traditionalists who want the filming stopped. The movie company's cameras in the holy places and shrines and in the plaza of the pueblo open old wounds and create bitter animosities. Then Rodriguez dies suddenly, and movie leading man Gregorio Velasquez is killed. And Rodriguez's son Martin's succession to the Governor's post is challenged by the dissidents who want Martin to oust the Hollywood invaders from the sacred lands. What else could possibly go wrong? Martin Rodriguez is unable to locate the Governor's silver-crowned wood cane, engraved with the signature of Abraham Lincoln, the traditional badge of sovereignty, that was given to the Santo Esteban Pueblo by the Great White Father in 1863.

In the middle of the rising controversy—and the two deaths—is blind sculptor T. Moore "Mo" Bowdre; his part-Hopi girl friend Connie Barnes, who is slated to be an extra in the movie; and Detective Anthony Ramirez of the Santa Fe Police Department.

The Knotted Strings focuses on the invading Hollywood army, replete with egotistic characters caught up in their own self-importance. I was not enamored of the Hollywood characters or their work, their petty problems or the death of one of their soldiers. I was much more interested in (but unfortunately did not find out enough about) the Santo Esteban Pueblo and the Hopi who live there; Santa Fe and its long and colorful history; and Mo Bowdre, the blind sculptor who, like Max Carrados before him, is able to discern more about the people and places surrounding him than most others gifted with sight. *The Knotted Strings* pales in comparison with *The Stolen Gods* and *The Deadly Canyon,* two earlier—and better—books in the series that concentrate more on the bootheel of New Mexico as well as the Hopi and their arts and traditions. *The Deadly Canyon,* in particular, has a more pervasive sense of place—giving the reader the feeling that the land, ostensibly barren on the surface, in fact, is teeming with desert flora and fauna and rich in the heritage and traditions of the people who lived there.

—Ronald C. Miller

The Money Lovers

by Timothy Watts. New York: Soho, 1994. $20.00

As the title bluntly states, Timothy Watts' second novel is about currency and the people who worship at its alter. The characters here are not beautiful losers, or fallen angels, or deeply flawed individuals in search of their own brand of redemption. They are motivated by greed, straight and simple, and are uninterested in shades-of-gray introspection. So the jacket blurbs and pre-reviews describing this as *noir* couldn't be more off-base. Watts has written a straight crime novel—a very good one that simply aims to entertain.

Nicky is a young, small-time scam artist in Beaufort, South Carolina, who lives like a rich man despite his negative cash-flow. He's setting up some local businessmen on a phony island-buy deal, with the intention of taking their money. He's also setting up a man named Wesley, who he thinks is some Atlantic City sucker, but who happens to be a sadistic killer. Nicky's wife, Katherine, is a gin-head who is also being set up by her friend Suzie and her partner Ellis, a makeup-wearing muscleboy, in a blackmail plot involving sexually explicit photos. When Jimmy,

a sharpshooting Marine freshly discharged from the Gulf War, returns to Beaufort and hooks up with Katherine, his high school sweetheart, the plots and plotters become entwined, setting in motion events that will culminate, quite violently, on a lovely stretch of Carolina beach.

Watts, the author of the highly-regarded *Cons,* moves his cast deftly and humorously through some neat twists on the way to their bloody destinies. The characters—reluctant hero Jimmy who knows what he is about, sad alcoholic Katherine, casually evil Wesley—are straight out of the Elmore Leonard mold, as is the relaxed, ruminative style that virtually ignores subject-verb-predicate sentence structure. It's not a stretch to say that fans who miss the harder edge of Leonard's mid-period will find what they've been looking for in *The Money Lovers*. That's good news for them, but you can't help wishing that Timothy Watts will expand on his considerable storytelling talents next time out. When he finds his own voice, he's going to knock one right out of the park.

—*George Pelecanos*

Origin and Cause

by Shelly Reuben. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994. $20.00

A burned vehicle in the middle of an abandoned stretch of road with a dead body behind the steering wheel. But not just any vehicle. This was a 1930 Duesenberg Arlington sedan—one of only 470 Duesenbergs ever built—worth a cool $2 million. And not just any body. This was the burned body of Stanfield Standish (aka Stanley Scheidler), the entertainment tycoon who controlled SSN, the largest broadcast and information-gathering network in the world.

But that was five years ago, and Standish's relatives are ready to go to court with their $52 million product liability lawsuit against Courtland Motor Company, the firm that restored the classic Duesey. The six-man team, led by Clyde Prouty, intends to prove that Courtland improperly restored the car, resulting in Standish's accidental and untimely demise. Courtland's *new* in-house legal counsel (his predecessor drank excessively to overcome his concerns over the lawsuit) hired young attorney Max Bramble to cope with the impending litigation. With only a month before trial, Bramble teamed up with retired New York City Fire Marshal Wylie Nolan, the crack arson consultant, to investigate the suspicious car fire. If Bramble and Nolan can prove that the fire wasn't caused by a mechanical defect in the car, then Courtland is off the hook for paying damages.

While looking into Stanfield Standish's background, Bramble and Nolan learn that Hugo, the industrious patriarch of the Scheidler family, turned a corner gas station and unlimited energy first into a single department store and then a chain, before he started building the shopping malls where he located his department stores. By focusing his efforts into his work and his beloved classic car collection, Hugo had virtually no time left for his wife, mistress, three daughters, or son Stanley.

Stanley watched his father and learned his lessons well. First Stanley metamorphosed into Stanfield Standish; then he became a media mogul who made enemies among the other executives in his industry, his few friends and acquaintances, and his own staff who were expected to incorporate Standish's biases into their SSN news reports. And just before his death, Standish unveiled plans to radically alter the classics in his Cinema Select film library, incurring the wrath of a group of ardent film lovers.

Shelly Reuben, herself a private investigator and arson expert, packs years of experience into *Origin and Cause*. Her detailed descriptions of the arson investigation of the Duesenberg and the basics of product liability litigation could serve as a checklist for others to follow. However, I was disappointed by extensive passages of courtroom scene narration, rather than the potentially explosive dialogue between the pompous and dour Clyde Prouty and the dynamic duo of Max Bramble and Wylie Nolan. Interesting, idiosyncratic characters abound in this breezy and humorous tale, and I look forward to more Max Bramble/Wylie Nolan adventures.

—*Ronald C. Miller*

A Small Sacrifice

by Ellen Hart. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1994. $20.95

Six theater friends from the University of Minnesota hold a reunion some twenty years after one of the six was arrested, an event whose repercussions are still felt. The reunion is held primarily as an "intervention" to keep noted actress Diana Stanwood from drinking herself to death. In addition, most of the former Shelvin Underground, as they dubbed themselves in college, are still looking for answers to unresolved questions.

The title refers to the sacrifice each is making to spend the better part of a week in Summer Green, Wisconsin, where Stanwood is directing the first play of her new theater. It becomes a more meaningful tag when events of the Summer Green reunion unravel. One of the six, Theo Donati—whose life has been an enigma since his arrest years ago—has a sudden heart attack and dies. But is it a heart attack or was he poisoned? Narrator Cordelia

Thorn, a successful artistic director in St. Paul, summons her close friend Jane Lawless, a Minneapolis restauranteur, to help her figure out what has happened. In their fifth episode, Thorn and Lawless poke, prod and insinuate until ultimately Lawless learns the truth of what has happened.

The novel is intelligently presented and reads well. More cerebral than action or violence-oriented, it barely qualifies as a mystery. If it makes any difference to readers, only one of the seven main characters is fully heterosexual, though sex *per se* is not a big factor in the story. Give Lawless, Thorn and Hart a chance, and you will probably enjoy their adventures.

—Douglas G. Simpson

Sweet Dreams, Irene

by Jan Burke. New York:
Simon & Schuster, 1994. $20.00

Irene Kelly, intrepid newspaper reporter, appears in her second episode (after *Goodnight, Irene*) in fictitious Las Piedras, a coastal southern California city. While covering an election for district attorney, Kelly finds herself in the middle of a controversy over satanism which soon expands to a struggle over property development, murder, and her own kidnapping and near death (twice).

As a hardnosed, uncompromising reporter, Irene is as tough as any of the lady P.I.s—and some can't top her for being threatened and physically abused. Kelly and her cop lover Frank Harriman are both in their late thirties—mature, sexually attractive veterans of their respective wars. Harriman, like Kelly, is likeable, but must work through a ton of guilt regarding the deaths of two people close to him before he is whole for Irene.

The story is not for the faint of heart. Kelly is warned at one point with the discovery of a human heart (that of a teenage witness she has been searching for) on her doorstep. Later, when two sadistic psychos threaten and beat her, the descriptions are vivid—and felt by the reader as well as the victim.

The novel is compelling despite a few loose ends that a more experienced Burke will probably tidy up in future books. It is a fast read with some pulse-pounding suspense, and the relationship of Kelly and Harriman is skillfully developed, as are a few of the other characters, notably suspect Jack Fremont. Subsequent Kelly episodes certainly bear watching.

