

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE®

SPRING 1995 • VOLUME 28 • NUMBER 2 • \$7.50

Nero Wolfe

*A Literary
Masquerade Revealed*

John Dickson Carr

Fairplay Foremost

Ngaio Marsh

A Centenary Celebration

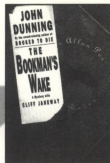
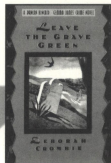
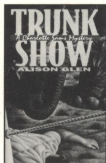
**The 1995
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Nominees**

JOHN DUNNING

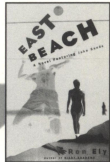
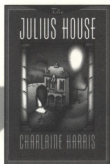
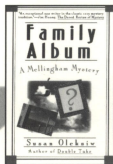
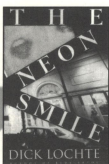
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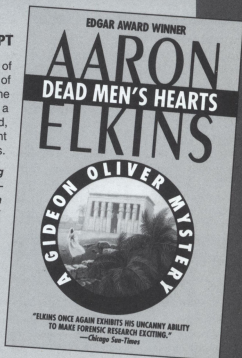
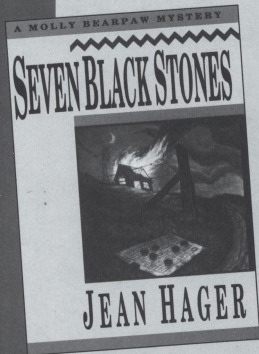
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COMING IN APRIL



THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

SPRING 1994 • VOLUME 28 • NUMBER 2

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THE BOOKMAN'S EYE

Although he had been nominated for Edgars two times previously, mystery fans know him best as the author of the wildly popular *Booked to Die*. Bibliophiles will be just as delighted with his new Cliff Janeway novel, *The Bookman's Wake*, which changes the focus from book collecting to fine printing.

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MURDER IN MOTION

Liza Cody, Michael Z. Lewin and Peter Lovesey have teamed up to form a traveling mystery minstrel show that has received high praise on its swings through the U.S. and England. In this three-way interview, they reveal their secrets for entertaining on the run.

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by B.J. Rahn 140

NOTABLE PASSINGS

The mystery world has lost a number of luminaries over the past few months. *The Armchair Detective* bids a fond farewell to writers Patricia Highsmith, J.I.M. Stewart (aka Michael Innes) and Julian Symons. 152

JOAN KAHN REMEMBERED

One of the most influential editors in the history of the genre, Joan Kahn discovered and published a multitude of distinguished writers including Tony Hillerman, Dick Francis, Nicolas Freeling, Peter Dickinson, John Ball, Patricia Highsmith and Jane Langton. Here she is fondly remembered by one of her admirers.

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JOHN DICKSON CARR: FAIRPLAY FOREMOST

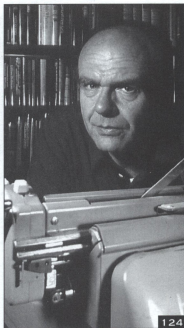
Even given his commitment to fairplay rules of clue giving, readers of Carr's brilliantly plotted novels seldom managed to solve the mystery before Carr explained it to them. In this excerpt from an upcoming biography, a noted mystery scholar examines Carr's deviously misleading—yet scrupulously fair—methods.

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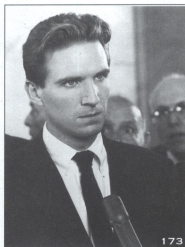
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*Front Cover photo by
Susan Goddard, Denver, CO.*



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UNEASY CHAIR

"I start on my work without theory of any sort—in fact, I may say, with my mind a perfect blank."

—Loveday Brooke in "The Black Bag Left on a Doanstep," *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective* (1894) by C.L. Pirkis.

I all too often have found this an apt quotation in my work at *TAD* which is why I always keep my reference library close at hand. In fact, I've grown rather addicted to reference works and lately my fancy has been captured by books of quotations, anecdotes and trivia. Here is an introduction to two current favorites:

Mystery & Crime: The New York Public Library Book of Answers (Fireside, 1995) is an entertaining collection of trivia compiled by Jay Pearsall in a question-and-answer format. The contents are based on customer queries at his New York bookshop, Murder Ink. Here's a sample:

1. Who said, "Life has consequences"?
2. Who was the first woman to write an American detective novel?*

Far and away one of the best reference books for browsing is Jane Horning's excellent *Mystery Lovers Book of Quotations* (Mysterious Press, 1988). Writers are listed alphabetically with a short biographical note on each. Then come the quotations which cover pretty much everything you'll ever need to know about the world.

These include:

Good advice and shrewd observations:

"Nothing is more infallibly indicative of bad morals than bad champagne."

—Lady Clancarron to Lady Appleby in *A Private View* (1952) by Michael Innes;

"A prompt man is a lonely man."

—Bryan Hurd in *Split Image* (1981) by Elmore Leonard;



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"It would never do for me to lose my wits in the presence of a man who had none too many of his own."

—Miss Amelia Butterworth, overcoming a faint spell when she views her first body, in *That Affair Next Door* (1897) by Anne Katharine Green;

Thoughts on the root of all evil:

"You can't blame money for what it does to people. The evil is in the people, and money is the peg they hang it on. They go wild for money when they've lost their other values."

—Low Archer in *The Moving Target* (1949) by Ross Macdonald;

"Whenever he saw a dollar in another man's hands he took it as a personal grudge, if he couldn't take it any other way."

—Jeff Peters of Andy Tucker in "The Octopus Marooned," *The Gentle Gaffer* (1908) by O. Henry;

Opinions on marriage and the ties that bind:

"Marriage, in my view, should be a balanced stalemate between equal adversaries."

—Amelia Peabody Emerson in *The Mummy Case* (1985) by Elizabeth Peters;

"You could say they're related in a way, only we don't have a word for it. They were both married to the same chap."

—Greg Hocking in *Posthumous Papers* (1979) by Robert Barnard;

"Insanity runs in my family. It practically gallops!"

—Mortimer Brewster, trying to explain why he can't marry, *Arson*, and *Old Lace* (1941) by Joseph Kesselring;

Frivolous pleasures:

"It is the rare mind indeed that can render the hitherto nonexistent blindingly obvious."

—Dirk Gently in *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* (1987) by Douglas Adams;

"It's so pointless, there has to be a point."

—August Maltravers in *The Latimer Meny* (1985) by Robert Richardson;

And musings on life itself:

"Life is the process of finding out, too late, everything that should have been obvious to you at the time."

—*The Only Girl in the Game* (1960) by John D. MacDonald;

"There was no choice. It turns out there never is a choice, and only the occasional illusion to keep us interested. Life is ten per cent carrot and ninety per cent stick."

—Mitch Tobin in *Wax Apple* (1970) by Tucker Coe (aka Donald Westlake);

"Life is a series of crises separated by brief periods of self-delusion."

"I need a pith helmet to protect me from your sayings."

—Exchange between Mickey Slavin and Harvey Blissberg in *Fadaway* (1986) by Richard Rosen.

Sadly, *The Mystery Lovers' Book of Quotations* has not been updated since 1988. But perhaps it's time to take matters into our own hands. If you will send us your favorite recent quotations (with the sources noted as in the above examples), we'll run them in an upcoming issue of *TAD*. Happy hunting!

There have been some recent changes at *TAD*. Judi Vause, who has been working in various capacities in our offices for some time now, will be taking over the duties of managing editor and advertising manager. Judi has worked at ABC Television and is, in addition to her other talents, a computer whiz. Judi will be attending both the Edgar Banquet and Malice Domestic, so be sure to stop and chat if you'll be at either of these events.

Hope you enjoy this issue!

KATE STINE
Editor-in-chief

* Answers to the questions from *Mystery & Crime: The New York Public Library Book of Answers*: 1. Milo Milodragovich, in *Dancing Bear* (1983), by James Crumley. 2. Metta Victoria Fuller Victor, who wrote *The Dead Letter* (1867) under the name Seelye Register.

Letters

The Real Anne Perry

Dear TAD,

Bill DeAndrea's column "J'Accuse!" (28#1), concerning the recent revelations about Anne Perry's past, concludes with two questions: 1) Which is the "real" Anne Perry? 2) What can Mr. DeAndrea possibly say to her upon their next meeting?

These questions need not trouble him. As Ms. Perry's literary agent in North America I have had occasion to both answer the first question, and to tackle the second situation for myself.

As to which Anne Perry is the "real" one—the troubled teenager who participated in a murder forty years ago, or the dignified, gracious and accomplished mystery writer whom we know today—it is obvious that the "real" Anne Perry is the latter. It would be cynical to believe otherwise, especially as Ms. Perry's personal story can give us all hope.

Regarding what to say upon meeting Ms. Perry, I do recognize Mr. DeAndrea's concern. This social situation does not come up every day.

However, it was just this situation that I faced when I first learned of Ms. Perry's past last August. I could not ignore it, I am not only her agent but, I believe, her friend. Thus, I phoned and said, "Anne, I am so sorry to hear about the publicity you are facing. Are you okay? Let's discuss what I can do to help."

Obviously, not everyone knows her as well as I, nor is help needed from all. Still, perhaps the spirit of that response will prove a guide. Tactful acknowledgement is a help. Support is a bigger help still. Most of all, it is kind to show faith in the essential goodness of one of our own.

After all, who do we understand better than a mystery writer?

DONALD MAASS
New York, NY

Cheers for Tapply on Gun Control Issue

Dear TAD,

The Winter 1995 issue (28#1) was one of your best yet. I particularly enjoyed William G. Tapply's thoughts



THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

presents

THE INDEPENDENT

MYSTERY BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION

Mystery Best-Seller List

OCTOBER–DECEMBER 1994

HARDCOVERS

1. *The Scold's Bridle*, Minette Walters
2. *Brother Cadfael's Penance*, Ellis Peters
3. *Aunt Dimity and the Duke*, Nancy Atherton and *She Walks These Hills*, Sharon McCrum
5. *The Last Suppers*, Diane Mott Davidson
6. *Martians in Maggody*, Joan Hess and *Lying in Wait*, J.A. Jance
8. *Wild Horses*, Dick Francis
9. *Writers of the Purple Sage*, B.B. Smith
10. *Shinju*, Laura Joe Rowland

PAPERBACKS

1. *The Sculptress*, Minette Walters
2. *The Ice House*, Minette Walters
3. *Tis the Season to be Murdered*, Valerie Wolzien
4. *Festival of Deaths*, Jane Haddam
5. *King of the Mountain*, M.K. Wren
6. *Aunt Dimity's Death*, Nancy Atherton
7. *Do Unto Others*, Jeff Abbott
8. *A Knife to Remember*, Jill Churchill
9. *Mystery Bred in Buckhead*, Patricia Houck Sprinkle
10. *Defend and Betray*, Anne Perry

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Killing Time, Seattle, WA; The Mystery Book Store, Dallas, TX
Murder by the Book, Houston, TX; Murder for Fun, Raleigh, NC
Once Upon a Crime, Minneapolis, MN; The Poisoned Pen, Scottsdale, AZ
The Raven Bookstore, Lawrence, KS; Salmagundi, Naperville, IL
Seattle Mystery Bookshop, Seattle, WA; Spenser's Bookshop, Boston, MA

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

on gun control and the effect of his 1989 Massachusetts testimony regarding assault weapons. Mr. Tapply's talents as a writer of fiction are equaled by his factual narrative of the reaction his testimony got from the "gun nuts" and the "gun control nuts." In a succinct and remarkably clear essay he hits the nail on the head regarding so many issues in our society. In a world looking for easy answers we would all be better off if there were more thoughtful people such as William Tapply with the courage to address these complicated issues with thought rather than pure emotion. *The Seventh Enemy* is great, too.

Joan Hess's cover and interview were a treat (as is *Martians in Maggody*) and the article on Americans in Golden Age fiction sent me back to my bookshelves to reread the works cited.

The only discordant note in this fine issue was Bill DeAndrea's appalling attempt to exploit Anne Perry's current situation. His version of this tragic story is spotty at best and neglects many of the mitigating factors

involved in a forty-year-old murder. Anne Perry accepts full responsibility for her actions and I am sure she would give anything to be able to undo them. In answer to Mr. DeAndrea's question about what to say the next time they meet, I'd suggest "Hello Anne. How are you?"

Keep up the good work!

JUDY JERSTAD CATER
Carlsbad, CA

Consider It Done

Dear TAD,

Would you please announce the following meeting in forthcoming issues of your journal:

Popular Culture Association in the South and American Culture Association in the South, in Richmond, VA, October 5-7, 1995. For information, contact: Robert L. McDonald, Program Chair, Department of English and Fine Arts, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, VA 24450.

Many thanks.

ROBERT L. McDONALD
Lexington, VA

Announcing Historicon

Dear TAD

We'd like to invite your readers to a three-day celebration of the historical mystery novel (the ancient world to 1913) in Boulder, Colorado on June 2-4, 1995. Many of the events will take place in the historic auditorium on the grounds of Chautauqua Park, one of the few remaining Chautauquas in America. Events include panels on various periods of the historical mystery, performances by members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, a little Shakespeare, a little opera, a little drama, a little Sherlockiana, perhaps a trial (Richard III, Lizzie Borden, Jack the Ripper?), a History Bowl based on College Bowl, a croquet tournament, costume parties, and a tea. A gala performance will be held Saturday night in the auditorium hosted by Edward Marston. A family-style banquet will be held in the 1898 dining hall. Day passes, auditorium box lunch and banquet tickets may also be purchased separately.

For lodging in Chautauqua Park

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— London Sunday Telegraph

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— The Times (London)

"James' style is so flat and edgy it sings."

— Kirkus Reviews

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— Bennington (VT) Banner

"... bright, clever, striking."

— Murder on lib

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by B. Comfort
224 pp., hardcover \$19.00

A Tish McWhinny Mystery

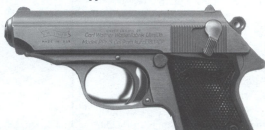
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itself, call the Colorado Chautauqua Association (303-442-3282).

Full memberships to Historicon are \$100 per person and include admittance to all events, including banquet, box lunch and tea. Please send checks made out to Historicon to c/o Rue Morgue, P.O. Box 4119, Boulder, CO 80306.

TOM & ENID SCHANTZ
Boulder, CO

Announcing BuffCon

Dear TAD,

Please tell your readers about our new convention, BuffCon. BuffCon, the Buffalo (New York) Mystery Convention will be held Friday, May 19th and Saturday, May 20th. This conference covers all subgenres of the mystery and offers fans a chance to meet writers; Lawrence Block is this year's guest of honor. Events include a Meet the Authors Reception, a full day of programming (panels, readings, signings), a cocktail party and banquet, and admission to the book dealers' room. Cost is \$40 (\$50 after May 1st), or \$30 not including the banquet (\$40 after May 1st). Please make checks payable to:

BuffCon
Medaille College
Agassiz Circle
Buffalo, New York 14214
Phone (716) 836-7223.

Pompous—Moi?

Dear TAD,
Pompous—Moi?

Mr. Barry, W. Gardner seems to have gotten bent out of shape by my remarks as printed in the Fall 1994 (27#4) TAD, and has rebuked me severely for unbridled "criticism" in the Winter issue. Actually Gardner is right in defining a semi-professional critic as one "who gets paid occasionally," which is what St. James Press (their volume on *20th Century Crime and Mystery Writers*) and Oxford UP (the forthcoming *Companion to Crime & Mystery Writing*) did or is supposed to do in my case. So that makes me, what? Triple-A? Texas League? Definitely semi-pro.

Gardner defines a critic as someone who "expresses opinions as canonical

[sic] law"—wrong, I'm afraid. A critic is someone who uses his or her critical faculties, which presumably is what Gardner uses when he acts, as he says he does, as a "reviewer." He also labels himself as a "reader" (taken, I think, for granted) and also as a "fan." Evidently by a "fan" he means someone who attends Bouchercon (congratulations), meets the authors, and presents his credentials to the TAD regulars there. It isn't something I'd do myself (the last author I thought I'd like to meet was the late John D. MacDonald) but there are those who do this sort of thing, and good for them.

But Gardner rebuts none of my opinions—and that is just what they are: opinions. If he feels addressed *de haut en bas*, that is his problem. He says that he is always ready to be instructed by his betters: that is an old, moss-covered, pseudo-populist gambit that simply invites an intemperate response. It's much like the old gag: I have opinions; you are opinionated. Or: I am a reviewer; you are a critic.

For the rest, more opinions. I took a shot at Sara Paretsky as a Chicago writer and made an invidious comparison between her and the good citizens (8th graders, actually) of Escanaba for which I apologize to Ms. Kuhn and the Escanabans, especially for not checking my gazetteer. Paretsky remains deaf to the tones of Chicago; this city can be mean, but not mean-spirited. Chicago is not at all an easy city to capture; Grainger tries too hard, R. Campbell is just ridiculous, D'Amato is finding her voice, and Les Roberts (not a native) seems to be doing the best job, at this point. Evidently more than a little irony is needed, oddly enough—and a lot of experience (or very good sources) out in the neighborhoods.

I here provide *gratis* the solution to the Problem of DeAndrea. Put the poor guy's mug on the cover, do the Star Interview he has been whining for all these years—and then pull his consistently meaningless column. You would make at least one aged elitist, and probably a number of other folks, very happy.

DEAN A. MILLER
Chicago, IL

New from Scarecrow Press



NGAIO MARSH: The Woman and Her Work

B. J. Rahn, ed.

268 pp. photo 1905 #3023-X \$32.50

We are pleased to celebrate the multifaceted talent of Ngaiio Marsh—painter, director, and detective novelist—on the centenary of her birth, 23 April 1995. This illustrated festschrift presents a comprehensive profile of Marsh, with articles discussing various aspects of her personality, life, and work. Among the contributors are: her official biographer, Margaret Lewis; her cousin, John Dacres-Mannings; and two Detection Club colleagues, H. R. F. Keating and Julian Symons. Marsh's theatre career is traced by Paul Bushnell, and its influence on her detective writing is assessed by Marilyn Rye and Catherine Aird. Her contribution as a novelist of manners is addressed by Kathryn S. McDorman, Susan Oleksiw, and B. A. Pike, while her accomplishments in short fiction are discussed by Douglas G. Greene and Bruce Harding.

Also available—

**SHERLOCK HOLMES: Screen and
Sound Guide**, Gordon E. Kelley
343 pp. photoes 1994 #2650-6 \$37.50

**WHAT ABOUT MURDER?
(1981-1991): A Guide to Books
About Mystery and Detective Fiction**

Jon L. Breen

390 pp. 1993 #2606-7 \$39.50

**MURDER... BY CATEGORY:
A Subject Guide to Mystery Fiction**

Tasha Mackler

484 pp. 1991 #2493-9 \$52.50

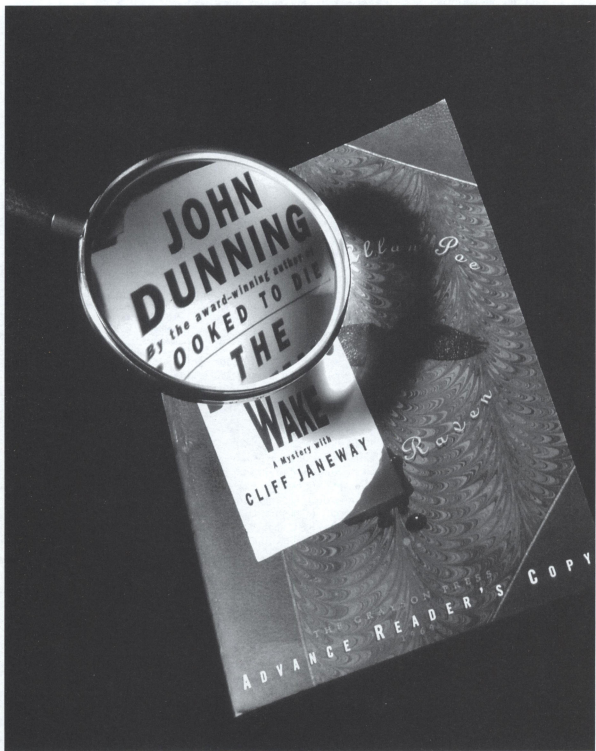
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Charles L.P. Silet teaches contemporary fiction and film at Iowa State University. He is currently writing a history of the American hardboiled detective novel.

THE BOOK- MAN'S EYE

by Charles L.P. Silet

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSAN GODDARD

The extraordinary success of his first Cliff Janeway novel, *Booked to Die* (1992), reintroduced mystery readers to John Dunning whose earlier paperback originals, *Looking for Ginger North* (1980) and *Deadline* (1981) were both nominated for Edgars. His next Janeway novel, *The Bookman's Wake*, is just out from Scribner this month. At one time or another in his life John Dunning was a book dealer and owner of Old Algonquin Books, worked as a newspaper reporter on *The Denver Post*, and served as a racehorse walker. An authority on old-time radio and author of one of the standard references in the field, *Tune in Yesterday*, he also hosted a Sunday afternoon radio show that played the best of the classic dramas and comedies.

In the following interview he talks about his current success with the Cliff Janeway series and shares both his past experiences as a novelist and his thoughts about contemporary crime fiction.

TAD: Tell me something about your background, your family, your schooling, that sort of thing.

DUNNING: I was born in Brooklyn in 1942, January 9th. My dad was from Charleston, South Carolina and my parents took us back there in 1945 where I was raised. Education, not much to be made of that—I was a tenth grade dropout. I did get a GED, which is going to be a historical document some day because it's from the state of South Carolina and it says that the holder of this is guaranteed by the State of South Carolina to be equivalent to the average white twelfth-grade graduate. I did do some college-level classes, but I found college difficult to get interested in. I bummed around and had a lot of odd jobs. I was a glass cutter in shops in



South Carolina and did a little bit of that out here in Denver. I came out here in 1964 with some friends, just to get away from Charleston, because everybody has to get away from where they grew up.

TAD: What did you do in Colorado?

DUNNING: I became a racetracker and followed the horses around for a couple of years. It was a great time in my life. I'm one of those writers who was really influenced by reading. When I was a kid I got into the Black Stallion books and nothing would do after that but I had to have a fling on the racetracks and Denver was the first town I'd settled in that had a racetrack. I walked in one day just before the race meet in 1964. At that time, you could walk in cold and get a job just like that. The job paid \$50 a week and a place to sleep in the tack room. But it was wonderful because everybody slept in the tack rooms, and it was great camaraderie. I'd give a lot to find out where those guys are now. We bunked together and chased women and all that kind of stuff. I did that for a couple of years. I went out to California to work at Santa Anita, Bay Meadows, Golden Gate Fields, and the county fair circuit.

TAD: How did you begin writing?

DUNNING: I remember—Christmas in '65. The only way you knew it was Christmas was somebody four or five rows down was playing Christmas music on the radio. It was just like any other day at the track and after a while I thought, "What else do I want to be?" Well, I always wanted to be a writer. I always figured that I would some day and so I just started up the ladder from the lowest rung at a newspaper. In every town I went through I stopped at the newspaper. Of course having no degree, not even having a high school diploma, I didn't have the greatest qualifications. Every year I came through Denver, and I'd go talk to the papers. They never had anything, but at the *Denver Post* I got to be known by the guy who hires and

I wrote a few articles here and there. Then I began writing book reviews, and I did thirty or forty and got them published. I think I shamed them into hiring me; they really didn't want me.

because I was persistent, finally, he gave me a job in the *Post* library filing pictures. I did that for about a year and started writing some stuff. The hardest part of any job is getting it. I went around and made friends with all the editors and started writing for their different departments. I wrote a few articles here and there. Then I began writing book reviews, and I did thirty or forty and got them published. I think I shamed them into hiring me; they really didn't want me. The managing editor was a hard-bitten guy named John Rogers who told me in very explicit terms how little chance I had of making it there. The filing cabinets were full of applications from prize winning journalists from back East who had worked on papers like *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* and wanted to come out to Colorado to get out of the rat race. But they gave me a shot. They had a program there called the "Twenty-twenty," where you could spend twenty hours a week as a reporter and twenty hours as a copy boy. At twenty-six, I was the oldest copy boy on the paper, and I had to take a cut in pay to do that. Not

that the work in the library paid much; I was only making about \$65 a week anyway. The first story I did I caught a judge fixing a ticket, and they headlined that across page two of the paper. I was very energetic and I knew I had a lot of ground to make up, so I was what you call "turned on" all the time. I did that for about three years, and did pretty well. I became their investigative reporter in a short time. They had a three-man investigative team they put me on. Two were what they called "seasoned reporters" and me. It was really a great honor. We didn't break any wonderful stories. In fact, most of the ones we did do they killed because they tended to offend some of the people who advertised in the paper.

TAD: How did you get started in fiction?

DUNNING: I quit the paper in April of '70 to write and during the next two years I managed to turn out a novel that was probably incomprehensible. The last time I looked, it had about 300 characters, was 450 pages long, and it was going in all directions.

TAD: Was this *Denver*?

DUNNING: No, this was a novel that I never finished, but it was like *Denver*. It was a big, sprawling mainstream book with lots of characters. It was based on a true incident that I would still like to resurrect someday. Finally, I realized I wasn't making it and I started working for political candidates. I got a job working for a guy named Craig Barnes who was running for Congress and he lost because he split the Democratic vote here but that spun off into working for Pat Schroeder and she won. I worked on her first campaign as press secretary and then I worked for a man who ran for mayor, and later won a race for D.A. I also taught a couple of adult education college classes, even though I lacked a degree. Once you've taught they don't seem to question your ability. I taught journalism and novel writing.

TAD: Where was this?

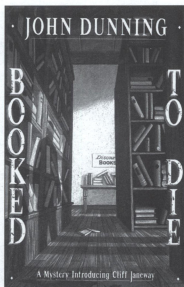
DUNNING: I started at the University of Denver and then went over to



Metropolitan State College, and gradually they worked me into the degree program where I was teaching for credit. It took the guy who was running the Journalism Department three years to persuade them to let me do that. The money was a lot better, but the hassles were greater, because there you're teaching students who are motivated for a different reason. They want to get grades instead of learn something. There was a lot of conflict and I didn't like it as much. But then I started doing a radio show. I became a collector of old-time radio. In fact, I became a radio historian, and I wrote a book on radio called *Time in Yesterday*. And one day a radio station called and asked me if I wanted to play some of these old things on the air, and I did that for about eighteen years.

TAD: "The Shadow" and that sort of thing?

DUNNING: "The Shadow" really was the least of it. Those things are pretty corny today. If it was just the nostalgia part of it I would have lost interest pretty quickly, but I soon found that the really great stuff were the shows nobody ever heard of. There were shows that were only on for a short time—just like television today—like "I'll Fly Away." There were shows that were on for six months or a year that were absolutely wonderful. They were taking chances then and trying new things. And so I played those shows. We had the whole afternoon on Sunday and I would talk about them and about who the stars were and where they came from and what they did and who the writers were and how the shows were written and what type of effect they had. When we played "The Jack Benny Program" we played it with all the original Lucky Strike commercials. I wouldn't think of cutting a word out of it, even some of the really racist stuff that was done in those days, not just "Amos and Andy," things that used some pretty brutal racial language. Of course during WW II the Japanese were all "Japs." But I always played it, and I said, "Well, you can't change it, that's the way it was. We just give it to you unfettered." We had a sponsor for years who was satisfied to just



get their commercial mentioned around the shows and so when I started it we played the shows just like they ran in the '30s and '40s with no commercial interruptions at all.