—Douglas G. Simpson

COLLECTIONS

Deadly Allies II

edited by Robert J. Randisi and Susan Dunlap. New York:
Doubleday, 1994. $18.95

I've seldom felt short-changed by a short-story anthology. A weak inclusion is likely to be balanced by a strong one. There's delight in finding a favorite writer included, and a delicious sense of discovery in reading a felicitous piece by someone whose work is unfamiliar.

This second collection compiled by Private Eye Writers of America and Sisters in Crime features a series of paired, rather weakly theme-linked stories—one by a member of one authors' group and one representing the other. This could turn out to be a contrived, constricting format though, as of this volume, it has produced good reading.

Some of the stories turn on the idea that a poor P.I. can never, ever relax. In "Pig Man" (Les Roberts), actor/P.I. Saxon is still jet-lagged after returning from a long, on-location movie shoot when he's menaced at his L.A. home by a weirdo stranger. The true menace though, turns out to be the trusted Mr. Executive-type next door.

Ms. Tree, the P.I. in "Inconvenience Store" (Max Allan Collins) encounters double danger (she's heavily pregnant) during an innocuous neighborhood snack-run. But what's an off-duty sleuth to do but act when she's bystander at a mini-mart robbery?

Several of the stories attest to the continued ascendence (and infinite variety) of female P.I. characters.

In "Film at Eleven" (S.J. Rozan), the non-traditional investigator is Lydia Chin, Chinese-American; while "Scarlett Fever" (Jan Grape) features partners Jenny Gordon, white, and Cinnamon Jemina Gunn, black. Another black female P.I., the grandmotherly Edna Lynch, appears in "Uncommon Law" (Cathy Pickens), confounding even a young, with-it woman lawyer into stammering a stereotypical, "And...somehow, I was expecting someone...different."

For those whose taste is other-directed, the compilation offers "Paper Trail" (Joan Hess) which, I believe, would've intrigued Hitchcock himself.

In sum, an anthology's rather like a box of candy: all pieces will not appeal equally, but the experience of partaking is more than likely, as with this volume, to be toothsome.

—Norma J. Shattuck

Justice in Manhattan

by The Adams Round Table.
Stamford, CT:
Longmeadow Press, 1994. $17.95

The Adams Round Table was founded in 1982 by Mary Higgins Clark and Thomas Chastain. Its twelve members—who have collectively produced more than one hundred books—dine together each month at an East Side Manhattan restaurant owned by a man named Adam. *Justice in Manhattan* is the fourth book of a series by this illustrious group.

This collection of ten tales, set in Manhattan and designed to address the myriad expressions of justice, features three outstanding tales. In "A Cry from the Heart," Warren Murphy spins off inspired one-liners on his way to *proving* that murder is the only solution to the protagonist Douglas Brentley's marital problems. Consider that his wife Maddie's "five siblings had managed to spawn a total of seventeen revolting children, without a chin among them," that "he had never known any man to survive divorce with all his faculties intact," and that "Maddie would have riparian rights on his blood until the day one of them died. And she would never die."

Equally clever is "Betsy's Butterfly," by Joyce Harrington. A down-on-his-luck advertising executive has a problem: his spoiled wife now treats him with disdain, insisting on her own life without regard for their precarious finances. In his jealousy, and with the free time afforded by his lack of steady employment, he stalks her with increasingly murderous intent. The denouement, which leaves just a shad-

ow of doubt about premeditation versus fast thinking, is delightful.

In spite of its common theme—a shrink brought into a closed session of suspects to help a police friend solve a murder—"Rehearsal for Murder" shows Lucy Freeman's touch at poignant storytelling. A nice twist caps a sad tale, in which the world of the deceased young actress becomes depressingly real.

"Now Is Forever," by Dorothy Salisbury Davis, also deserves special notice. The characters, a priest and a parochial-school teacher who are having an affair, are vivid and involving, the setting moody yet real. Ultimately frustrating because of the obscurity of its opening and ending, this is nonetheless a masterful piece of writing.

The stories contributed by the Round Table's famous co-founders are the weakest links, but all ten tales in this fine collection are worth reading.

—*John Benson*

Cozy

Dying Breath

by Sarah J. Mason. New York: Berkley Prime Crime, 1994. $4.50

Dr. Holbrook's dead body is discovered by Mrs. Mint and the milkman. His death has all the earmarks of suicide, but Detective Superintendent Trewley, with his years of experience with meddling in the private affairs of others in his English village, questions the death. Dr. Holbrook, working on a top secret project for Allongham Alloys when he was suffocated by a gas leak, was a greatly disliked employee.

Trewley and his "counterpart," Stone, find out that one of the employees was a disgruntled lover of the victim's wife, another wanted his job, and yet another believed Holbrook was responsible for his wife's death. Also the company would have prospered greatly with Holbrook's discovery and almost any other company would have liked to get a hold of his findings. In sum, many could have wanted him dead, but, if it was murder, how was it done?

A thoroughly involved story with a many faceted stack of facts, making the book a delight. —*Catherine M. Nelson*

Exit Mr. Punch

by Mignon Warner. London: Breese Books, 1994. $19.95

On the evidence of this novel, Mignon Warner writes classic, puzzle-based mysteries that could as well have been written in the 1920s and '30s as in 1994. Her plot is very carefully crafted, and she makes good use of one of Agatha Christie's favorite techniques, that of the progressive solution, in which a satisfying solution that seemingly answers all our questions turns out to be quite wrong, only to be supplanted by another, equally plausible solution that again turns out to be quite wrong....

Exit Mr. Punch is her eighth mystery featuring Edwina Charles, aka Madame Adele Hermann, a middle-aged British clairvoyant who lives in the village of Little Gidding, where she tells fortunes and solves mysteries. One of her clients is a famous rock star, JouJou, who was originally from the village but has been living in London for some time now. JouJou returns to the village to come to terms with her past life and decide what she wants her present life to be, but as it turns out, she is murdered before she has a chance to make that choice. Charles sets about solving the mystery from the premise that motive is secondary to opportunity, and the plot develops into a classic exercise in determining opportunity by carefully establishing who was where when and how he or she can corroborate that.

Characterizations are weak, with Warner giving people quirks rather than developing their personalities, and she has a deaf ear for dialogue. However, Warner is meticulous in outlining alibis, timetables and conflicts in schedules, and she has created in *Exit Mr. Punch* a story that will give great pleasure to mystery readers who, above everything, love a good mystery.

—*Joan G. Kotker*

First Pedigree Murder

by Melissa Cleary. New York: Berkley Prime Crime, 1994. $4.50

Cleary has written another mystery in the series featuring Jackie Walsh and her crime-solving shepherd, Jake. Fans of her four previous novels will certainly want to read this one to continue the saga of Jackie, Jake, and the Rodgers University Film Department.

In *First Pedigree Murder,* the brother of a local Rodgers University benefactor is murdered in plain sight of several persons attending a live radio broadcast. Stuart Goodwillie is convinced that Keith Monahan, head of the Rodgers University radio program, is guilty of the murder of Mannheim Goodwillie and proceeds to have him arrested. Jackie and Jake come to the rescue of her friend.

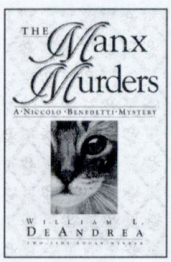
However, before she can prove the innocence of her friend, another murder at the local newspaper office occurs and seems to be connected to the first murder. Jackie must first deal with the connections and then ascertain which of the town's characters could have been responsible for both murders. Is it the radio program head after all? Or is it the shadowy dog trainer Tom Mann, who may not be all he seems to be and may actually be the long-spurned illegitimate son of the murdered Goodwillie brother? Or perhaps it is Marcella, a local television reporter, now being accused of the murder by Stuart Goodwillie, who has offered a reward for her capture. The small town of Palmer has plenty of suspects and very few clues.

The tale leads Jackie Walsh and Jake through the halls of academia and the radio and film industry. Although Cleary does seem to know how the industry works and the intricacies of the film industry, some of the story lines dealing with Jake seem not to be too well researched as to the abilities and limitations of animals—Jake is indeed a wonder of a dog at times. However, the tale is absorbing and the telling is quick and well written.

—*Christine E. Thompson*

The Manx Murders
by William L. DeAndrea. New York: Otto Penzler Books, 1994. $20.00

Professor Niccolo Benedetti is an eccentric genius who devotes his life to the study of the nature and causes of Human Evil. He's assisted in this formidable task by Private Eye Ron Gentry, and Gentry's wife, psychologist Janet Higgins. In this entry in the series the trio are hired by a pair of millionaires—identical twin brothers—whose company has developed an anti-pollution device which the Environmental Protection Agency wants very much to see produced.



Trouble is, the old coots are if anything more eccentric than the Professor. They've been feuding for years—originally over a woman, at present over cats and birds—and can't agree on the time of day, never mind the manufacture of a smoke-scrubber.