TAD: What a great opportunity.

DUNNING: Oh, it was wonderful. So, I did old time radio, I did campaign stuff, I taught classes, I wrote magazine articles. In 1974 my son was born and I decided I needed to go back to the *Post*. So I went back and learned all the reasons why I quit the first time. I quit again after a year.

TAD: When did you publish your first novel?

DUNNING: My first novel was published in 1974. It was called *The Holland*

Suggestions, and was one of Barbara Norville's "Black Bat Mysteries" at Bobbs Merrill. Just about that same time I published my first old-time radio encyclopedia at Prentice Hall in 1975 or 1976 and I quit the *Post* again. My wife had been working solidly all this time, and I kept thinking that sooner or later I was going to make a living at this but that just never happened. I went through some really long dry spells. My second novel was rejected by Barbara, and it took me twenty, twenty-two publishers to sell it.

TAD: Was this *Looking for Ginger North*?

DUNNING: Yes, thank God for a persistent agent. Phyllis Westberg is my agent, always has been. The original title of that book was *Bloodline*, and it went around so long that Sidney Sheldon stole my title. After it sold I had to change the name. They decided to call it *Looking for Ginger North*. I said, "That sounds a lot like *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*." They didn't seem to mind that—everything is derivative. It's funny because I really had given up on it by that time. I got so many rejection letters saying, "This is just such a neat little mystery, but it has no big book potential." I decided to give them one that did have big potential, and I wrote *Denver* which was large. It had fifty characters and a big, sprawling mainstream background. The Ku Klux Klan really did take over much of the state government of Colorado in the '20s and several other states, too. It was sent around and when I started getting rejected, I thought, "Jeez, it doesn't matter what you do...."



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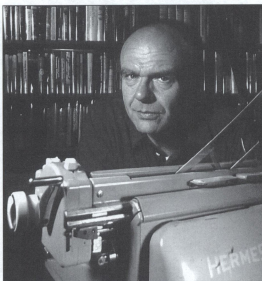
Then we sold *Looking for Ginger North*, and it became an Edgar finalist. I lost the Edgar by one vote but I got a scroll for it. I thought, "Well, maybe it didn't matter that it was rejected twenty-two times." My publisher was looking for something along similar lines, so I wrote a novel called *Deadline*, which was the easiest thing that I ever wrote. I had just sent *Denver* to Phyllis and I was full of nervous energy and postpartum blues, so I started to outline one morning and I pulled together a cast of characters and an idea. Forty-two days later I had a book. I've never come close to repeating that before or since. I sent it off and Phyllis sold it right out of the typewriter so I had several books right in a row. In fact, *Looking for Ginger North* and *Denver* came out, I think, the same month—in the winter or spring of 1980—by two separate publishers. New York Times Books published *Denver* in hardback, and Gold Medal published *Ginger North* and *Deadline* in paperback. That book subsequently went to England in a hardback, but it was only paper in this country. I thought I was going great again, but I had another one of those times when you just can't seem to give anything away. I went four or five years without a nibble. It didn't look like I was ever going to sell anything again. You just get to a point after awhile when you say, "Well, maybe it's time to do something else."

TAD: Were you writing all this time?

DUNNING: Oh, yeah. There's a shaggy dog story I could tell you about the aftermath of *Denver*. Times Books gave me a contract on another novel, a 1,200-page historical novel, which I subsequently did complete. Everything that could possibly go wrong with a book deal went wrong with that one. It's still sitting here. It's been under contract twice and another publisher was about to give me a fairly substantial contract for it, but that deal fell apart

too. It's one of those publishing stories from hell. There are many of those. I read about them all the time. I spent three or four years not selling books and finally decided to get into the used and rare book business. If your fantasy isn't to write books it's to have a bookstore. Everybody feels that way, or a lot of people do.

So we opened the Old Algonquin Bookstore on East Colfax Avenue in June of 1984. We were there ten years and I've got to tell you it's the greatest business that you could imagine. I'd still be there, if I hadn't started writing again. Although doing retail wears kind of thin—the public is not my favorite



part—but the hunt for books... I couldn't believe the kind of stuff I was buying. Suddenly, I was looking for them full time and seriously and they were there. When you establish a beat where books are liable to turn up and you're there everyday, twice a day, you do find them. One of the first things I found was a book signed by Harry Truman for ninety-five cents. I got \$300 for it, and I found two of those over a period of time. Lyndon Johnson was in Denver about the time fourth printings of a book called *The Professional* had come out and everybody in the Colorado Democratic party must have handed him a copy of that to sign, because about one out of every three or four you find in the thrift stores are signed by Johnson. They sell for a

flat \$150 apiece. Any presidential signature, even Clinton's—Herbert Hoover might be the exception—is at least three figures. I found books signed by Ronald Reagan in thrift stores. I found one book at a thrift store, it was just a cheap book but one I happened to like. I stuck it back on the shelf and came back a week later and it was still there. So I bought it, got out to the car and thumbed it and \$200 cash fell out. About that time I started thinking, "You know this isn't a bad way to make a living."

The best thing about the book business was its depth. I was in it for ten years and I've got to tell you, you don't ever start feeling confident, every day you see stuff you've never seen before. Luckily, I started with a notion that I was going to collect all the reference books I could find so I didn't have to play guessing games. Now I've got a pretty good reference library, but initially it takes forever. Even my years as a reporter were nothing compared to this. In the book business every day is a new treasure hunt. You go out and you hit the streets and you find stuff.

TAD: How did you get back to your fiction?

DUNNING: I had been selling books for about six years when my writer friends started pushing me to start up again. There were a group of fifteen or twenty poor young writers here in Colorado who met regularly, and only Clive Cussler made it to the degree all of us wanted to. But the rest of us were picking up peanuts and my friends would say, "When are you going to write that book? When are you going to get back?" And I'd say, "Oh, I'm really comfortable in my failure." You have no idea how painfree my life was since I'd stopped writing. But in reality it's not like that, there's a kind of an empty spot which if you're a writer, you can't ever fill up. Warwick Downing, who is one of my mystery-writing friends, has written a number of books and he kept bugging me, "Why don't you write a book about a bookstore, write a mystery about a bookstore." Every time we'd



have lunch together he'd start on that. I thought, "Well, why not, why don't I do that." It took me about a year of digging at it before I saw what the story was and once I figured it out, it wrote itself in about four or five months. That was *Booked to Die*.

TAD: Did it sell right away?

DUNNING: I sent it off to Phyllis and she started it around. A year later, I called her up and said, "What is going on? I can't understand why they don't buy this book. I can't write a better book than this, I just don't know how to do it." And she said, "I don't know either. It's the book stuff—that's the feedback I'm getting. They were afraid of the book stuff." They kept saying, "Well, gee, we never read a bookstore mystery that has this much book stuff in it, it's really pretty heavy. We find it interesting because we're in the trade, but we're afraid that the average person won't really care about your bookstore and how you find books and scout around and this kind of thing." I told Phyllis at the time, "You just wait, if this book ever does sell, all of my flaws will be virtues overnight. I've just got a feeling that's the stuff that's going to sell the book."

TAD: It's like the Tony Hillerman story about cutting all the Indian stuff.

DUNNING: Yeah, cut all the Indian stuff, unbelievable. Then Susanne Kirk bought it at Scribner's. The book was published on, I think, January 22, 1992 and the first edition was sold out within 48 hours. I wasn't even going to stock it in my store because I don't stock new books, but my wife made me order 25 and we sold those almost overnight. A lot of the scuttlebutt got started among the dealers in used and rare books. I don't know how that happens and certainly Scribner's didn't do anything to make it happen. They didn't advertise the book to anyone at all. I was being treated as a first novel-

ist, which in many ways I was. Luckily, I had been gone long enough that no one had remembered all the books I failed at. But suddenly the used book dealers were hoarding it. They were buying a hundred copies and salting them away. I started getting letters from all over the country from book dealers asking me if they could send me suitcases full of books to sign. They actually came in suitcases and big cartons. I'd sign fifty at a time and send them back. The second printing came off about five weeks later and then there were two more printings. It got up to about 15,000 to 18,000 copies, which is fairly remarkable for a book

I spent three or four years not selling books and finally decided to get into the used and rare book business. If your fantasy isn't to write books it's to have a bookstore. Everybody feels that way, or a lot of people do.

that nobody had ever heard of.

Then of course they wanted another one, and they said, "Put a lot of book stuff in it." Susanne never had any problem with the book stuff, maybe that's why she bought it. It was all those other editors. My agent got a call from one of the editors who had turned it down and they wanted the second one for a hardcover/softcover deal with lots of book stuff. I really liked Scribner's and I liked Susanne so I just felt I didn't need to make a bunch of advance money when we didn't know at this point whether it would sell out. I was just happy that somebody wanted to publish the damn thing. And now, the second one, which is called *The Bookman's Wake*, is due in April. Oh, and Oxford

University Press has contracted with me for the old-time radio book. I've done a greatly revised and expanded version—god, is it expanded—and I turned in 3,500 pages. Oxford went into corporate shock when they saw the manuscript. It cost me \$120 to Xerox and another \$40 to mail it. I was afraid they were going to ask me to cut it in half, in which case I probably would have had to go someplace else. And there's no guarantee that I would ever find anybody else, because I think Oxford is the ideal publisher for this book. But they said they needed to cut fifteen percent minimum, and I started to work on it. I'll get it wrapped up next summer. I hope they can get it out in '96.

TAD: Where did Cliff Janeway come from? How did you come up with the policeman/bookman?

DUNNING: I've known cops who collect books. I know that sounds strange, but I had cops as customers. Janeway is kind of an idealization of myself; what I'd like to be if I had that kind of nerve, that kind of physical stamina. When I started *Booked to Die* I knew I was going to do a cop who collected books, quits the force and becomes a book dealer. The initial plot was entirely different. I had a whole

different notion which was based on an experience I'd had at the *Post* but it just wasn't working. Janeway was distant and cold, almost aloof. It was one of those things where if you dig at it long enough, it goes into metamorphosis and becomes something else. I approached it two or three different times. The way I write is, I start out and I just keep rewriting the same page until something breaks and I start doing something else. Sometimes it means putting in something earlier and going back and rewriting all the way up to that point because everything changes. I don't use a word processor, I just write with an old manual typewriter.

After I'd been digging at it for a long time—with the wrong story, the wrong hero, but the right background—a



book dealer, Steve Wilson, who bears some resemblance to one of the characters in my book, came in one rainy day when there wasn't a single customer in the store. The two of us were talking and he said, "My god, I just heard an incredible story that in California this old man died and he had a house full of first editions and the collection fell to some lawyers to broker. They didn't have a clue to what they were doing and they didn't know a modern first edition from Adam. To them they're just books. There was a whole run of Hemingway and Faulkner. A bunch of other firsts." (You know it takes a real incompetent to mistake Hemingway, but there were a lot of writers in there that nobody ever heard of but were still worth a lot of money. I could see a lawyer missing out on *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a \$700 book.) Steve said, "This book dealer got wind of it and here they were going to put these things out for fifty cents a piece, and he went charging

over there and he said, 'You can't sell those for fifty cents, I'll give you a dollar for them.' And for an outlay of about four or five thousand dollars, he walked out of there with \$150,000 worth of books." I thought, "Boy, that's a nice motive for murder."

I took it home and I wondered if I could work that into the book. I started dickering around with it. There was still something wrong with Janeway, he needed to have a kick in the pants. Suddenly, Janeway stood up and became something and then the plot jelled. I threw out the original idea that I'd been working with and four months later the book was done. It's like you have to go through all that agony before it happens, but then it happens all at once. A writer once told me that there's a point in every book where you see the end and you know what's going to happen so clearly, at that point it's just a matter of typing.

TAD: When did you think of him as a series character? Did you originally?

DUNNING: I'm not sure that I did. I finished the book and started another book, a Walker book. Walker was my character in *Deadline*, and I wanted to bring him back. I was a good way into that book when this book sold and Susanne said, "I need another Janeway book." And I told her that as a matter of fact I had another book. But she said, "I need another Janeway book." So I had to stop the Walker book and start the second one from scratch. They are fairly intricate books in the sense that they have a lot of real book scouting and book selling and stuff. I'm not real interested in doing a series where every other story is a hunt for a valuable book and you just merely change the book. It becomes *The Maltese Falcon* all over again, except it's a book instead of a bird.

TAD: I thought of that when I was reading *Bookman's Wake*.

DUNNING: Yeah, but then you get to the end of it and you find out that it's something else. It's not the search for one book, because it breaks open and there's a tragedy there that transcends the hunt for one book. And that's what I'm interested in. Hopefully in the course of it you illuminate a facet of the book world that the average person doesn't know about.

TAD: *Booked to Die* was about modern first editions and *The Bookman's Wake* is about fine printing.

DUNNING: The first one was about the business of modern first editions. One of the reasons why it took off the way it did is because very few people outside the trade knew that some of these books are worth the kind of money they're worth. *Camie* is not just another Stephen King book; it's worth \$500. The paperback of *Booked to Die* is now out and I'm getting a good deal of the blame for the fact that book dealers aren't finding books like they used to. People aren't putting them out in garage sales anymore. The second book was about limited editions of fine press books and the printers who make them. But there's a whole lot of nuts-and-bolts book scouting around the fringes of it.



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TAD: How much were you thinking about the bibliography when you began?

DUNNING: Not at all. *Booked to Die* was about books because I had been in the book business and, frankly, I had never read a book like that. Most of the bookstore books that I have read—and I haven't read a whole lot of them—dealt with the book world as a fringe thing. I had not seen any books about the book world I knew, which is full of strange people. Some of them are the salt of the earth, really great guys, and others are just, my god, renegades, ex-alcoholics, ex-druggies. They're not the academics and the gentlemen that they used to be, but then neither are literary agents and publishers. Neither are authors.

TAD: I'd like to ask some specific questions about your earlier crime fiction. Was *The Holland Suggestions* a crime novel?

DUNNING: Yeah, it was a mystery. It's a novel about a guy who had hypnotic suggestion planted in his mind as to the location of this treasure, and this suggestion kicked in years later and sent him on this trip that he didn't really understand. I don't know whether it's a good book. I keep running into people who say it's the best book I ever wrote. I think it's pretty far-fetched. If it is the best book I ever wrote then I've been over the hill for twenty years.

TAD: The second one was *Looking for Ginger North*, which was a racetrack mystery.

DUNNING: That had its origins when I was walking horses at Bay Meadows. I keep hearing that it's my weakest book; it may well be but I don't know. It was also nominated for the Edgar but after awhile you realize that those kinds of things are strange. Nobody knows why Edgars get awarded or to whom and for what reasons. I was a runner-up two years running and that was one of them.

TAD: What about *Denver*?

DUNNING: *Denver* came about because I was frustrated and I kept get-

ting these turn-downs for *Ginger North* that said, "This doesn't have any big book potential." So I thought, "Well, to hell with it, I'll give you a book with big book potential." I was looking for an idea when I saw in *Colorado Magazine*, an article called, "When the Klan Ruled Denver." It was about the '20s when the Klan had come back after the Civil War and by the time the peak of it came around 1925, the governor was a Klansman, Ben Stapleton, who our airport is named after. The chief of police was a Klansman and so were all the heads of licensing boards. At one point there was talk about setting up armed checkpoints at every road coming into the state so if they didn't like the way you looked they could turn you back. About the same time I remember watching a television show in which James Michener was asked, "How do you start?" And Michener said, "I start from a sense of deep dramatic freight, I have a feeling of this dramatic power, and that's what the book grows out of." I had the same feeling about this. I thought if I can't write a book with big book potential about this subject, then I can't write. And so I spent the next year and a half doing *Denver*, while *Ginger North* was getting rejected by everybody.

The manuscript of *Denver* was about 800 pages long and my agent sent it off to Harper and Row. This time the rejection letters were, "My god, it's much too big." It was exactly the opposite. An editor at Harper and Row said, "There's a novel in here, but I'm damned if I can find it. He goes off in tangents, I don't know why, and then he comes back hun-

dreds of pages later and ties it up. It makes a neat package if you remember what the initial thing was to begin with. I know that somebody can get a novel out of this, but I can't do it." That was a pretty grim day, but the book was sold to Times Books after about only three or four submissions. We got a \$60,000 paperback deal, which was thrilling. Even though you've got to split it with the hardcover publisher, it's better than anything I'd ever gotten. In *Denver*, my reporter hero at the *Denver Post* had the same problem with management that I had when I was there. When you find something that's embarrassing to the newspaper advertisers, it's never going to see the light of day. That happened to me more times than you want to hear about. So *Denver* was an anger novel, which is the best kind of novel to write. If you can write it while you're feeling pissed off at something, you can write a pretty good book.

Deadline came right in its wake, and it was a continuation of that. Walker was a newspaper reporter who had trouble getting his stories printed. Editors will always tell you that they value good writing and that they value your integrity as a reporter and all that kind of stuff. Then the minute you start getting close to the truth, their idea of what strong writing is and mine become two different things. They start eating it alive. So *Deadline* came along and it just wrote itself. I still had that same hot anger—I still have it. I don't think editors ought to do things like that. So

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that's where those books came from.

TAD: What is *Deadline* about?

DUNNING: *Deadline* came out of the Patty Hearst kidnapping. It was a novel about dissident students and it came out about that time. It was also about the FBI and had a lot to do with the Ellsberg stealing of the Pentagon papers, only I fictionalized that and made it something else. It had FBI goons in it. In fact one of the FBI guys is a killer. I had a killer and a kind of a white knight, both within the FBI, playing off each other. Walker was the reporter who gets the story but can't get it into the paper. Then he has to go on the run. It's a chase book. For about half of it it's a pretty good mystery. I still think that's my best book prior to *Booked to Die*. I reread part of it recently and I still like it.

TAD: You mentioned earlier that your education largely came from your reading. What did you read that had an influence on you?

DUNNING: I read all of the Hardy Boys. When I was twelve I read all of Walter Farley—all of the Black Stallion books—and I read all of the Rover Boys. One of the greatest discoveries I ever made was getting into this garage of a friend of mind and finding a box full of the Rover Boys books when I was twelve years old. I thought they were absolutely wonderful. I look back on them now and, of course, they're contrived, but god, what great stuff for

a kid. I also devoured the Tom Swift books. Then there came a day—I don't know how old, I was probably thirteen—when I got away from the Hardy Boys. One day they weren't quite as good as they used to be. Then I started reading all the horse and dog books. Then I got into the sexy books, like *Peyton Place* and *East of Eden*, which I read when I was very young. I read *The Grapes of Wrath* and I read all the rest of Steinbeck and then I read Hemingway. I think everybody who wanted to write, every young male of my age, went through a Hemingway stage where you just get caught up in the language. I remember sitting with a pencil copying "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" until I had the pace and the rhythm. You just hope you can absorb some of that, it's so wonderful. Then eventually you cast it off and go on. I tried to read Faulkner but couldn't. I remember trying to read *The Sound and the Fury*. At that time I couldn't keep it straight. About four years ago I went back and bucked up the courage to read Faulkner and found it wonderful stuff. I went through all those modern American classics writers. I don't understand why John O'Hara isn't better thought of and I bet he doesn't understand it either, wherever he is. He was always his own most vocal champion. But that was my kind of stuff. Occasionally, I would read the classics, but I was never one for Homer and the Bible and all the things that you're suppose to read. I started reading John Fowles. I'm still in awe of some of the stuff he's done. I can't understand why he's not still writing. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a great book. I

love books like John Gardner's *Mickelson's Ghosts*. That's a great mystery novel. I still don't know what happened, but it doesn't matter, I just love it anyway. I'm a pretty broad, kind of a junkyard reader. I read everything.

TAD: It used to be that there were pretty hard and fast lines drawn between what we describe as "serious fiction" and genre fiction. It seems to be blurring at the moment.

DUNNING: I'm glad that's true, aren't you? You know, one of the reasons why I think that there was that distinction in the old days is because most of the crime writing was pretty awful except for a Raymond Chandler or a Cornell Woolrich. That stuff just blew out of the gate and for my money the best of all of them is James M. Cain. I think *Mildred Pierce* and *The Postman and Double Indemnity* are three of the greatest crime novels ever. The first half of *Serenade* is just absolutely great. But a lot of the stuff that was coming out in the '50s and '60s was pretty hokey. I think today you've got some real writers that work in the crime area, and I do think that distinction is blurred. The guys who keep saying that there is a distinction are by and large academics whose interests are served by keeping that distinction. All you have to do is read your newspaper to see that crime fiction is not really so improbable and there are worse things that happen every day in real life than I could ever dream up to write about. It's like professors don't believe that this kind of stuff can happen in real life. There really are some honest-to-God mysteries in life and that's what makes the mystery field so interesting.

Let me just put it this way, and this I really believe, although I'm just repeating something Chandler said years ago: It's the only literary form that has never been beaten. The perfect mystery has never been written because there comes a time in every one of them when the author has to start cheating. There's just no way around it. You get to the point where the hero has to know more than he can tell the reader and therefore you have to close that door between your-

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self and the readers and you don't tell them. All I can say about genre fiction is that it isn't as cheap and easy as they think. I'd like to see Mr. Updike and some of those guys try it. Not to disparage their talent, which I think is great, but don't put the mystery down to me because I just don't believe it. I know how hard it is to write a good one. It's even hard to write a bad one.

TAD: Is the mystery good for social commentary?

DUNNING: I got into trouble for some things that Janeway said in *Booked to Die*. The editor at the *Drood Review* felt that I had stepped over the bounds by having Janeway so political, but if you read the book, Janeway is really not political at all. What he's saying is, "I don't know what my politics are." The fact is I don't know what my politics are. I was always a life-long Democrat, but now I'm not a member of any political party. I guess I'm anti-politics now. Janeway says something like, "I came back from Vietnam a dove, I went in a hawk came back a dove. You know, I like black people, some of them a lot. I believed in busing when it was necessary, but there's something about affirmative action that leaves me cold." The thing that got me in trouble with the *Drood* fellow, which I guess I'll have to live with, was when Janeway says, "I hate abortion but I'd never pass a law telling a woman she couldn't have one." His objection was that I was using the mystery not for entertainment, which it is supposed to be for, but to push some political agenda. I think that's a crock. That's like saying that there are certain elements in characterization that are off limits because they happen to offend somebody's politics. There's always going to be a critic who's going to have an opinion that's different from mine. I'm the one with the book and he's the one with the magazine, so I write the book and he can criticize it, that's the way it goes. I think he's wrong, though.

TAD: You mentioned a writer's group that you belong to.

DUNNING: It wasn't a formal group, although we were all members of the Colorado Authors' League at one point. We used to go to the League meetings and sit around the bar—that was the best part, not the program, but sitting around the bar talking shop—bitching up a storm about New York and how bad things were. Gradually we all got successful to some degree or another. All of us started publishing and Cussler got rich and we seldom saw him anymore. So it just kind of fell apart.

I'm interested in getting together with writers and talking technique. But there's so much jealousy today. Even when you get together with writers that you know and like, there's this feeling that the guys are against the gals and the gals are against the guys and the gals think the guys had it their own way for years so now it's their turn and they're going to stick it to them. You just get tired of it. I can't pick up the Mystery Writers of America newsletter and read it anymore. It's just so full of acrimony; this is why I'm not a member. The head gal at MWA called and asked me if I wanted to join. I thought I really ought to be a member, I should be. But then I pick up their newsletter and you have the gals saying they never read guy books, the guys saying the gals are just being vicious. California wants to secede from New York and form its own group. Sisters in Crime is angry with MWA or they're angry with factions within their own group. Whatever happened to the days when writers used to have a common cause and sit around and talk about their work? I've heard that Tony Hillerman's group—I say it's his group, it's a group of writers down in Santa Fe or Albuquerque, used to meet the third Thursday or some day of every month in a local automat and talk craft, technique, and maybe even bitch about New York a little bit. That to me is what the camaraderie of getting together with writers is about, not all this other stuff.

TAD: What are you working on now?

DUNNING: I'm trying to get this radio book finished for Oxford. I've still got a

thousand pages to put in order. I've got the glimmer of another Janeway book but it's probably two years away. I've got another novel that I've written that I need to rewrite. It's called *Two O'Clock, Eastern Wartime*, and I don't know whether anything is going to come of that. It's an old-time radio mystery that takes place in the early '40s. I didn't do it right but I think I've got the way to do it now. I'm hopeful that it will do the same thing for radio that *Booked to Die* did with books because I have that background. I've done radio so long now and I know a lot about it and I don't use it. So I'm going to dust that off and see if I want to show it to Scribner and if they want to publish it. I never assume that anybody wants to publish anything any more.

TAD: You mentioned something earlier about another Walker book.

DUNNING: I have a Walker book that's about half finished that's been interrupted half a dozen times. I don't know what might come of that. I really love the opening. It's just almost too good not to use; it's just the rest of the book that is lacking. Fifty pages do not a book make, so I have to figure it out. The main thing I have to do is get the time. The problem is that everybody wants another Janeway book. I can really understand it when I pick up *Publishers Weekly* and read an article about Walter Mosley and he says, "I'm not going to do another Easy Rawlins book this time." There's no way you can write a book a year on the same character with the same background without turning into a hack. I still have a 1,200-page historical novel sitting here on the floor that needs another run through the machine. It's not something I'm willing to just let go. I have too much time, effort and blood in it. Susanne Kirk has been just wonderful. The first thing she said to me was, "I'd love to have one year." Then when I said, "Well, I don't think I can do that," she said, "Well, you do what you can do." There's always the understanding that I would be better served by giving them another Janeway, but if I write a good book that ought to be the thing. If I write a bad book then it doesn't matter. ■

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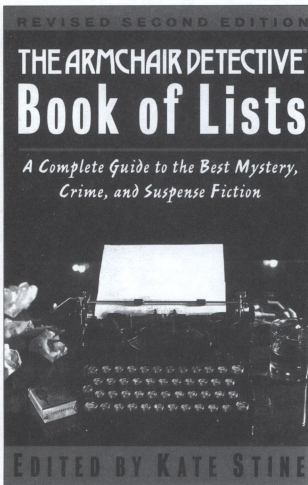
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BY ALLEN J. HUBIN

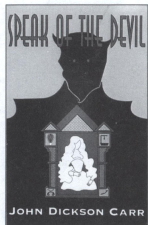
The second of Irene Allen's stories about Elizabeth Eliot and the Society of Friends is **Quaker Witness** (Villard, \$18.00). Eliot lives in Cambridge and worships at the Quaker Meetinghouse there. This is where she meets Janet Stevens, a graduate student in paleontology at Harvard. Janet has been sexually harassed by her advisor, the person who will determine her thesis work success and career prospects thereafter. Finally, unable to take any more of his foul attentions, she complains to the dean—an attack on the Harvard establishment that is decidedly unwelcome. Elizabeth consoles and advises, but matters are about to get worse: Janet's harasser is found murdered, and almost everyone (including the police, mostly offstage here) thinks Janet, with her excellent motive, dunnit. But not Elizabeth, who begins to look for other motives. This is readable enough, with welcome insights into Quaker life and belief, though the prose is not very polished and the impact of the tale and of Janet's plight is much less than it might have been.