How does the Professor fit into all of this? Well, it seems the birds have all disappeared from the woods surrounding Henry Pembroke's mansion. Furious, he unreasonably blames his brother Clyde, who raises Manx cats on a neighboring estate. The whole affair is silly, yet mysterious enough to pique the Professor's curiosity. And as it turns out, human evil does manifest itself. Murders occur.

The Manx Murders is difficult to classify, except to say that its plot is somewhat reminiscent of old time radio: preposterous, but a lot of fun. The culprit's identity and the method of murder come as no surprise, nor is the motive entirely convincing. But DeAndrea creates his own little world, a pleasant place to visit; you might want to drop in on the Professor and his friends.

—*Edward Lodi*

Murder in a Nice Neighborhood
by Lora Roberts. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994. $4.99

Liz Sullivan describes herself as a vagabond. Actually she's a woman on the run from an abusive ex-husband and she comes to realize, from herself.

Her wanderings have brought her to Palo Alto, where she resides on the streets in her '69 VW microbus, eking out a living as a freelance writer and part-time teacher at a local Senior Center. Lulled into a false sense of security she begins to enjoy life again. That is, until murder intrudes. A local street character named Pigpen Murphy is killed, his body placed under Liz's microbus.

To the police, Liz is the most likely suspect. She admits having had an altercation with Pigpen the evening before his demise. As a female "vagabond" she's vulnerable to predators—the drunken Pigpen had made unwelcomed advances and she'd been compelled to use violence to fend him off. The police are skeptical; they don't buy her theory that she's been set up by the real killer.

The detective in charge of the investigation is named—to his chagrin, and Liz's amusement—Paul Drake. He even resembles the fictional detective. He's handsome, intelligent, charming and thinks Liz may be guilty.

Meanwhile the old ladies at the Senior Center take Liz under their wings. It's a symbiotic relationship, with Liz helping and being helped. But once again murder intrudes, and Liz is doubly suspect.

Can her ex-husband be so deranged as to commit several murders solely to make her look guilty? Or is an even more diabolical mind at work? It all gets resolved in the end, of course—satisfactorily except for a climactic but unconvincing scene with the ex-husband. Otherwise *Murder in a Nice Neighborhood* is an enjoyable mix of cozy, romance, and psychological thriller, on the deceptively clean but really mean streets of modern California.

—*Edward Lodi*

HISTORICAL

In the Dead of Winter
by Abbey Pen Baker. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. $19.95

Myrl Adler Norton, the daughter of the opera singer Irene Adler and lawyer Geoffrey Norton, is a professor of logic at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. She also happens to be one of the most successful consulting detectives of all time. Faye Martin Tullis, Norton's confidante, is an undergraduate student and writer. Over the years, Tullis authored 27 books and eight short stories that turned their lifelong friendship into one of the most popular series of books in the history of detective literature. And now, by a quirk of fate, a long-forgotten and never published manuscript reveals the circumstances of Norton's and Tullis's first meeting and their first case—a locked room murder.

Rachel White, a Smith College student, started the whole affair when she found that someone had ransacked her room and left a unique gold chain behind. Rachel had been somewhat concerned with her accommodations before the break-in because Alyssa Dansen, her landlady, seemed a bit eccentric, with a penchant for keeping to herself in a locked room, usually communicating only by leaving notes, and displaying hunting trophies of stuffed animals throughout the house. Norton and Tullis agree to investigate.

As the trio walk towards Rachel's lodgings, they hear a gunshot, and a roughly dressed man with bright red hair runs from the house. After breaking down the door of the locked room on the second floor, they find the body of Alyssa Dansen in the chair where she regularly gazes through the front windows, until the drapes are closed at precisely eight o'clock each evening. Alyssa Dansen is obviously dead, but it appears to Norton, from the condition of the

body and the room, that the gunshot and the running man had nothing to do with Alyssa Dansen's death.

The strange case takes Norton and Tullis to Brattleboro, Vermont, where Dansen had a summer home and where she was involved in a variety of activities, including a theatrical group at the Opera House. The suffragette movement is in full swing; the trolleys run down Main Street; young people cycle at the Wheel Club; and the Second Annual Island Carnival will soon open. But rumors of murder abound, and hints of blackmail and worse are in the air—unusual for normally bucolic 1920s Brattleboro.

Myrl Adler Norton is a complex character. She is a careful observer governed by logic and reason, is prone to the dramatic, suffers from bouts of melancholy, but takes no medication for fear of addiction. While trying to solve the mystery behind Alyssa Dansen's death, Norton also uncovers intriguing, but not unexpected, details about her own background. Abbey Pen Baker's *In the Dead of Winter* is an interesting period mystery, suffused with details appropriate to the time and with unanticipated plot twists. Hopefully, more Norton and Tullis adventures are in the offing.

—Ronald C. Miller

The Lady Chapel

by Candace M. Robb. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. $20.95

Absorb yourself into 14th century York (and Windsor) as Candace Robb, in her second Owen Archer novel, skillfully presents a complex story with two interrelated plot lines. In York, Archer is asked by Archbishop/Chancellor John Thoresby to investigate brutal cases of murder and dismemberment. On a national scale, Thoresby tries to influence King Edward's liaison with the young, ambitious Alice Perrers. Linking the two strands is the English and Continental wool trade, in which rivalries and betrayals flourish amidst the King's efforts to raise a war chest with which to conquer France.

The King, Thoresby and Perrers were historical personages whose lives Robb has utilized to frame her story. Because Perrers' family had been victimized by double-dealing traders, young Alice (as Robb spins her story) sought revenge against those responsible through her perfidious cousin Paul Scorby. Plying his own ambitions, Scorby, in turn, has two wool traders killed and one hand of each hacked off and left as a warning to the next victim. In the process, a youthful witness is nearly killed twice before he falls under the protection of Archer and his apothecary wife Lucie. Before Owen's trail leads to the Scorby family, and ultimately an exciting, climactic battle, four people are killed by the Scorby-Perrers treachery.

In Robb's first novel, Archer, a former captain of the King's archers who became incapacitated by the loss of an eye, was summoned by Thoresby to find a murderer. He served as an apprentice apothecary under Nicholas Wilton, then wed Lucie after her older husband's death. In this second episode, we see their healthy marital relationship develop under the pressure of more Yorkshire mayhem. It is a series well worth reading.

—Douglas G. Simpson

The Grail Murders

by Michael Clynes. New York: Otto Penzler Books, 1994. $21.00

Veteran history-mystery writer Michael Clynes (a k a P.C. Doherty) serves up another delightful concoction, using braggart and admitted coward Sir Roger Shallot as his mouthpiece to chronicle part of King Henry the Eighth's early reign. The Holy Grail itself pops up in this swift-moving tale that blends the machinations of the sinister Tudor court and garroting murders of the king's spies, with the mystique of the Templar order.

Shallot, the story's Watson, serve sharp-witted Benjamin Daunby, special agent and nephew of the dreaded Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Shallot and Daunby are sent to investigate goings on at Templecombe in Somerset, an ancient Templar stronghold near Glastonbury, where legendary King Arthur is buried. They also seek the Grail and sword Excalibur, which are rumored to be floating about and which Henry wants. In London the Duke of Buckingham is beheaded for treason, for allegedly seeking these artifacts and plotting against the king.

Accompanied by Mandeville and Southgate, sinister secret agents for the king, whose clerks have had their tongues cut out, and the Santerres who own Templecombe, the pair of sleuths is soon confronted with a clerk burned alive in his bed, a man killed in an empty church and a terrible hunting accident.

Confidential asides in which Shallot tips readers that Elizabeth wasn't Henry's daughter, and tosses off lines he says Will Shakespeare stole from him, add to the fun. Shallot's an old rascal, who dubs King Henry an old bastard, the Great Killer, the Mouldwarp prophesied by Merlin. "Now Henry VIII, that limb of Satan, had his brains firmly in his codpiece whilst his soul was a storm of emotions," writes Clynes. Such tart snippets make historical mysteries worth reading. Shallot's gabby tone is irresistible, the murderer chilling, the end satisfying. Clynes packs the book with political intrigues, juicy, irreverent descriptions of the high and mighty, and a real whiff of the treacherous 16th century. He makes English history fun.

—S.M. Tyson

NONFICTION

Criminal Convictions
by Nicolas Freeling. Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 1994. $22.95

"In all good crime fiction, realism is of little consequence...Only when a character is false to metaphysical truth does it fail."

Are you quite ready for this book? Freeling is betting you're not, but he wrote it anyhow. This should tell you something.

What we have here is a book of essays about crime writers. Freeling explains that since crime is the motive power behind the illumination of character for virtually every writer of quality in the last two centuries (excepting only Jane Austen), all writers of quality are crime writers. This, then, is a book about crime writers because Nicolas Freeling says it is.

The essays concern, in this order, Stendhal, Dickens, Conrad, Doyle, Kipling, Chandler, Sayers, and Simenon. That the first five are generally shelved under "Literature" and the last three under "Mystery" is not to worry you; they're all crime writers, remember? There is a rather difficult opening chapter on crime and metaphysics, and a closing one in which he gives tribute to the wives of some of these writers, and to his own. Or was he talking about Mrs. Vermeer? Freeling gets a little hard to follow here, as elsewhere.

The authors have been chosen for their virtues, and the essays are primarily laudatory, but flaws and errors are pointed out. Doyle is hardest hit, but Freeling's chief complaint is about the Sherlock Holmes imitators, of vastly inferior quality. (Among these he includes the whole of the cozy genre; Peter Wimsey escapes only because of his association with Harriet Vane.)

Now, do we pronounce Freeling a genius because we agree that David Copperfield was a waste of time and that Chandler beats out Hammett? (And the early Chandler, at that—he calls *The Big Sleep* one of the fundamental crime novels of history.) Or is he pigheaded, blinded by his theories of metaphysics, and altogether irrelevant because we disagree just as thoroughly with his other pronouncements? (I keep *Gaudy Night* around for the thirty or so pages I find readable.)

Let's fall back on the endflap blurbs, which state that even if one disagrees with Freeling, the essays can be fun to read. We should add that here and there, even if one is agreeing, they can be difficult to read. It ought to be worth your while to read this book, since you will probably find something to agree with, if that is your preference, or argue with, if you buy your books for that.

Metaphysics! Whatever became of those reference books that compared the bust measurements of James Bond's sweethearts?

—Dan Crawford

The Tony Hillerman Companion
edited by Martin Greenberg. New York: HarperCollins, 1994. $25.00

This compilation, which follows similar works Greenberg has edited for fans of Robert Ludlum and Tom Clancy, begins with a book-by-book guide and interview of Hillerman by Jon Breen and an article on the Navajo Nation written by George Hardeen and recommended by Hillerman. The bulk of the book is the work of Elizabeth Gaines and Diane Hammer, who put together a 200-page guide to the characters in the novels and a separate guide to Navajo clans mentioned in the works. They have been careful not to give away plot twists, in case anyone who hasn't read all of Hillerman blunders into the book. The volume is rounded off with a collection of short essays and fiction by Hillerman, the star of which is probably the nonfiction fiction "First Lead Gasser." "A Day in the Life of Chapter Two" will be of interest to those who want to read about how bestselling authors do it. There is also a section of entertaining illustrations, which should not be missed.

Some of these companion/concordance style volumes are so detailed that you never have to read the novels themselves. This is not that kind of guide. Nor are there any startling revelations. It is what it says it is: a companion, something to be read in conjunction with the books. The Hillerman fan will require this, but for the general shelf of mystery nonfiction, it is an entertaining but optional item.

—Dan Crawford

You Know My Method
by J.K. Van Dover. Bowling Green, OH: Popular Press, 1994.
$42.95 hardcover, $16.95 paperback

The premise is so obvious I wonder that I've never seen it anywhere else. At the same time that Victorian society conceived its deep and abiding faith in the scientist, who would be able through the method of scientific inquiry to resolve all the mysteries of the cosmos, Sherlock Holmes and a host of imitators became wildly popular. Resolving more earthly mysteries through their method of inquiry, the detectives perfectly mirrored the leading lights of progress, without all the jargon.

This cannot have been coincidence. Poe was fascinated by technology, Doyle was a doctor: modern science and its methods must have been at the heart of the investigative method of Dupin, Holmes, and a host of lesser lights. (The Thinking Machine leaps to mind.) Then, as faith in the scientist as earth's panacea faded, in the wake of World War I, so too did the detectives who relied on reason and spoke of method. Van Dover does see the method continuing, perhaps muted by other elements of a story. Perhaps the logical development of the relation between science and detection is in the police procedural: in detection as in science, the reliance now is on the organized group in the lab than on the brilliant amateur.

Van Dover covers primarily the period from Poe to the First World War, with special attention paid to Poe, Doyle, R. Austin Freeman, and Arthur Reeve. He is occasionally a little broad in his assertions—surely something happened before 1800 in both science and the proto-detective story that could have been discussed—and his style is a bit flat here and there.

Anyone interested in the mystery in its nineteenth century form, its place in society, and its cultural background, needs to give this book a glance.

—Dan Crawford

PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS

Dead Dinosaurs
by Gary Alexander. New York: Doubleday, 1994. $19.95

In *Dead Dinosaurs,* the second Luis Balam mystery of the Yucatan, Gary Alexander presents his souvenir-shopowner/private detective with a series of wildly imaginative situations and depends on a solid cast of amusing regulars and oddball American newcomers to provide an entertaining experience.

The novel begins with a smooth introduction to the continuing characters in the series: Luis Balam; his two daughters, Esther and Rosa, who operate the family souvenir shop while Luis is away; police inspector Hector Salgado Reyes, Luis' former mentor; and Ricardo (Ricky) Martinez Rodriguez, the amorous and sometimes-competent lawyer. Three main plot strands soon entangle Luis and his friends. Vance Dugdale, and American client of Ricky's wants to open a series of Dead Dinosaur theme parks around the rim of a gigantic crater created by the asteroid collision that caused massive extinctions 65 million years ago. That rim runs throughout the Yucatan, including Luis' tiny village of Ho-Keh. Meanwhile, Hector asks Luis to act as bodyguard for Bob Chance, a hapless lottery winner from Washington State, who is hiding out from his angry goon of a partner, Mikey Smith, who thinks he deserves a cut of Chance's millions. As Luis soon discovers, Chance is also being pursued by his *two* American wives, Judy Maxwell-Chance and Rita Trunkey Chance. To complicate matters further, Luis falls in love with the Mayan-looking Judy during their pursuit of her husband and the solution to Smith's murder.

Amid the mayhem, the author takes time to portray the inner workings of a small Mayan village (Ho-Keh) as it deals with Dugdale's gambling and iridium scam. The contrast between the rich Anglo life in the resort area of Cancun and the poor native life in the Yucatan is a constant background theme, as is the tension between Mexicans and Mayans. All of this is handled with a wonderful sense of humor. One-liners and recurring gags abound: Hector's observation that, after a fight with Smith, Luis looks like he "had a fatal accident with farm machinery"; repeated references to Luis' driving habits and Ricky's relationship with Rita (including an embrace at the airport when they were "on the verge of violating public decency laws"); the "oxygenating" scene after the first near-romantic encounter between Luis and Judy.
The denouement is a bit forced, and *Dead Dinosaurs* never reaches the heights achieved by its predecessor, *Blood Sacrifice.* But Gary Alexander, author of six earlier novels featuring Bamsan Kiet of Luong, continues to entertain with his offbeat detectives, exotic settings, and dependable cast of supporting characters.

—John Benson

Don't Turn Your Back on the Ocean
by Janet Dawson. New York: Fawcett Hardcover, 1994. $20.00

Private eye Jeri Howard journeys to the beautiful Monterey coast of central California to visit her family and catch up on badly-needed rest in *Don't Turn Your Back on the Ocean,* the fourth book in this increasingly popular series. Jeri's plans for a placid week quickly disappear when her cousin, Bobby, is arrested for the murder of his girlfriend, Ariel, whose battered body was found washed ashore days after a highly-visible fight between the couple. Ariel's wealthy family is quick to believe in Bobby's guilt; they had never understood what their beautiful daughter saw in Bobby, a reformed drinker who fished the Central Coast for a living. But Jeri and her family have just as many reasons to believe in Bobby's innocence.

Intertwined in Ariel's murder are some other puzzling events, including increasingly serious "pranks" occurring at the popular restaurant owned by Jeri's mother and a horrifying series of pelican mutilations. Jeri is convinced there's a pattern somewhere, and her investigation soon focuses on a boat yard owned by her mother's new boyfriend and his sister-in-law. Needless to say, Jeri's mother is less than pleased at Jeri's suspicions and long-buried family resentments between mother and daughter soon complicate Jeri's search for answers. An exciting confrontation on the turbulent Pacific Ocean between Jeri and Ariel's killer caps this well-written novel that uses the Carmel-Monterey locale to great success.

Anyone who's enjoyed John Steinbeck's works will particularly appreciate the descriptions of today's Monterey in comparison to Steinbeck's earlier era. Dawson clearly loves the ocean and she uses her mystery to educate readers as to the dangers facing the delicate marine ecosystem. And while many mysteries often sacrifice the elements of "good" fiction to concentrate solely on plot or entertainment, this book doesn't. The complex story features multi-dimensional characters who grapple with life-sized issues facing real people and Dawson's level of writing and environmental conscience raise this series above most others. Highly recommended.

—Liz Currie

The Lemon Chicken Jones
by Les Roberts. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. $20.95

Roberts returns to his first series character, private detective-part time actor Saxon, and this time his now teenage, adopted African-American son, Marvel, gets in on the action. Comedian Nappy Kane, whose best days in show business are long past, hires Saxon to find his missing wife Doll, a mail order bride from China. A routine missing persons case gets ugly when Saxon starts peeling away the layers. The hard-nosed detective discovers an agency providing wives from a massage parlor in Northern California, which is all part of an Asian women import business. Saxon takes his lumps but the sparks between him and Kane are almost as interesting as the action between Saxon and the bad guys. There's plenty of both.