William Bayer brings back Lt. Frank Janek of the NYC police in **Mirror Maze** (Villard, \$21.00). Nine years ago a murder investigation reaching into high society put a convicted killer in jail, but doubts, as well as suspicions of police corruption, have trailed the case ever since. Now a witness missing these nine years has suddenly surfaced (in Havana), and it's Janek's case. But how can anyone come out whole from this disastrous affair? Meanwhile an organization of beautiful women is inducing randy men in NYC bars to invite them to their hotel rooms, with robbery and debasement—not sex—the end result. Janek is involved here too, when one of the women's victims turns up dead. This proves a challenge to both Janek's mind and emotions. *Mirror Maze* is a masterfully plotted tale, very smoothly told, with some spectacular scenes

that beg to be filmed.

The intrepid Douglas G. Greene, author of a forthcoming biography of John Dickson Carr and editor of several collections of Carr works, has decided to launch a publishing venture, focusing chiefly on short crime stories. This is perilous territory, in which some (Mysterious Press) do well and others (Pulphouse) not so well. The beginning for Crippen & Landru, Publishers, as Greene has named his imprint, is certainly auspicious—a Carr radio serial, broadcast in 1941 and never before published: **Speak of the Devil** (\$12.95; P.O. Box 9315, Norfolk, VA 23505). The setting is England, 1816. Capt. Hugh Austen, wounded at Waterloo, has been searching London for the beautiful young woman he saw—he's sure he saw—in Brussels just before that battle. His quest has made him the object of ridicule in society, especially ridicule by Thomas Tring, who seems particularly bent on provoking him. Perhaps to a dare to end all dares, with only one survivor? But why? Mysteries abound, and Carr resolves it all to my great satisfaction—though with the help of a colossal coincidence that could have been avoided.

I was far from certain I wanted to read a 400 page novel on sexual harassment in industry, so I picked up **Disclosure** (Knopf, \$24.00) by Michael Crichton with but lukewarm commitment to the



enterprise. I'll read a bit of it, I thought, and then go on to something better. But the pages went by so easily, so pleasurable, that almost before I knew it they had all flown by. The setting is Seattle, where Tom Sanders runs one of the production operations of an electronics firm. He's looking for good things out of a planned merger—head of the division, very likely. But instead a woman, a beautiful woman who was many years before, his mistress, gets the job. And shortly after an evening meeting with his new boss, harassment charges fly. His life and career fall into shambles; even his friends don't believe his side of the story. His situation seems hopeless. A vastly readable tale taking a perspective on its subject that, however valid, will

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probably not be welcomed by all.

I really don't know how to react to Michael Dibdin's **The Dying of the Light** (Pantheon, \$19.00). Is it very cleverly plotted or just obtuse? Should my primary reaction be appreciation or frustration with unrealized opportunity? We are at Eventide Lodge in the English countryside. The Lodge is filled with the aged and with, it appears, murderous passions. At least so Rosemary and Dorothy, two of its inhabitants, seem to believe—and in due course there is a corpse, as if to prove them right. I think you'll have to try this for yourself and decide.

It's the English winter of 1884–5 in Mark Frost's **The List of 7** (Avon, \$5.99). A struggling doctor and aspiring author with an abiding interest in the paranormal, who is also a student of the writings of Helen Blavatsky, receives a mysterious invitation to assist in exposing fraudulent spiritualist practices. The doctor's name is Arthur Conan Doyle. He loads his revolver and attends, there to experience but the first attempt on his life. He also meets Jack Sparks, with whom he will unequally partner in an assault on the legions of evil with their supernatural weapons. Why have those of the List of 7 targeted him, and what



terrible plot have they hatched? A fascinating and memorable tale, full of period flavor and detail—and overfull of pages (401 of them); judicious editorial paring would have led to a cleaner, faster narrative, especially in the early going.

Drawing Dead (Simon & Schuster, \$21.00) by Pete Hautman is, for me, only on the edge of our genre but it's full of remarkably offbeat characters and sports an engaging plot. In Minneapolis Jim Crow, a recovering alcoholic, ex-cop and sometimes private investigator, has a certain addiction to poker, at which he is capable of losing his shirt. Dicky Wicky, cocaine-snorting stockbroker, has some of Crow's markers, and asks him to work off his debt by following his wife. Dicky thinks his wife, Catfish, is unfaithful and wants her lover identified and paid to stop. (Unfaithful is hardly the word: Catfish is without a trace of redeeming social value, along with many others in the cast.) Meanwhile a larcenous pair from Chicago, fresh from a rare comic book scam against Joey Cadillac, a mob-connected car dealing creep, arrive in Minneapolis and engage Wicky in their newest caper. Cadillac, enraged to discover he's been taken, sends his strong-arm pea-brain Freddy Wiznesky to Minneapolis to retrieve the pair and his money. A fascinating romp!

I can't recall when last I enjoyed a book as much as **A Beautiful Death** (St. Martin's, \$19.95), the seventh of S.T. Haymon's books about Detective Inspector Ben Jurnet. We begin as a detonation devastates Jurnet's life. The IRA takes credit, and he pokes about unofficially, taking a trip to Ireland. More death and destruction. Is all of this to any purpose? This is a tale overflowing with the fullest range of emotion, piercingly and memorably evoked. Never mind that I spotted the critical clue 150 pages ahead of the inspector. How in the name of all that's honorable could this novel have been missed by all the folks passing out awards, as I think it was?

Strip Tease (Knopf, \$21.00) is not Carl Hiaasen at his best, but it certainly does have its moments. Nude dancer Erin Grant has the proverbial heart of gold; she only does what she does to keep her daughter out of her husband

Darrell's clutches. Darrell, nearly brain-dead from a dazzling ingestion of chemicals, supports himself by stealing wheelchairs. Life would be complicated enough for Erin, but along comes Florida congressman Dave Dilbeck. Dilbeck, running for re-election and



nearly brain-dead himself from lust, attends one of Erin's performances, is photographed in a compromising position, and flees with an Erin-fixation in his few remaining brain cells. Dilbeck is important to the Florida sugar cane industry and its obscene federal price supports, so fixer "Moldy" Moldowsky's job is to keep Dilbeck in office by any necessary means—up to and including murder. Hiaasen harpoons nearly everyone in sight, most with hilarious effectiveness, though he draws it out a bit long and the gobs of profanity get tedious.

Lynn S. Hightower has published a couple of futuristic police procedurals, and **Satan's Lambs** (Walker, \$19.95) is her first crime story set in the present. It introduces Lena Padgett, a private investigator in Lexington, Kentucky. She was on her way to a Ph.D. when her Satan-worshipping brother-in-law Jeff Hayes slaughtered her sister and nephew. That seemed to make academia academic and she turned to investigations, specializing in abused women and children. But now the past has come home to roost: Jeff Hayes served his trivial six years and is now out, thirsting for revenge. So is his good buddy, Archie Valetta, another cultist who is determined to recover some loot from a robbery at any cost. The law—with the possible exception of Sgt. Joel Mendez—doesn't seem to be of much use, so what is one lonely P.I. to do against this pair of Satanists, not to mention the rest of the cult? This is a convincing, suspenseful tale with

strong characters and excellent plotting. More, Hightower!

Tony Hillerman's **Sacred Clowns** (Harper, \$23.00) started slowly for me, but when I finished I sat back well content with this savory tale. The criminal matters are good enough, but the cultural and religious inquiries are most captivating. On the former side is the hit-and-run death of an old man; Joe Leaphorn says a promotion will come along for Jim Chee if he can solve it. Perhaps more urgent are the murders of a socially responsible mission school-teacher and an Indian—unlinked and motiveless, it would appear. On the latter side are Chee's struggles with his love for lawyer Janet Pete; widower Leaphorn's still vivid sense of loss of his beloved Emily and his relationship with university professor Louisa Bourebonette, with whom he plans to travel to—of all places—China; and the dynamics of the uneasy Leaphorn-Chee relationship. Don't miss this and its



many nuances.

Seattle lawyer Matt Riordan's fourth outing is in Frederick D. Huebner's **Picture Postcard** (Gold Medal, \$3.95), an impressive tale in this excellent series. It's complex in plot, diverse and emphatic of character, and very persuasively worked out. Riordan is helping

his client Lisa Thayer get established as an art dealer when a couple of disturbing events intrude. She receives a postcard drawing, convincingly in the style of her grandfather, Lee Thayer, a famous Northwest painter who died ten years before. And a top Seattle art dealer includes what Lisa believes are forgeries in a showing of Lee Thayer's work. Perhaps these two events are linked, but how could the dealer—an expert in Thayer's style—be fooled? And if he isn't fooled, why is he risking his professional reputation? Lisa asks Riordan to look into these matters which are bad enough at the surface but much worse below. Impressive! ■

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- Balcer & William N. Forde
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"SIMONE SAYS" written by Stephen
Bochco, Walon Green and David
Milch (**NYPD Blue**/20th Century-
Fox/ABC-TV)
"THE ERLKENMYER FLASK" written by
Chris Carter (**The X Files**/20th
Century-Fox)
"PILOT EPISODE/EPISODE ONE"
written by Jacqueline Zambrano
(**Under Suspicion**/CBS-TV)

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- UNNATURAL CAUSES written by
Peter Buckman (*Mystery*/PBS)
PRIME SUSPECT 3 written by Lynda
LaPlante (*Mystery*/PBS)
CRACKER: TO SAY I LOVE YOU
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(A&E Mystery)
THICKER THAN WATER written by
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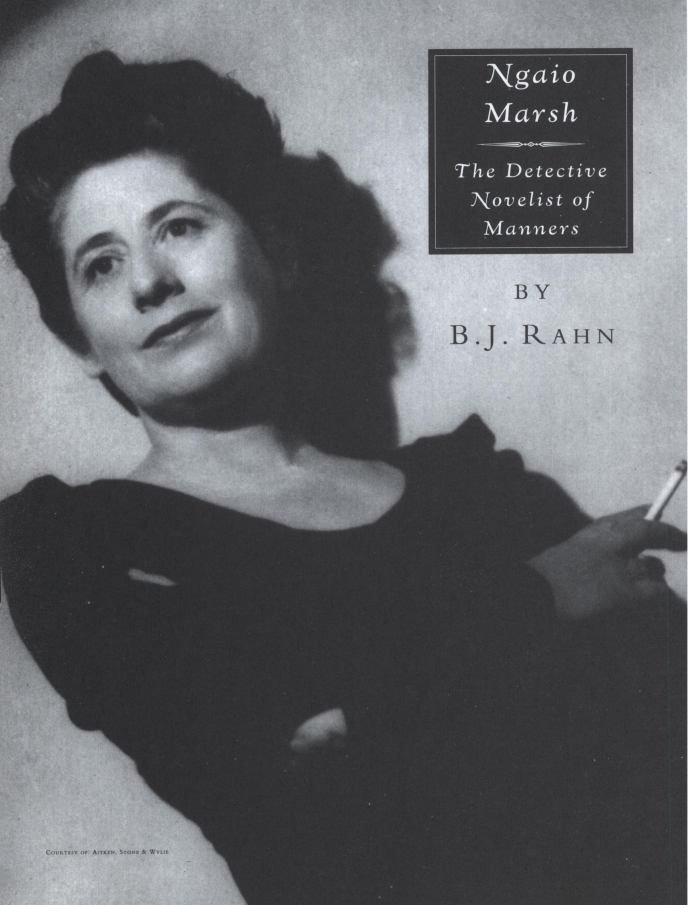
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B.J. RAHN

The only colonial writer to be ranked with Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Margery Allingham as one of the Grande Dames of the Golden Age, Ngaio Marsh deserves to be remembered on her 100th birthday (April 23, 1995) and for many years to come.

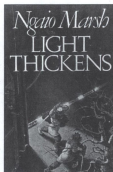
For her achievements in the genre, Ngaio Marsh won the Crime Writers Associations Red Herring Award in 1955 and was made a Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America in 1978. As is the case with her famous contemporaries, demand by devotees and new readers ensures that Marsh's detective novels are always kept in print. Library borrowings of her books in the U.K. reach a million annually.

In addition to crime writing, Marsh became a renowned director of Shakespearean drama in her native New Zealand, and she achieved international recognition in 1948 when she was awarded an OBE (Order of the British Empire) for services to literature and theater. Later, in 1967, she was created DBE (Dame Commander, Order of the British Empire). In 1962 she received the first honorary doctorate in literature conferred by the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, and in 1967 a new playhouse, the Ngaio Marsh Theatre, was named for her at the University.

Ngaio
is pronounced
NIGH-oh.
It is a Maori
word for a type
of flowering tree.

Ngaio Marsh's career as a detective writer began in 1932 when one rainy Sunday afternoon in London she put pencil to paper and began to compose her first whodunit (*A Man Lay Dead*, 1934) and came to a conclusion in 1982 when *Light Thickens* was completed six weeks before her death.

During this 50 year span she wrote 32 crime novels. Thus her life as an author of detective fiction began in the first Golden Age and extended well into what is being called the second flowering of the genre. Marsh is usually grouped with Christie, Sayers and Allingham because they all achieved prominence in the two decades between the world wars and because they all wrote what has come to be designated as the classical British detective novel.