This is a welcome addition to the Saxon series for which Roberts won the Best P.I. novel contest with his first book several years ago. Saxon's concern for his son Marvel comes across touchingly as he sees the former street waif becoming a man. It's Marvel who comes to Saxon's rescue this time out. The characters ring true and Roberts' portrait of Nappy Kane is espe-

cially on target. Show business is filled with these type of characters who have a hard time realizing their day is long gone. Whenever the action slows, Saxon continues to hone his culinary skills *à la* Spenser. Hence the title and main course. In street slang, as Marvel teaches Saxon, to have a "Jones" for something is to have a strong hankering. Roberts has two fine series going, and readers will have a "Jones" for more Saxon.

—Bill Moody

The Portland Laugher
by Earl Emerson. New York:
Ballantine Books, 1994. $20.00

In his seventh Thomas Black novel, Earl Emerson further develops Black's relationship with his long-time, beloved friend and neighbor, attorney Kathy Birchfield. While on the verge of losing Kathy to debonair Philip Bacon, whom Thomas dislikes and mistrusts, he finds himself with an unusual dilemma when he is asked to tail Bacon to keep him from doing harm to Billy Blodgett, a troubled ex-con. Ethically, Black knows he shouldn't take the case, but with his feelings about Bacon, he can't resist it.

Blodgett is a loser who has been suspected—and sometimes convicted—of killing pets, breaking into houses and even killing people. It soon becomes clear to Black that some sort of psychopath (a deranged telephone laugher) is at work, as at least three people have been murdered, including the husband of his client, Roxanne Laker. Blodgett is the logical suspect, but what kind of grudge is Bacon carrying and could Blodgett's half-brother Jerome Johnson, a Laker protégé, have been involved?

Emerson uses an interesting technique of occasionally interspersing a chapter of the critically wounded Black in a hospital room. The reader realizes that his investigations of Blodgett/Bacon have led him to this state. The narrative's progress leads Black closer and closer to his fate, an exciting shootout in an abandoned hillside house and its aftermath. But the violence isn't over until Thomas confronts the killer in his debilitated state in his hospital bed.

This cleverly constructed story presents a somewhat distressing picture of a handful of disturbed individuals. At the same time it continues to explore the increasing stresses of the Black-Birchfield relationship. It will take another novel, the third in the trilogy that started with *Yellow Dog Party,* to see where Emerson takes them, though those romantically inclined will probably anticipate a happy ending. In the meantime, Black must work through the agony of having hurt the woman he loves.

—Douglas G. Simpson

Violent Spring
by Gary Phillips. Portland, OR:
West Coast Crime, 1994. $9.00

A new publisher marks the introduction of Southern California writer Phillips and his hip, L.A. detective Ivan Monk, who delves into duels with gangs, the LAPD, and the FBI in an effort to solve the murder of a Korean liquor store owner.

Monk fights middle-age spread with regular gym workouts, listens to jazz, drives a 1964 Ford Galaxie he's fully restored, and keeps regular company with Asian judge Jill Kodama. Monk has seen it all and from his politically astute perspective, he knows when a Korean business association hires him to solve the murder, it's not only because he's a qualified P.I.

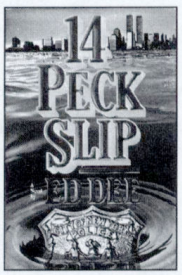
The time is Spring 1992. The Rodney King verdict has been delivered and Los Angeles is seething. When Monk does his job too well, he gets pressure from all sides. Everyone wants a piece of Monk. From the gang turf of South Central, the Asian community, to the movers and shakers in Bel Air, Monk discovers not everyone wants him to solve the case. Gary Phillips knows Los Angeles and gives readers a realistic, gritty portrait of this city in turmoil through the eyes of his African-American P.I. This is an impressive debut and Ivan Monk is a character who is easy to stay with.

—Bill Moody

PROCEDURAL

14 Peck Slip
by Ed Dee. New York:
Warner Books, 1994. $19.95

In his debut novel, former cop Ed Dee has come up with a dandy plot. It's 1982 and the echoes are still reverberating from the Knapp Commission crackdown on New York City police corruption a decade earlier. Veteran



detectives Anthony Ryan and Joe Gregory are sitting at a Lower East Side dock known as Peck Slip when they see three men drop a drum into the harbor. They suspect a mob-ordered hit but when the barrel is brought to the surface they're in for a big shock. It's a different barrel, and inside is the deteriorated body of Jinx Mulgrew, a corrupt cop who disappeared ten years ago.

Ryan and Gregory have to find out who killed Mulgrew, not an easy task, given the time that's passed and the fact that most of their suspects belong to the mob which controls the waterfront. The two quickly discover that it's easier to find a bullet than a usable fact.

Dee, a twenty-year veteran of the New York Police Crime Unit, and Supervisor of detectives in the Organized Crime Control Bureau for eleven years, knows his subject well and has a telling eye for details. For example, in sorting through the dead man's effects, Ryan comments:

"What bothered me was the lack of notebooks. All cops kept extensive notes. I kept two notebooks myself: one speculative, where I could be free to write things I wasn't sure of: the other one official, sanitized for the eyes of defense lawyers. I was certain Jinx had kept a black book somewhere.

"I didn't know where to begin with this case, because it appeared that all steps would be back-

ward. In organized crime cases I usually started by trying to understand what had happened in the past. I began by listing the history of the people and the events. Then we went into the streets, started tailing, working on the three Ps: people, patterns, and plate numbers."

—Bernard A. Drew

Balboa Firefly

by Jack Trolley. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1994. $19.95

San Diego PD's elite Squad 5, know as SCUMB (for Sickops, Crackpots, Underwear & Mad Bombers) is after a gunman who so far has left nine corpses and four notes.

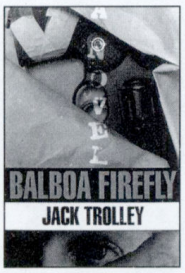
The shooter's goal: Shut down Lindbergh Field.

His threat: He'll shoot down an airliner.

The chief clue: A handful of tiny rubber tubes scuffed from an old Mercedes-Benz 280SE 4.5.

Planes setting down at Lindbergh cross the Balboa Park residential neighborhood. They fly so close, a rocket launcher could take one out. Sergeant Tommy Donahoo, head of SCUMB, has his hands full with Stryker, the very formidable killer.

As the police follow their leads to the killer they've nicknamed the "Balboa Firefly," they don't notice right away a second emerging plot or, as one officer comments, "one track here, two trains coming."



Balboa Firefly is a suspenseful romp. Slightly marred by the jumble of characters and plot threads and lacking in characters of any great depth, the story makes up for it in narrative energy and moments of humor. Trolley may be remembered under his Tom Ardies name and a suspense novel of a decade and a half back, *Kosygin Is Coming,* which was made into the film *Russian Roulette.*

—Bernard A. Drew

City Blood

by Clark Howard. New York: Otto Penzler Books, 1994. $23.00

Who has not, if honest, wanted revenge and the subtitle, "A Novel of Revenge," promises the reader a hero with whom to identify and a story full of satisfying action. Howard's book fulfills both promises. Nick Bianco and Joe Kiley, detective partners in the Chicago PD, respond to a murder in back of the 4-Star Lounge, where Ronnie Lynn, a go-go dancer, has been beaten to death, face and breasts mashed to a pulp. Bianco and Kiley decide to investigate on their own, knowing they're breaking the rules which give the case to detectives from the "Shop." They figure they could use the collar to help Bianco get promoted and Kiley is out to get Tony Touhy, Ronnie's ex-boyfriend and a likely suspect.

In the process of tailing Tony, Nick Bianco is fatally shot, devastating his wife and two daughters and leaving Joe Kiley feeling both guilty and certain that Tony Touhy is responsible for this murder too. He is forbidden to work on the case and is re-assigned to the Bomb and Arson Squad where he is given an arson case, which provides additional action for this risk-taking, almost self-destructive cop.

In addition to all the line-of-duty action, Kiley's life is further complicated by his love for Nick's wife, who has the "hots" for him but turns down his marriage proposal and Ronnie Lynn's twin sister who falls in love with Kiley. Almost overwhelmed by what's happening to his life, Kiley rushes in where even the devil would fear to tread.

Clark Howard does a most skillful job of combining reality with super-human action in creating a hero who has just enough flaws to make him likeable. Howard also pulls many unexpected, O. Henry-like twists which keeps the plot moving fast, the reader intensely interested, and after this book ends, hoping for a sequel.