Although in many ways Marsh's writing is typical of the period, she also broke new ground and experimented with innovative ideas which foreshadowed the future development of the genre. Marsh retained the plot structure and observed the general pro-

ocol of the Golden Age novel, but she departed from its conventions significantly by making her sleuth a policeman and by writing novels of manners in the guise of police procedurals. In fact and in fiction, when Marsh created her protagonist, the police force was a *déclassé* career choice. The Golden Age was the heyday of the well-born gifted amateur sleuth, and such policemen as appeared in the genre were never aristocrats. Moreover, they were frequently slow-witted and clumsy. Marsh showed great perspicacity in making her classy cop, Roderick Alleyn, the younger son of a peer. He was a transitional figure combining the traits of the pre-World War II, gifted amateur gentleman sleuth with the rank-and-file postwar professional policeman. In him were joined

B.J. Rahn is an Associate Professor of English at Hunter College of the City University of New York. She is co-founder and editor of *Murder Is Academic*, a newsletter for people teaching crime fiction at colleges and universities. She has published numerous articles on detective fiction and serves as an advisor for the *Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*. She is editor of a festschrift celebrating Ngaio Marsh's centenary titled *Ngaio Marsh: The Woman and Her Work*.

the imaginative brilliance of the gifted amateur with the dogged discipline, access to forensic resources, and official authority of the police professional. Thus, while Sayers and Allingham found their protagonists extremely out-moded after World War II, and were forced to modify or replace them, Marsh was able to retain her hero without any cosmetic surgery. In fact, reforms throughout the police force at the time Marsh first began writing resulted in active recruitment of men from the educated classes, but the occurrence of individuals of Alleyn's type was still rare. Alleyn is the first of the fictional professionals who predominate in the postwar period. He begins as Chief Detective Inspector at Scotland Yard and is promoted to Chief Superintendent.

As the younger son of an aristocratic family, Alleyn had embarked on a career in the Foreign Office, but made the unconventional switch to the police force "for personal reasons" (*A Man Lay Dead*). His move is referred to cryptically in several books, but the closest one gets to a proper explanation occurs in *Scales of Justice* (1955) after he had been a police detective over 20 years. In response to an offensively phrased question posed by Lady Hermione Lacklander implying that his choice was a defection as well as a demotion, Alleyn states that his liking for facts led him to make the change. When Lady Lacklander rejoins that facts should not be confused with the truth, Alleyn counters that they are the raw material of truth. The implication of his remark is that there is more truth in police work than there is in diplomacy. This

conversation is particularly ironic given the context, for Alleyn had served in the Special Branch (MI5) in 1937 at the time Sir Harold Lacklander, Britain's Ambassador to Zlomec, was seduced by Nazi political beliefs into betraying his country and blaming his young secretary who committed suicide as a result.

Although she converted her gentleman sleuth to a policeman, Marsh retained the useful Holmes/Watson partnership of the previous era. Alleyn and Inspector Edward Walter (Ted) Fox enjoy a complementary relationship in which differences in intellectual ability, social background, and temperament make for a good working partnership. At first, Alleyn is facetious, supercilious and patronizing to Fox, but he becomes more respectful and affectionate as time goes by, even asking Fox to be godfather to his only son. The fact that Alleyn and Fox are not social equals proves an advantage when they conduct their interviews above and below stairs. (Fox's ability to charm cooks and serving maids is legendary at the Yard.) Although the relationship between Alleyn and Fox may be regarded by some as a triumph of human nature and professionalism over social class barriers, Alleyn always remains somewhat condescending toward Fox, as Holmes was with Watson.

Alleyn is also supplied with a fingerprint expert and a photographer—Sergeants Bailey and Thompson—as part of his Scotland Yard team. Bailey makes his appearance in the first novel, acting as Alleyn's assistant, and is the more fully developed of the two technicians. Thompson shows up in the fifth novel. Bailey is rather morose and tends to assume a melan-

choly expression when he is about to report important test results. In later novels such as *Hand in Glove* (1962) Bailey and Thompson seem equally adept at finger-printing and photography. While the team, including the police surgeon, Dr. Curtis, figure prominently in all the stories, the



spotlight is upon Alleyn and Fox.

The steps of the investigation follow the Golden Age formula consistently, although Alleyn has the advantage over the gifted amateur in terms of technical expertise, manpower and authority. First, Alleyn observes the crime scene—the body and its immediate surroundings. Then he consults with the police surgeon and orders technicians to take photographs and fingerprints and search the area for any existing physical evidence which will enable them to reconstruct the crime and persons present. Secondly, he interviews all witnesses and suspects to gather facts from their observations and establish alibis where possible. Next, he and Fox sift through information collected to try to eliminate innocent persons and/or determine who had means and opportunity to commit the crime. Normally they discover clues which must be followed up whose results may lead to a second or third series of interviews. Alleyn frequently reconstructs the crime orally or actually requires the characters to repeat their actions directly prior to the murder, hoping—like Hamlet—that the guilty person will give himself away. Alleyn's solution emerges at this point in the narrative and is followed by the dénouement.

Marsh does play fair with her readers because she shares the



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information Alleyn collects and also indicates when he and Fox are forming a hypothesis, but she leaves the reader to postulate his own theory. Usually solutions to the cases depend on police procedure backed up by logical deduction and intuitive insight. Alleyn uses police routine to build a chain of evidence to eliminate innocent suspects and prove that only one person could be responsible for the murder. He focuses on proving the culprit had the means and opportunity rather than motive, although motive is always explained eventually. Although Alleyn claims he despises motive, in several cases he imagines how important suspects are feeling just prior to the crime; this psychological analysis is tantamount to discovering motive (*Death of a Fool, Black as He's Painted*). He rails against "speculation" in several cases and condemns it in his handbook of detection, widely read and admired by professional colleagues and referred to informally as the Scourge of the Force (*Clutch of Constables, 1969; When in Rome, 1971*).

While Alleyn and his team of experts conduct their investigation following police routine, Marsh manages to present a microcosm of contemporary society through characterization and setting. Hence, her books are repositories of social history. Dame Ngaio was a keen observer of social class attitudes, values, behavior and speech. Her portraits of knaves and fools run the gamut of the human spectrum and affectation and pretension are fair game in any social stratum. The cavalcade of characters in Marsh's novels and the situations they find themselves in testify to her sensitive appreciation of and insight into this earthly vanity fair. With a finely attuned sense of irony, Marsh exposes the cruelty and hypocrisy of class pretension as well as the dark underside of snobbery—the pain and grave social injustice it causes. A true satirist, Marsh does not lecture but portrays people's follies and vices and allows readers to draw their own conclusions. The responses of her protagonist also act as a touchstone to guide reader reactions.

Just as Jane Austen has been faulted for not mentioning the Napoleonic wars in her novels, so the Golden Age detective novel has been criticized for ignoring the Great Depression of the late 1920s and the rise of fascism during the 1930s. Such criticism fails to realize that popular fiction can reflect social truth by focusing not only on current political events but also upon human nature. Marsh has been accused of being snobbish and reactionary as well as anachronistic because her main character hailed from an aristocratic family and because her postwar novels con-tinued to portray life in England as it existed before World War II. But change was slow to occur during the postwar recovery—especially in English villages. Marsh does not endorse snobbish values or antisocial doctrines that she observes; and in fact, she does address important social issues of the era within the mode of the novel of manners. Both *Colour Scheme* and *Died in the Wool* deal with the threat of invasion faced by New Zealanders in World War II and subversive Fifth Column activities.

Certainly social snobbery is portrayed in the novels, but it runs the gamut of the social classes and is always unattractive when it appears. When Alleyn investigates crimes involving people from his own social milieu, they invariably try to establish a bond based on common social ties in order to exempt themselves from suspicion and gain special treatment during the case. His refusal to grant special consideration to individuals on the basis of social class demonstrates that everyone is equal before the law. In *The Nursing Home Murder* (1935), Lady O'Callaghan, wife of the murdered Home Secretary, sends the family lawyer to warn Alleyn off investigating her simple-minded sister-in-law and is most irate when he does not follow instructions. He explains to her that the law is like a machine which, once set in motion, cannot be halted until it has fulfilled its function. The most flagrant example of this kind of special pleading occurs in *Scales of Justice* when Lady Hermione Lacklander telephones Scotland Yard and demands that



**NGAIO
MARSH:**
**THE WOMAN
AND
HER WORK**

Edited by **B.J. Rahn**

Scarecrow Press

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Alleyn be assigned to investigate a local murder because she prefers to deal with a gentleman. She is indeed shocked and dismayed when "Helena Alleyn's boy" refuses an invitation to lodge in her house and treats her and members of her family as he would any other suspects in a murder case. Similar preferences about dealing with a gentleman are expressed by members of the Lamprey family in *Death of a Peer* (1940), but Lady Charles Lamprey receives a cool rebuff when trying to establish kinship by inquiring about Alleyn's mother's maiden name. Others of the same sort include Lady Pastern in *A Wreath for Rivera* when reminding Alleyn that his father, Sir George Alleyn, was a frequent visitor at her family's house when he was a young attaché in Paris, Sir Cedric Ancred in *Final Curtain* (1947) who reminds Alleyn he was at school with his nephews, and Percival Pyke Period in *Hand in Glove* who claims acquaintance with Alleyn's brother.

Death in a White Tie (1938), depicting the rituals of London's upper crust

social season, furnishes the most socially elite setting of the novels, but the characters are prone to the same worries, follies and vices as the rest of humanity. Husbands are concerned with the fidelity of their wives, mothers with the future security of their children, young women with finding suitable husbands, and young men with sowing their wild oats and establishing their independence. In addition to *The Nursing Home Murder* which also condemns genocide, this novel exonerates Marsh from charges of failing to deal with serious social problems. Marsh discredits unpalatable opinions by placing them in the mouths of unsympathetic characters and endorses healthy attitudes through sympathetic figures. For example, Miss Birnbaum, an American Jew foisted by her socially ambitious mother on an unwilling but greedy London hostess who agrees for £500 to oversee her debut, suffers from lack of social success among her contemporaries, but what is much worse, she must bear the snide anti-semitic insults of her chap-

erone. The sponsor is a thoroughly unattractive woman, a shallow social climber who is unfaithful to her husband with a dishonest gambler. However, Miss Birnbaum, who is the granddaughter of a famous Jewish artist and professes a desire to paint, is encouraged by Alleyn and his wife Troy, a successful portraitist.

In *Death of a Peer*, Alleyn directly confronts upper social class prejudice when Dr. Kantripp remarks about the Lampreys, "They would never in this world do anything to get money. They couldn't. It's the way they are bred, I suppose." Alleyn replies, "I don't agree with that. Business consciences aren't entirely bounded by the little fences of class, are they?" In *Scales of Justice* when Lady Lacklander questions the discretion of Colonel Cartarette's déclassé wife in her desire to cover up Sir Harold Lacklander's political treason, "You never know...with that sort of people what they may do," Alleyn replies, "Nor...with other sorts, it seems." In the same novel, middle class snobbery is exposed when a visiting nurse hotly

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defends her feudal values as they are attacked, "It is possible that Nurse Kettle...found in Kitty Cartarette's contempt an implicit threat to what Lady Lacklander had called her belief in degree...It was as if, by her very existence, Kitty Cartarette challenged the hierarchy that was Nurse Kettle's symbol of perfection..." When asked, "What have they got, except money and snob value, that you haven't got?" she retorts, "Lots!" Marsh also registers the snobbery of servants, as for example in *Hand in Glove* when the butler says of Alleyn, "...class is class and to be treated as such. In the force he may be, and with distinction. Of it, he is not."

Marsh tackles the darker side of social class prejudice in *Scales of Justice* and *Death of a Fool*. In the former a young man, innocent of everything except indiscretion but unable to face the disgrace of failing to live up to his code, commits suicide after a severe reprimand from his superior in the Foreign Service. In his misguided loyalty to his chief, the real traitor, he begs his parents in his last letter to them not to take any action that might discredit his patron. His tragic act not only ended his own life prematurely but led to his mother's early demise and turned his father into an embittered eccentric. At the end of the novel, when the truth has been told, the boy's father states, "I no longer desire the Lacklanders to suffer for my dear boy's death. I do not...believe any longer in human expiation." Marsh takes her thinking about social class a bit further than usual in this book, suggesting by Alleyn's attitude that people are driven to desperate acts by false social values—not merely young Viccy Phinn but also the murderer. In a less philosophical mode, she confronts irrational, obstinate adherence to tradition in the form of outmoded values.

In *Death of a Fool* Marsh reveals the ingrained class prejudice against marrying above or below one's station in life. When a scion of the local landed family wishes to marry the granddaughter of the local blacksmith, both families object. While Andersens have lived in the village as long as Mardians at the manor, yeomanry and aristocracy are united in their adherence to the old mores because "nothing good can



A sketch of Roderick Alleyn by Ngaio Marsh, on the pages of her hand-written draft of "Killer Dolphin": it shows Alleyn interviewing the mysterious Mr. Coducus.

come" of breaking the social hierarchy. When Ralph Stayne claims that these old ideas don't apply any more in a postwar world, Camilla Campion replies, "They do in South Mardian." There were still many people in England ten years after World War II whose thinking and behavior were mirrored in these novels.

The xenophobia of Britons is satirized in several works, not merely the distrust of foreigners but the narrow-minded prejudice which condemns without a hearing and makes no effort to discover common humanity in people from another culture. When inquiring about the distraught wife of the deceased in *Death of a Peer*, Alleyn is warned by her brother-in-law, Sir Charles Lamprey, "She's not English." Furthermore, her sister-in-law of many years professes to know nothing of her family history, "Violet is a Hungarian or a Yugo-Slav. One or the other. Her name isn't Violet at all. It's something beginning with 'Gla,'

like Gladys, but ending ridiculously. So Gabriel called her Violet. I think her maiden name was Zadody, but I'm not sure. She was nobody that anyone knew, even in Hungaria or Yugo-Slavia..." Lady Charles cannot remember her sister-in-law's name because it is ridiculously foreign nor identify her native country because all foreign nations are so insignificant as to be interchangeable according to her code of values.