—Maria Brolley

Dead End Game

by Christopher Newman. New York: Putnam, 1994. $21.95

Rookie pitching ace Willie Cintron's flamethrower fastball is expected to give the underdog Kansas City Royals an upset victory over the New York Yankees in the seventh and final game of the American League Championship Series. Then, on the morning of the final game, Cintron is found dead from a drug overdose, an apparent suicide, in his New York hotel room. The rookie was new to the big money and the fast-lane life of professional sports, but the Dominican had grown up in New York City's tough Washington Heights neighborhood and had managed to escape with both his life and with hope for the future. Sports reporter Barry Zajac of the *New York Daily News,* Cintron's longtime friend, knows that Willie just wasn't the type of person to kill himself.

Detective Lieutenant Joe Dante and his partner Lieutenant Beasley "Jumbo" Richardson of the Special Investigations Division catch the case. They're a pair of persistent cops, devoted to their work, but marching to a different drummer—trying to solve the unsolvable and untouchable high-profile cases. They soon learn of a possible sports betting angle and develop a handful of suspects who could have profited from Cintron's death: a high-performance sports car dealer, a sexy swimsuit model, a high-powered sports agent, a seductive and conniving TV advertising executive, Cintron's cousin who owes big money to a Chinese drug lord, and a teammate facing a rape trial. Instead of finding solutions, Dante and Richardson find more problems and more bodies, as the FBI, the DEA, and the New Jersey police become involved.

Dead End Game is Christopher Newman's hardcover debut, although Joe Dante and Jumbo Richardson have previously appeared in four paperback original novels in the Precinct series.

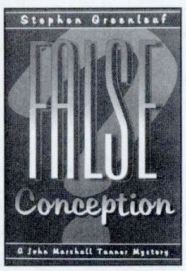
Dead End Game is not a play-by-play baseball mystery that only sports jocks will appreciate. Rather, it is a gritty police procedural with occasional and brief sports interludes. Dante and Richardson are as tough and tenacious as junkyard dogs, and *Dead End Game* keeps delighting and surprising until the final page

—*Ronald C. Miller*

False Conception

by Stephen Greenleaf. New York: Otto Penzler Books, 1994. $22.00

This is a trip down Memory Lane, with a plot modeled after Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald. It has the same device of a wealthy family headed by a dictatorial patriarch and peopled by a whole mess of dysfunctionals. Their dark doings are dragged into daylight by the nicest P.I. imaginable, a guy who cares not for his career or bank account, only the pursuit of truth.



He's hired to make a perfunctory character check on a woman being considered as a surrogate mother for a rich couple who are themselves unable to produce an heir for the family enterprises.

The investigation leads him into a tangle of incest and sundry other sexual shenanigans. When the surrogate does indeed become pregnant, the thing becomes so complicated that you need graph paper to figure out whose sperm and whose egg were involved. Greenleaf has more twists than Chubby Checkers.

The tenth in a series featuring John Marshall Tanner, this novel shows Greenleaf's ability to create an effective investigator with the sentiments of a Southern gentleman. Though basically of the "hardboiled" school, the book's final three pages can only be described as "charming." The versatility makes this a fine novel.

—*Donald H. Buck*

Their Kind of Town

by Richard Whittingham. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1994. $22.50

Their Kind of Town is my kind of book: a procedural which reveals as much about the quotidian activities of the Outfit (i.e., Mafia) as it does about the Chicago police force.

The plot centers around the botched "execution-style" slaying of a petty burglar who overstepped his bounds. Unfortunately for the professionals brought in for the job there are two witnesses, one whom they succeed in killing and one who gets away. The witness who escapes is a twelve-year-old girl from the projects. Enter a second criminal element: the Western Vice Lords, a vicious Chicago youth gang.

The police, who know they have to find the girl before the Outfit does, engage in an uneasy truce with the Vice Lords. The focus is on Joe Morrison, a weary but wise ex-homicide cop who appeared in Whittingham's previous book, *State Street.* And on an undercover agent—I won't reveal his name—who has infiltrated the Outfit but made the mistake of falling in love.

In contrast, one of several subplots serves up comic relief in the person of Vaughn Swayze, an inept con man seeking to buy a body in order to pull off an insurance scam. Of course, with the Outfit nobody dies laughing, and the body Swayze buys may be his own.

Whittingham writes with a keen ear for dialogue and keen insight into the human psyche. There are no stereotypes in *Their Kind of Town.* All of the many characters, criminals as well as police, come across as distinct individuals—people you've known all your life. Or have hoped to avoid.

This is a book worthy of anyone's shelves.

—*Edward Lodi*

A Touch of Panic

by L.R. Wright. New York: Scribner's, 1994. $20.00

L.R. Wright has written another absorbing and thrilling story that involves Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Staff Sergeant Karl Alberg. In fact there are actually three plots interwoven in the police affairs of the RCMP station in Sechelt, each one bearing the Wright trademark study of psychological dysfunction and obsession. One of those plots centers around Cassandra Mitchell, Sechelt librarian and companion of Alberg. Gordon Murphy has been searching for the perfect woman and is absolutely certain that Cassandra is the one. He will stop at nothing to realize his fantasy, even murder.

The second is a series of strange burglaries where someone is taking items which may or may not be valuable. Apparently the burglaries are staged only for the thrill of breaking into the property and taking something to prove it. Even stranger, this thief sometimes doesn't steal anything but, rather, helps the victim such as when he/she breaks into a home and cleans it.

The third involves a drug deal and murder which impacts on the lives of one of the Sechelt residents and the young mother she has allowed to stay with her until the mother can "rescue" her children from their father. Unfortunately, her method of rescue is to kidnap them.

In typical fashion, Wright masterfully connects the investigations into the burglaries and the fantasies of Gordon Murphy by the end of the novel. The real connection, however, between all three cases is the sense of panic felt by each of the persons involved in them: Gordon and Cassandra, the thief, the young mother, and of course Sergeant Alberg.

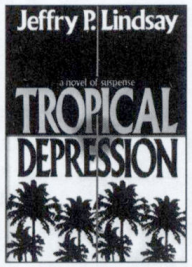
A Touch of Panic is typical of Edgar-winning L.R. Wright's psychological thrillers. Anyone who enjoyed *Fall from Grace* and *Prized Possessions* will also be delighted by this further adventure of RCMP Staff Sergeant Karl Alberg.

—*Christine E. Thompson*

Tropical Depression

by Jeffry P. Lindsay. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1994. $20.95

Another mystery novel waiting to be a great action movie. Billy Knight is an ex-LAPD cop who is now a fishing guide down in the Florida Keys—his way of coping with the loss of his wife and daughter having been killed because he was a cop. His routine is disrupted by fellow LAPD detective who asks him to investigate the murder of Hector, his son, who was killed in the Rodney King riots. The killing was



obviously premeditated and just as obviously being covered up for racial or political reasons.

While Billy Knight argues with himself about saying yes or no, McAuley returns to L.A. Knight then gets a telegram from his LAPD ex-partner, Beasley, and as Billy says, "...unless you've been a cop yourself you can't really appreciate how much that means. It's a close relationship. It's for life," and so he calls Beasley and is told McAuley has been found with his throat cut. Again as Billy says, "In some really stupid and maybe self-destructive way, Roscoe's problem and mine had gotten twisted together," and so Billy Knight goes back to L.A. to find a murderer.

The author takes you through Billy's fascinating paper trail search and on to exciting action—some of it unreal but nevertheless gripping because of the fast-paced writing. There are the usual upper echelon "hands off" directives and the more compelling physical threats from concerned citizens, all of which means Billy Knight is doing an effective job. But he is hampered every which way, feels he's failed and finally goes back to his Florida Keys only to find he has actually succeeded in his manhunt. At the end there is a boat chase to rival any car chase ever written or filmed.

In spite of the subject matter being hackneyed, trite and banal, Lindsay carries it off very well due to his style of writing and his use of authentic details about the setting, the riots, and police procedure. Some of his metaphors are heavy-handed, e.g., "The victim is just a lump of cold meat in its own gravy." On the other hand, there are some great lines, such as "A yacht is a boat with an attitude." All in all, the sympathetic "good guys," the action, the well-structured suspense build-up make it worth reading.

—*Maria Brolley*

Suspense & Espionage

Pretty Boy Floyd
by Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. $24.00

His robberies, shootouts, and escapades made front-page headlines across depression-era America, and Pretty Boy Floyd became a household name. "That ain't my moniker ...the papers started that...I'm Charles...Arthur...Floyd." Charley Floyd, a dirt-poor farm kid from Sallisaw, Oklahoma, crammed a whole lot of living into his brief 30 years. More than 20,000 people gathered at the graveside for his funeral when he passed from this life into American myth. And sixty years after his death, they're still writing books and making movies about him.

He was just 21 and working as a helper at the Kroger Bakery in St. Louis when he and Billy Miller decided to rob the armored car delivering the bakery payroll. Charley's share was more than $5,000. He bought a diamond wedding ring for his wife Ruby and toys for their son Dempsey, dressed to the nines in a white gabardine suit, and drove a shiny blue Studebaker back home to the Oklahoma hill country. The law nabbed him at home, and Charley was on his way to the Jeff City Pen for five years. And Billy Miller lost his share of the loot playing poker with a couple of cheats, same as usual.

Four years later, with time off for good behavior, 25-year-old Charley Floyd is on the road again, armed with tips from some of the biggest cons in the joint, like Big Carl Bevo, who hit the First National Bank of Kansas City for $92,000, and the lawmen still haven't found the money. This time, Charley crisscrosses the Midwestern heartland on a rampage of robberies and shootouts that make him a legend in his own time.

All women love Charley. His mother Mamie, his faithful wife Ruby, his loyal girlfriend Beulah, his former landlady and lover Lulu Ash, partner George Birdwell's wife Bob, and a host of others. Just about everybody admires Pretty Boy Floyd, even the folks in the towns—

including Sallisaw—where he robs the banks. Only the local lawmen and the Bureau of Investigation agents (including Melvin Purvis, who just ambushed John Dillinger at the Biograph Theater in Chicago) tracking Charley down are not amused. In fact, J. Edgar Hoover in Washington is planning to make Pretty Boy Floyd Public Enemy #1 and get a little publicity not only for the Bureau of Investigation but also for himself.

Larry McMurtry, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and other awards, is the author of *Lonesome Dove, The Last Picture Show,* and other memorable works. Diana Ossana has previously coauthored screenplays with McMurtry, including one about Charles Arthur "Pretty Boy" Floyd, from which this novel was developed. The result is an unforgettable crime novel that paints a realistic portrait of a simpler time and a simpler place in America when outlaws like Dillinger and Floyd, Ma Barker and her boys, and Bonnie and Clyde rampaged through the countryside and into American folklore.

—Ronald C. Miller

Quiller Salamander
by Adam Hall. New York:
Otto Penzler Books, 1994. $23.00

Intrepid Quiller is here again! British secret service operative Quiller is off to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to confront the Khmer Rouge—Pol Pot, General Kheng, Colonel Choen, and all twelve thousand of the Communist soldiers. Quiller hopes to thwart their attempts to rain missiles on Phnom Penh and to set up another Killing Fields for a million Cambodians.

In Cambodia a man named Flockhart from London, nicknamed the Tarantula, is Quiller's control and young Pringle is his director. Neither one impresses Quiller very much, and he finds greater companionship with Gabrielle Bouchard, a French-Cambodian beauty there as a photographer. Quiller's first objective is to find the Khmer Rouge Army soldiers and the next objective is to find out what the Army plans to do in the near future. The first objective is easily reached and the second one reveals that the Army plans to shoot Russian missiles toward Phnom Penh on the nineteenth of the month—soon.

The third objective is to locate the main KR Army camp and to find Pol Pot himself. That objective, too, is accomplished but then Quiller is asked for proof that the large KR camp is where he says it is. To accomplish this task takes some doing and is almost the end of Quiller's adventures, and of snake-bitten Quiller himself. It is certainly the end for Quiller's Sikorsky helicopter and its capable Cambodian government Army pilot. From this point on, things get steadily more intensive as the deadline approaches.

This novel provides an example of Hall's skill in keeping the pressure on, in keeping the reader alert and involved; each task which Quiller undertakes is more hazardous that the last one. The book covers only about a week's time and contains little more than the description of Quiller's intensive and desperate life in which he must accomplish so much before the nineteenth. Gabrielle moves in and out of the story. Quiller's affair with her is an enjoyable relief from his duties but takes up little space and about three-fourths of the way through she disappears from the story. Some glimpses are obtained of Cambodian life, also, which seems to contain mostly fear, squalor and poverty. Hall knows his DP51 high-capacity pistols from his short-barreled Remington pistols, also.

A wholly admirable and single-minded short adventure novel, taut and tense.

—John F. Harvey

Sleep, Baby, Sleep
by Jessica Auerbach. New York:
G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1994. $21.95

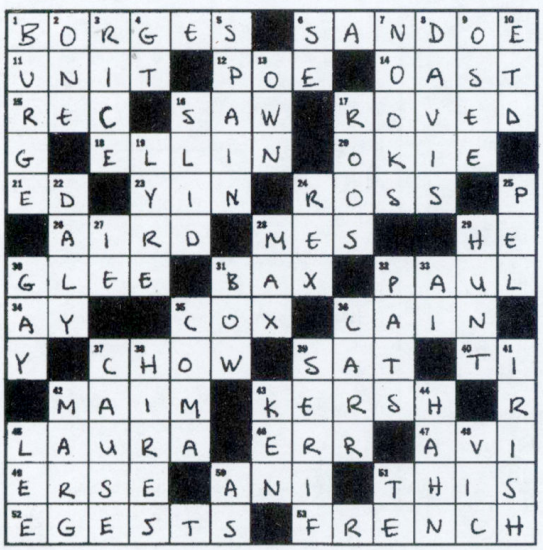
Twenty-year-old Sylvie tells police, her mother, the FBI, that she only left her six-week-old baby girl Cally alone for five minutes. But when she returns home from errands, the baby is gone. Every young mother's nightmare comes to life—FBI agents are holed up in the basement of the apartment building, waiting for ransom calls; her bossy art scholar mother Hannah lectures and points the finger; her boyfriend Peter, Cally's father, show luke-warm sympathy; and Sylvie herself is mercilessly aware of her own attention deficit disorder. But Sylvie gains the trust of a coffee-addict detective, Martinson, whose own marriage went bust after his son died in a terrible accident.

Setting and character are the novel's strength, with fine, believable depictions of the physical and mental aches of losing a baby. At midpoint, the slow-building story shifts into high gear as spacey, frazzled Sylvie sees all the fingers are pointed at her and understands she'd better find out what happened to Cally before she's arrested on suspicion of killing her baby.

With Martinson's moral support, Sylvie turns detective and tracks a possible kidnapper, putting herself in danger. The nail-biter ending hits hard, with Sylvie coming of age in all senses of the word. The novel rings like a true story, and Sylvie is a character readers feel deeply for; the book is too well-written to be labeled and possibly dismissed as merely a "woman/child in jeopardy" novel. One guarantee: After finishing the book, readers will never, ever, see shopping mall security cameras in quite the same way.

—S.M. Tyson ■

Crossword Answer From Pg 24

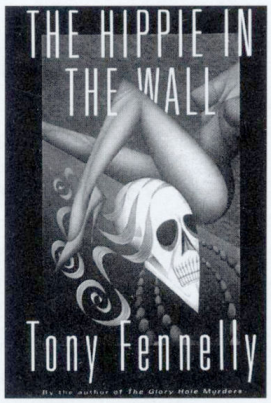


CHECKLIST

COMPILED BY
M.S. CAPPADONNA

CHECKLIST OF MYSTERY, DETECTIVE AND SUSPENSE FICTION PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES.
APRIL–JUNE 1994

• Adler, Warren: *The Ties That Bind.* Donald I. Fine, $19.95.
• Allegretto, Michael: *Shadow House.* Carroll & Graf, $19.95.
• Andrews, Sarah: *Tensleep.* Otto Penzler, $20.00.
• Ashford, Jeffrey: *Judgment Deferred.* St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Babson, Marian: *Nine Lives to Murder.* St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Bakos, Susan Crain: *Female Superior Position.* Kensington, $18.95.
• Block, Lawrence: *The Burglar Who Traded Ted Williams.* Dutton, $19.95.
• Bowker, Richard: *Senator.* Morrow, $20.00.
• Bukowkski, Charles: *Pulp.* Black Sparrow, $25.00.
• Burley, W.J.: *Wycliffe and the Danes Mystery.* St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Brett, Simon: *A Reconstructed Corpse.* Scribner's, $20.00.
• Cosley, Dennis: *Death Underfoot.* St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Chapman, Sally: *Love Bytes.* St. Martin's, $20.95.
• Clark, Mary Higgins: *Remember Me.* Simon & Schuster, $23.50.
• Cody, Liza and Michael Z. Lewin, eds.: *Second Culprit.* St. Martin's, $20.95.
• Connelly, Michael: *The Concrete Blonde.* Little, Brown, $21.95.
• Conroy, Richard Timothy: *Old Ways in the New World.* St. Martin's, $21.95.
• Cook, Bruce: *The Sidewalk Hilton.* St. Martin's, $21.95.
• Dancer, Rex; *Bad Girl Blues.* Simon & Schuster, $26.00.
• Dickinson, Peter: *The Yellow Room Conspiracy.* Mysterious, $18.95.
• Donaldson, D.J.: *New Orleans Requiem.* St. Martin's, $19.95.
• Doss, James D.: *The Shaman Sings.* St. Martin's, $20.95.
• Douglas, Carole Nelson: *Cat on a Blue Monday.* Forge, $21.95.
• DuBois, Brendan: *Dead Sand.* Otto Penzler, $21.00.
• Dulany, Harris: *One Kiss Led to Another.* HarperCollins, $20.00.
• Elkins, Aaron: *Dead Man's Hearts.* Mysterious, $18.95.
• Ely, Ron: *Night Shadows.* Simon & Schuster, $20.00.