Perhaps the best examples occur in *Death and the Dancing Footman* (1941), which is a classic country house murder mystery, complete with isolating blizzard. The house party is a varied group including a mother and two sons from the local gentry, as well as a European cosmetologist and an Austrian plastic surgeon (secretly married to each other), a surrealist London playwright, a modern young woman who arrives engaged to one of the brothers and departs engaged to the playwright, the host and his kinswoman, a beauty spe-

A Ngaio Marsh Reading List

NOVELS

(Inspector/Superintendent Roderick Alleyn in all books)

- A Man Lay Dead* (U.K. 1934; U.S. 1942)
Enter a Murderer (U.K. 1935; U.S. 1941)
The Nursing-Home Murder, with Henry Jellett (U.K. 1935; U.S. 1941)
Death in Ecstasy (U.K. 1936; U.S. 1941)
Vintage Murder (U.K. 1937; U.S. 1940)
Artists in Crime (1938)
Death in a White Tie (1938)
Overture to Death (1939)
Death at the Bar (1940)
Death of a Peer (U.S. 1940; U.K. as *Surfeit of Lampreys*, 1941)
Death and the Dancing Footman (U.S. 1941; U.K. 1942)
Colour Scheme (1943)
Died in the Wool (1945)
Final Curtain (1947)
Swing, Brother, Swing (1949; in U.S. as *A Wreath for Rivera*)
Opening Night (1951, in U.S. as *Night of the Vulcan*)
Spinsters in Jeopardy (U.S. 1953; U.K. 1954; again in U.S. 1955 as *The Bride of Death*)
Scales of Justice (1955)
Death of a Fool (U.S. 1956; in U.K. 1957 as *Off With His Head*)
Singing in the Shrouds (U.S. 1958; U.K. 1959)
False Scent (1960)
Hand in Glove (1962)
Dead Water (U.S. 1963; U.K. 1964)
Killer Dolphin (U.S. 1966; in U.K. 1967 as *Death at the Dolphin*)
Clutch of Constables (U.K. 1968; U.S. 1969)
When in Rome (U.K. 1970; U.S. 1971)
Tied Up in Tinsel (1972)
Black as He's Painted (1974)
Last Ditch (1977)
Grave Mistake (1978)
Photo-Finish (1980)
Light Thickens (1982)

SHORT STORIES

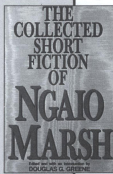
The Collected Short Fiction of Ngaio Marsh, Edited by Douglas G. Greene, 1989

PLAYS

- The Nursing-Home Murder*, with Henry Jellett, adaptation of their own novel. First produced 1935.
False Scent, with Eileen Mackay, adaptation of her own novel. First produced 1961.
The Christmas Tree (for children). First produced 1962.
A Unicorn for Christmas, music by David Farquhar. First produced 1962.
Murder Sails at Midnight. First produced 1963.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Black Beech and Honeydew: An Autobiography (1965)



cialist whose clients are being stolen by the cosmetologist. In the course of the weekend, when one of the brothers is murdered, almost all of the English characters close ranks against the foreign doctor and either openly accuse or quietly believe him to be the killer despite the fact that he has an unbreakable alibi. In this microcosm of feudal society, prejudice against the outsider is expressed across the social spectrum from the lord of the manor to his servants (who are the most outspoken and virulent in their denunciations). This hostility is registered in other novels, but nowhere so poignantly as here.

One of the techniques Marsh employs to expose xenophobia lies in her characters' mulish resistance to foreign languages and contemptuous mispronunciation of foreign words. The rigid anglicization of the French "chateau" into "shatter" by a servant who spent several years in France and had ample time to learn correct pronunciation of common words exemplifies this attitude. A cockney businessman pokes fun by converting "apartement" into "apart-tay-mong" in a disparaging drawl. Another indicator is the surprise expressed whenever a British person is fluent in a foreign tongue. There is a running joke for 30 years over Inspector Fox's labored and not very successful attempts to learn French. What began as a leg pull illustrating Fox's ignorance and rather stolid nature in *The Nursing Home*

Murder changes in tone as he becomes a more important and more dignified character. He does acquire some skill but never becomes an adept. His accent is still the subject of adverse comment by a language coach in *Dead Water* (1964), and while exchanging compliments in French over the telephone in *When in Rome* (1970), Alleyn teases him for not being able to speak Italian.

Although Marsh set most of her novels in England, sometimes she employed locales in New Zealand and Europe. In *Vintage Murder* (1937), *Colour Scheme* (1943) and *Died in the Wool* (1945)—in which criminal cases take Alleyn to cities as well as rain

forests, hot-spring resorts, and sheep ranches in the high plateaus of New Zealand—she widens both the horizons and the social purview of whodunits in the period by describing the landscape, the colonial settlers and Maori aborig-



nes, plus the customs of the country. But her antipodean novels (which also include *Photo Finish*, 1980) offer more than local color—they register the essential character of the people. Always alert to injustice, Marsh was one of the first writers in the genre to advocate racial tolerance through characterization, by contrasting the inherent dignity, spontaneous reactions, ingenuous lack of guile and the wholesomeness of aboriginal characters with the self-importance, rigid rationalism, hide-bound manners, exploitative opportunism and decadence of the white characters. Rua, a Maori chieftain whose own grandfather lived like a neolithic man, remarks, "In a century we have had to swallow the progress of nineteen hundred years. Do you wonder that we suffer a little from evolutionary dyspepsia?"

Many of her books with English settings expose racial prejudice among whites. In *Clutch of Constables* an Oxford-educated, cultured black doctor who befriends Troy Alleyn on a canal cruise is patronized by ignorant, vulgar white passengers. Never intrusive, these people of color nevertheless serve as vehicles of serious social commentary in a period when the genre was considered merely escapist reading. Later, in *Black as He's Painted* (1974), she deals with the politics of emerging black African nations and the vicious fanaticism of racial hatred.

When the President of Ng'ombwana apologizes to Alleyn for practicing vigilante justice while visiting England instead of abiding by the law of the land, underlying his words is the same plea for patience for an evolving society as that expressed by Rua, "With time we shall evolve a change and adapt and gradually such elements may die out in us. At the present,...you must think of us—of me if you like—as an unfinished portrait."

Thus, attentive reading reveals that Marsh's novels refute the critical disparagement of Golden Age detective fiction as superficial formula writing. She confronted and exposed anti-social behavior wherever she observed it—in international politics or village life—through the ironic portraits which people the pages of her novels of manners with a variety and ingenuity to rival Dickens. These compelling characters walk out of her books and into our lives as we recognize their counterparts in our own daily existence. Moreover, having moved in, they settle down for a long tenancy. ■



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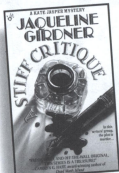
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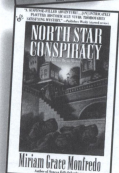
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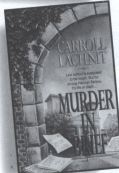
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While the death of a freed slave receives little notice in Seneca Falls, the independent librarian Glynis Tryon hears information that causes her to suspect so-called sympathizers of the Underground Railroad.

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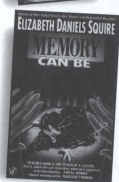
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J'Accuse!

BY

WILLIAM L. DEANDREA

THE PC WARS:

MORE NEWS FROM THE FRONT

I WAS VERY GRATIFIED BY THE LETTERS IN *TAD* 27#4 ATTACKING ME ON MY STAND AGAINST POLITICAL CORRECTNESS. AFTER ALL, WHEN YOU FIRE A SHOT IN A WAR, IT'S NICE TO HEAR THE SCREAMS CONFIRMING YOU HIT SOMEBODY. I POINTED OUT IN MY ORIGINAL COLUMN THAT THE WORST THING ABOUT POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IS THAT IT MAKES YOU STUPID. THE EVIDENCE CONTINUES TO PILE UP, DOESN'T IT?

A couple of specific points. Both Robert Pierson and Rose Litzelman appear to think that PC is a plot by right wingers to discredit opinions of the other side.

I'll say this again for the reading-comprehension impaired. *Political correctness is not a partisan issue.* It is evil no matter who does it. Nazi Germany was built on it. The American right tried it on in the 1950s—does the name “McCarthy” ring a bell? In the very column these scholars are ranting about, I talked about the idiocy of the Cincinnati Reds temporarily changing their name because of anti-communist PC.

In a rather remarkable sentence, Pierson calls PC “the phrase under which DeAndrea and his ilk lump any attempt to respect any non-Anglo Saxon tradition.”

First of all, take a look at the name at the top of the column. That's *DeAndrea*. Grandson of Vito Guglielmo DeAndrea and Luigi Fotunato Morabito. Yessir, all of us brimming with Anglo Saxon to the eyeballs. Pierson must think my grandfathers changed their names from Arthur Windsor and Peter Favershaw (or even Robert Pierson, come to that) when they came to this country around the turn of the century so they could have the great adventure of living in ghettos and being discriminated against.

Secondly, let's talk about my “ilk.” Fine. If this be ilkhood, make the most of it. My fellow ilksters of the anti-PC persuasion include such respected people of the left as Nat Hentoff, Wendy Kaminer, Christopher Hitchens, Elizabeth Fox Genovese, and Eugene Genovese, the last two being avowed Marxists. I'd be glad to put on my ilk team jacket and go hang around the ilk clubhouse with them. We wouldn't agree on much, maybe, but we'd have the guts to face the other side of the argument, and possibly even the resources to defeat it. We wouldn't try to gag it and lock it in a box.

Amazingly, Rose Litzelman manages in her letter to get something almost right. She says, “The sheer, undeniable power of language—in defining, including and, in many cases, limiting or excluding individuals and groups in our culture—is at the center of the debate on what right wing polemicists have dubbed ‘political correctness.’”

Well, Rosie, it so happens that politi-

cal correctness is *not* a coinage of “right wing polemicists.” Its first appearance in print was in the Harvard *Crimson*, something I think we can agree has been less than a bastion of the right in recent decades. The outgoing editorial staff explained that they had rejected an otherwise qualified applicant for the editorship because he was “politically incorrect.” What was that again about limiting or excluding?

But the main thrust of that sentence is on target. “The sheer, undeniable power of language *is* at the center of the debate.” And the debate boils down to simply this: I would make that power available to anyone—absolutely *anyone*, no matter how exalted or humble, how wise or foolish, how saintly or hateful they are to me personally. Rose Litzelman and those who agree with her (I won't call them an ilk—if they want an ilk, they can go start one of their own) want to abrogate that power exclusively to their frightened and defeated selves.

AND WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT

The last paragraph of Pierson's letter says, “I noticed that DeAndrea continues his blatant electioneering for a position as *TAD*'s coverboy.”

How perceptive of him. After all the trouble I went through to hide it, too, putting it on the page there in black and white in plain English, under a headline. But there's no fooling him, he *noticed* it.

Another effect of PC is that it destroys the sense of humor.

By the way folks, have you sent for your “DeAndrea for *TAD* Coverboy” button yet?

AND A SPECIAL MENTION TO —

Mr. Dean A. Miller of Chicago, Illinois, a semi-professional (his word) reviewer of mystery and detection, who also had a letter published in *TAD* 27#4. He supported me on the PC issue, which showed a working brain cell or two. Then he expressed a low opinion of me and the column in general, which is fair game—I put my name up there. Then he dumped some totally gratuitous insults on my wife and her work.

What the hell, you old semi-police-

sional, you. Keep it up. Boors and jerks have the right to free speech, too.

JEEZ, ENOUGH ALREADY, LET'S TALK ABOUT MYSTERY STORIES

Yes, thank you. It will be a pleasure to do just that.

I went to Seattle for Bouchercon. It was great to be back among fans and colleagues, talking, reading, (and eating, sleeping and breathing, come to that) the kind of literature that brings us to these pages.

It was my first trip to Seattle, and I have to admit I was surprised. I'm a lifelong Easterner, and the way we keep the West Coast cities straight in our minds is as follows—San Diego has the Navy, L.A. has the smog, San Francisco has the hills, Portland has a snow-capped mountain in the middle of town, and Seattle has the rain.

But I didn't see a drop the four days I was in Seattle, and my gout-ridden feet can attest to the fact that when it comes to hills, the City by the Bay has *nothing* on the City by the Sound.

It's also the City of the Coffee Shop. Whole blocks of that city smell like your kitchen at seven a.m. because of the number of coffee shops. The big mystery is why. I mean, they don't *grow* the stuff there or anything. One Seattle native speculated that most mornings in Seattle are so foggy and miserable that they've come to worship the coffee that gives them enough oomf to face the day, but as I said before, you couldn't prove it by me.

The convention itself was superb. I was going to call this section of the column "Flawless in Seattle," except there was one major mess-up. A reception scheduled for 6 p.m. was listed in the printed information I received as starting at 8 p.m., so by the time I got there, all the bagels and salmon (bagels and salmon was another big thing at this shindig) were gone. Just as well, I suppose. The sight of all those Seattleites dunking their salmon-laden bagels into their coffee would have been a little hard to take.

Everything else was great. They removed the curse of recent Bouchercons (too much bustle and impersonality) by limiting enrollment to twelve hundred people. This was a

terrific number. You could catch up with friends you haven't seen for awhile, and still make the acquaintance of new ones. There was space enough in the huge dealers room to browse without feeling like the first olive in the bottle, holding everyone else up.

The programming was excellent, too. I had the pleasure of chairing a panel on "Forgotten Authors." The organizing committee put mystery scholar and critic Marvin Lachman; Jeff Marks, author of a biography of Craig Rice; British publisher, bookseller, scholar, etc. Maxim Jakobowski and me together for this panel.

There are few things more rewarding as a mystery fan than to introduce somebody else to the work of a writer you like, and we did a lot of that. The consensus for top underrated writer of all time, (according to our panel) was Thomas B. Dewey, who wrote both sensitive private eye novels like his almost exact contemporary Ross Macdonald (and every bit as well, too,) and wacky private eye novels of the

Richard S. Prather variety.

Our discussion of Dewey led to one of the high points of the convention for me. Marv Lachman was extolling Dewey's evocations of Chicago in the Mac stories, likening them to a contemporary writer's: "If you like Sara Paretsky's descriptions of Chicago—"

At that second, Sara Paretsky walked into the room, looking around in bewilderment at the huge laugh she drew. We could have rehearsed it for a week, and it wouldn't have gone off so well.