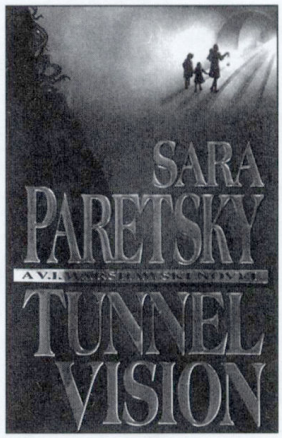
• Fennelly, Tony: *The Hippie in the Wall.* St. Martin's, $19.95.
• Fowler, Earlene: *Fool's Puzzle.* Berkley, $17.95.
• Freeling, Nicolas: *You Who Know.* Mysterious, $18.95.
• Garcia, Guy: *Obsidian Sky.* Simon & Schuster, $23.00.
• Gash, Jonathan: *The Sin Within Her Smile.* Viking, $18.95.
• Grady, James: *Thunder.* Warner, $21.95.
• Grafton, Sue: *K Is for Killer.* Holt, $22.95.
• Granger, Bill: *Drover and the Designated Hitter.* Morrow, $20.00.
• Harris, Charlaine: *Three Bedrooms, One Corpse.* Scribner's, $20.00.
• Harvey, James Neal: *Flesh and Blood.* St. Martin's, $22.95.
• Havill, Steven F.: *Twice-Buried.* St. Martin's, $19.95.
• Hess, Joan: *Tickled to Death.* Dutton, $18.95.
• Hill, Richard: *Shoot the Piper.* St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Holton, Hugh: *Presumed Dead.* Forge, $21.95.
• Holtzer, Susan: *Something to Kill For.* St. Martin's, $19.95.
• Horansky, Ruby: *Dead Center.* Scribner's, $20.00.
• Hornsby, Wendy: *Bad Intent.* Dutton, $18.95.
• Hoyt, Richard: *Red Card.* Tor/Forge, $19.95.
• Hunter, Evan: *Criminal Conversation.* Warner, $21.95.
• Hutchings, Janet, ed.: *Once Upon a Crime.* St. Martin's, $19.95.
• Ignatius, David: *The Bank of Fear.* Morrow, $20.00.
• Irvine, Robert: *Barking Dogs.* St. Martin's, $19.95.
• James, Bill: *Take.* Countryman/Foul Play, $20.00.
• Jance, J.A.: *Tombstone Courage.* Morrow, $20.00.
• Jardine, Quinton: *Skinner's Rules.* St. Martin's, $21.95.
• Jones, Dulan: *Thicker than Water.* St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Joseph, Henry: *Bloodwork: The New Rugged Cross.* Gibbs Smith, $19.95.
• Kelly, Nora: *Bad Chemistry.* St. Martin's, $20.95.
• Kotzwinkle, William: *The Game of Thirty.* Houghton, $21.95.
• Kuhlken, Ken: *The Angel Gang.* St. Martin's, $20.95.
• Lehrer, Jim: *Fine Lines.* Random House, $20.00.
• Leon, Donna: *Dressed for Death.* HarperCollins, $20.00.
• Lindsay, David: *An Absence of Light.* Doubleday, $23.00.
• Lipinski, Thomas: *The Fall-down Artist.* St. Martin's, $20.95.

• McCabe, Peter: *Wasteland.* Scribner's, $20.00.
• McClendon, Lise: *The Bluejay Shaman.* Walker, $19.95.
• McKernan, Victoria: *Crooked Island.* Carroll & Graf, $18.95.
• MacLeod, Charlotte: *Something in the Water.* Mysterious, $18.95.
• Marquis, Max: *Undignified Death.* St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Maron, Margaret: *Shooting at Loons.* Mysterious, $18.95.
• Marshall, William: *Inches.* Mysterious, $19.95.
• Marston, Edward: *The Silent Woman.* St. Martin's, $21.95.
• Maxes, A.: *Dead to Rights.* St. Martin's, $20.95.

• Mosley, Walter: *Black Betty.* Norton, $19.95.
• Myers, Tamar: *Too Many Crooks Spoil the Broth.* Doubleday, $17.00.
• Nehrbass, Arthur F.: *Dead Heat.* Dutton, $19.95.
• O'Callaghan, Maxine: *Trade-Off.* St. Martin's, $19.95.
• O'Donnell, Lillian: *Lockout.* Putnam, $19.95.
• Paretsky, Sara: *Tunnel Vision.* Delacorte, $21.95.
• Pelecanos, George P.: *Shoedog.* St. Martin's, $19.95.
• Perez-Reverte, Arturo: *The Flanders Panel.* Harcourt, $21.95.
• Prowell, Sandra West: *The Killing of Monday Brown.* Walker, $19.95.
• Ramos, Manuel: *The Ballad of Gato Guerrero.* St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Rayfiel, Thomas: *Split Levels.* Simon & Schuster, $20.00.
• Ripley, Ann: *Mulch.* St. Martin's, $19.95.
• Royce, Kenneth: *Remote Control.* Hodder & Staughton, $26.95.
• Ruryk, Jean: *Chicken Little Was Right.* St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Sandford, John: *Night Prey.* Putnam, $22.95.
• Schutz, Benjamin: *Mexico Is Forever.* St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Scoppettone, Sandra: *My Sweet Untraceable You.* Little, Brown, $19.95.
• Sedley, Kate: *The Weaver's Tale.* St. Martin's, $20.95.
• Shoemaker, Bill: *Stalking Horse.* Morrow, $20.00.
• Siciliano, Sam: *The Angel of the Opera.* Otto Penzler, $21.00.
• Smith, Joan: *What Men Say.* Columbine, $20.00.
• Smith, Julie: *New Orleans Beat.* Fawcett, $21.50.
• Spring, Michelle: *Every Breath You Take.* Pocket, $20.00.
• Stern, Mark: *Inadmissable.* Carroll & Graf, $19.95.
• Trocheck, Kathy Hogan: *Homemade Sin.* HarperCollins, $20.00.
• Truman, Margaret: *Murder on the Potomac.* Random House, $21.00.
• Watts, Timothy: *The Money Lovers.* Soho, $20.00.
• Wesley, Valerie Wilson: *When Death Comes Stealing.* Putnam, $19.95.
• Wilson, Charles: *When First We Deceive.* Carroll & Graf, $19.95.
• Whittingham, Richard: *Their Kind of Town.* Fine, $21.00.
• Wilhelm, Kate: *The Best Defense.* St. Martin's, $21.95.
• Williams, Arthur: *Missing at Ten O'Clock.* Walker, $19.95.
• Woods, Stuart: *Heat.* HarperCollins, $23.00.

PAPERBACKS

• Adamson, Lydia: *A Cat with No Regrets.* New American Library, $3.99.
• Axler, Leo: *Final Viewing.* Berkley, $4.50.
• Belsky, Dick: *The Mourning Show.* Berkley, $4.50.
• Bowers, Elisabeth: *No Forwarding Address.* Seal, $9.95.
• Burke, Jan: *Goodnight Irene.* Avon, $4.99.
• Clark, Mary Higgins: *I'll Be Seeing You.* Pocket, $6.50.
• Cornwell, Patricia: *Cruel & Unusual.* Avon, $6.50.
• Crais, Robert: *Free Fall.* Bantam, $4.99.
• Diehl, William: *Primal Fear.* Ballantine, $5.99.
• Fyfield, Frances: *Shadow Play.* Ballantine, $5.99.
• George, Elizabeth: *Missing Joseph.* Bantam, $5.99.
• Grafton, Sue: *J Is for Judgment.* Fawcett Crest, $5.99.
• Griffin, Linda: *Stoneridge.* Winston-Derek, $11.95.
• Hager, Jean: *Blooming Murder.* Avon, $4.99.
• Hess, Joan: *Poisoned Pins.* Onyx, $3.99.
• Kingsbury, Kate: *Service for Two.* Berkley, $4.50.
• le Carré, John: *Night Manager.* Ballantine, $6.99.
• McBain, Ed: *Mary, Mary.* Warner, $5.99.



• McBain, Ed: *Mischief.* Avon, $5.99.
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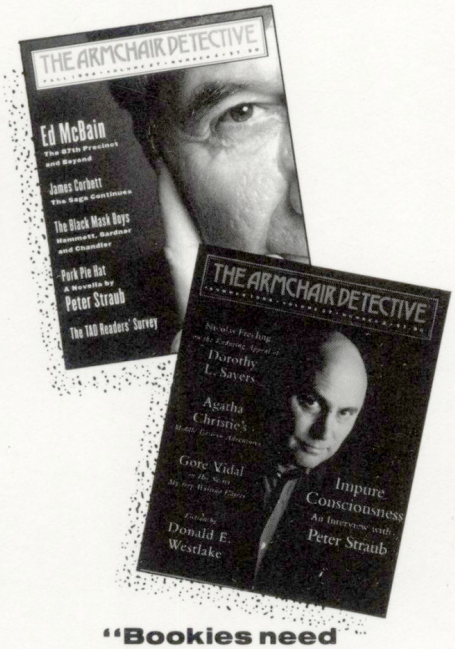

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