I also put in a big plug for Patricia McGerr, especially for her great *Pick Your Victim*.

An interesting thing happened at the end of the panel, during the question period. Someone stood up and said, "You could have mentioned more woman writers, you know."

Well, of course we could have. We could have mentioned more men writers. We could have mentioned more left-handed writers of Lithuanian descent. If we had the time, we could still be there, mentioning writers. Reckoning it up afterwards, I think we fondly plugged the works of some seven women mystery writers, which is not bad for a fifty-minute panel.

But that's not the reason I'm mentioning this. I'm mentioning it because when the question was asked (or, judging from the tone of it, when the indictment was leveled), *the rest of the audience groaned*. A lot of them did, anyway. Women and men together.

I guess it wasn't polite of them, but it sure was interesting. I guarantee you it would *not* have happened as recently as three years ago.

Maybe that reaction ties in with the applause Marcia Muller got during her guest of honor speech when she called for the end of acrimony and factionalism in the genre. I hope so. We're really all in this together.

My autumnal wanderings also brought me to Philadelphia, for the Mid-Atlantic Mystery Convention, run, as usual, by Deen Kogan. It was (also as usual) a lively and friendly gathering, just about the size of the first Bouchercon I attended back in 1977. I was only able to spend one full day there, but I still had a chance to talk to most of the attendees. Good panels, good fun. If you're an East

"The Coffee Capital"



MICHAEL DAVIDSON



STACY KEACH AS MICKEY SPILLANE'S MIKE HAMMER, A BETTER INCARNATION.

Coast person, you might want to check this out.

HAMMERED

I have to plead guilty to a little journalistic irresponsibility here, but I

can't tell you too much about the alleged Mike Hammer movie aired by CBS in November except for the fact that it was a travesty. The guy from *Silk Stalkings* played "Mike" who works in Florida and runs around in a

Hawaiian shirt à la Shell Scott. That wasn't the bad part, after all Ralph Meeker played a sleazy, California Mike Hammer in *Kiss Me Deadly*, and that was a terrific, if perverse, movie.

This telepic was just perverse. You can do lots of things with Mike Hammer. They've done him as a Californian; they've done him short; they've done him Italian. But the one thing you can't do with Mike Hammer is make him a wimp. You can't have him simpering while he's being henpecked like Ricky Ricardo by a bubbleheaded Velda. The point of Mike Hammer, like him or not, is raw power and barely contained violence. Making a wimpy Mike Hammer constitutes false advertising. You might as well populate *Jurassic Park* with guys in Barney suits.

What was really irritating was that this mess was produced by Jay Bernstein, who also produced the Stacy Keach *Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer* TV series, which was one of the best of the character's dramatic incarnations. ■



"New Mystery just keeps getting better and better...it's a knockout!" *Janet Rudolph/Mystery Readers Journal*

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Notable Passings



STEVEN HAMBROG

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH died February 5, 1995 in Locarno, Switzerland, near where she had lived since 1963. She was 74 years old.

Born in Fort Worth, Texas, Highsmith was raised in New York City. She began publishing short stories shortly after she received her B.A. from Barnard in 1942.

Highsmith published 20 novels, and 7 short story collections and was best known for creating Tom Ripley, a highly cultured and intelligent murderer who was the central character in five novels, most recently *Ripley Underwater*. Her first book *Strangers on a Train* was published in 1950 and was made into a classic movie by Alfred Hitchcock in 1951.

She once said "I find the public passion for justice quite boring and artificial, for neither life nor nature cares if justice is ever done or not." Her novels and short stories were distinctive for their austere, dark tone and mood. In her nonfiction book *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction*, she stated "creative people do not pass moral judgements—at least not at once—on what meets their eye. There is time for that later in what they create, if they are so inclined, but art has nothing to do with morality, convention or moralizing."

Although Highsmith's books were more popular in Europe than in her native America, her work was highly respected by critics on both sides of the Atlantic. Graham Greene called her a

"writer who has created a world of her own—a world claustrophobic and irrational which we enter each time with a sense of personal danger."

Highsmith had no known survivors.



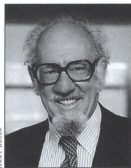
J.I.M. STEWART, the Oxford don who wrote 49 mysteries under the pseudonym Michael Innes, died November 12, 1994 in Surrey, England. He was 88 years old.

Stewart, a fellow of Oxford University's Christ Church College and professor of English literature, is often credited with creating "the donnish detective story." In addition to the Innes stories, Stewart wrote scholarly books on Shakespeare, Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling under his real name, and was the author of *Eight Modern Writers* (1963) the final volume of *The Oxford History of English Literature*. He also wrote novels under his own name.

As Michael Innes, he began writing in the Golden Age of detective fiction with the 1936 publication of *Death at the President's Lodging* (*Seven Suspects* in the U.S.). This novel introduced Innes' urbane, quotation-addicted sleuth, John Appleby, who over the next 60 years rose through the ranks to commissioner of Scotland Yard, married and had a son, received a knighthood and eventually retired. Some of his best known titles include *Appleby's End* (1945), *The Journeying Boy* (1949) and *Operation Pax* (1951).

In *20th Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, critic Michele Slung noted, "The flavor of Innes is very strong and very idiosyncratic: English, bookish, jokey, and bizarre...Appleby is of the breed of 'noble' policeman; with his good manners, empathy and erudition, he is a gentleman not by birth but by consensus." H.R.F. Keating selected two Innes mysteries for inclusion in his *Crime & Mystery: The 100 Best Books* (*Appleby's End* and *The New Sonia Wayward*, a non-series mystery) and called Innes "a magician with words, a relishing magician."

J.I.M. Stewart is survived by three sons and two daughters. His wife, Margaret, died in 1979.



JOHN BAUER

JULIAN SYMONS, 82, died on November 19, 1994 in London.

A published poet, editor and an astute literary critic, Julian Symons entered the mystery field by chance, writing *The Immaterial Murder Case* during the 1930s as part of an elaborate joke and leaving the manuscript in a drawer for six years before submitting it for publication. Over the next 60 years, Symons went on to become—by way of both his fiction and criticism—a major influence in the crime writing field.

His dozens of works of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry include biographies of Conan Doyle and Poe and novels like *The Broken Penny*, *The End of Solomon Grundy*, *The Kentish Manor*

Notable Passings

Murders, Something Like a Love Affair and his critical work *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. Winner of three Daggers from the British Crime Writers Association, including the Cartier Diamond Dagger Award for lifetime achievement; he also won two Edgar Allan Poe Awards from the Mystery Writers of America. In 1982, he was named a Grand Master by the MWA.

In the late 1950s, he chaired the Crime Writers Association, which he helped

found. He succeeded mystery writer Agatha Christie as president of the Detection Club after her death in 1976. He was also a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and served as a crime fiction critic for the *Sunday Times of London*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Review of Books* and the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Symons once said: "The thing that absorbs me most in our age is the violence behind respectable faces—the civil servant planning how to kill

Jews most efficiently, the judge speaking with passion about the need for capital punishment, the quiet obedient boy who kills for fun...If you want to show the violence that lives behind the bland faces most of us present to the world, what better vehicle can you have than the crime novel?"

Symons was born in London in 1912 and lived in Walmer near Canterbury, England. Survivors include his wife and son. ■

JOAN KAHN REMEMBERED

(1 9 1 4 - 1 9 9 4)

by Michele Slung

JOAN KAHN was a small blond woman with a quizzical smile, a husky voice and a confiding manner. Capable of being imperious one minute, she could be mischievous the next, then all business seconds later. And no matter how much one admired her, she had the gift of being able to turn that admiration back on the person bestowing it: it was impossible not to feel cleverer and more perceptive after any lunch with Joan, a sensation that didn't wear off until at least twenty-four hours later. "What a creep!" one often heard her remark *sotto voce*, yet those so designated were doubtless as much in the dark as any of the rest of us when it came to what she really thought. Appearing dithery and vague whenever

it suited her, actually Joan was anything but, and it was her focused single-mindedness that helped make her a legend as a mystery editor and gave her a following among readers for whom her Harper Novels of Suspense became synonymous with a special sort of excellence.

"When the Harper Novels of Suspense started," she wrote in a brief essay for this very magazine in the spring of 1969 (2#3), "we printed a small brochure which said 'The mystery novel has come of age and Harper is convinced that the mystery market is going to demand higher and higher quality. The Harper mystery list will be kept as small as necessary to guarantee that all titles are tops in their field, and

exciting reading.' We haven't *always* fulfilled that guarantee to everyone's satisfaction, she added, but we've done fairly well over the years."

Such modesty is pleasing, of course, coming as it did from a veteran and acclaimed editor who'd by then been tirelessly reading manuscripts and plying her blue pencil for nearly a quarter of a century, who'd already backed more than her fair share of Edgar winners and writers with growing reputations. With more of each to come.

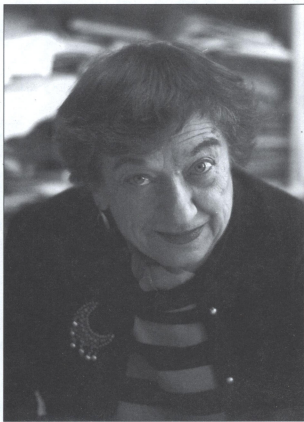
Here, in no particular order (which is how Joan would want it, since she *always* resisted naming favorites), are some of the stars from the Kahn-stellation: Dick Francis, Jonathan Gash, Elizabeth Linington, Michael Gilbert,

Notable Passings

Charlotte Jay, Patrick McGinley, Nicolas Freeling, Shelley Smith, Tony Hillerman, Gavin Black, Helen Eustis, Henry Cecil, Patricia Highsmith, Jack Scott, Lionel Davidson, Paul Jeffers, Bill Ballinger, Julian Symons, Peter Dickinson, Jane Langton, J.J. Marric, Elizabeth Fenwick, John Ball, Andrew Garve, Nicholas Blake, Ed Lacy, Berton Roueche and Leonard Tourney. Aside from the mysteries, Joan also signed up art books and cookbooks and anything, really, that struck her fancy. Her friendship with Ruth Praver Jhabvala, for example, meant that she published that splendid writer's early novels, as well as works by Jhabvala's partner-in-film, James Ivory and Ismail Merchant. And it only took the most casual of mentions, once, by another friend, Jacques Barzun, that he and a childhood pal, Wendell Taylor, had for decades kept up a running correspondence critiquing all the hundreds and hundreds of mysteries they'd read between them, for this to lead to the publication in 1971 of the now classic *Catalogue of Crime*.

And then, of course, there was Joan's passion for Dorothy L. Sayers, a passion which led her to acquire all that writer's mysteries for Harper & Row for the affordable sum of \$1,000 not long after she'd gone to work there in 1946. Harcourt, Brace, Sayers' main U.S. publisher, had, with no fanfare and little interest, allowed their titles of hers to go out of print, having no reason to believe that Sayers, who'd abandoned the genre in 1937, was significantly more enduring than any other of their mystery authors. There the situation likely would have stood for some time, had it not been for Joan's hunch that

here was a writer with a bit more mileage left in her if only her work could be made available to mystery lovers once again. The rest, we know, is history, as they say; certainly, its hard to imagine that there was



JOAN KAHN AMID THE CAREER-LONG CHAOS THAT WAS HER OFFICE.

ever in the annals of Harper & Row a better spent thousand dollars!

Joan energetically lunched across the length and breadth of midtown Manhattan, usually trailing happy authors about to be well fed, in her wake; once a year this same expense account would work its same magic in London where Joan's arrival was a much-awaited annual event. I actually was fortunate enough to experience Joan's largesse in both cities where, at places like the Brazilian Pavilion in New York and the Ritz in London, she would staunchly encourage my

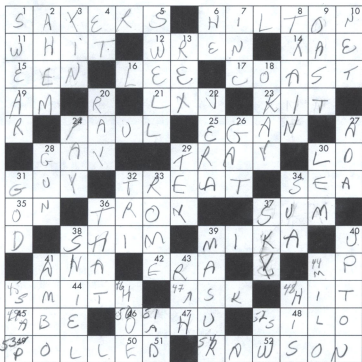
desire to forge some sort of career in the mystery business. (Now that The Monkey Bar in the Hotel Elysée is hot again, when I've been taken there, I can only think of Joan, who, for a while, favored a quiet, upstairs restaurant in the same hotel, a once hidden away eatery, that's today as forgotten as if it never existed.)

In New York Joan was convinced that I should get to know a young author of hers with whom she assured me I had much in common; since I liked the sound of his first book, a mystery anthology called *Whodunit, Houdini?* featuring magic and magicians, I agreed to be introduced. His name was (and still is) Otto Penzler. While in London, at the first International Crime Writers' Congress twenty years ago, Joan saw that Michael Gilbert's daughter Harriett, his date for the banquet, looked a bit bored, as if she needed someone her own age to talk to instead of her father's fellow crime writers. A novelist in her own right (published by Joan, no less), Harriett did perk up when I was presented to her: she's been a wonderful and valued friend ever since—yet another debt I have to Joan.

There's much, much more that could be written here about such an original as Joan Kahn: her extraordinary instinct for recognizing talent; her equally extraordinary talent for finding any piece of paper—no matter how hopeless the task seemed—in the career-long chaos that was her office; her fits of amusement that were somewhere on the glee spectrum between a giggle and a chortle; her generosity, her warmth, her intelligence, her loyalty, her *joie de vivre*. In short, it was an honor to have known her. And fun, too. ■

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE CROSSWORD

by John K. Young



ACROSS

- Creator of Lord Peter Wimsey
- Detective Inspector Brunt's creator
- Masterson, joint pseudonym of Mort Hagen, divorce detective, creators
- Pseudonym of Martha Kay Renfroe
- Foley, pen name of Elinore Denniston
- Poer's "evening"
- Stripper whose *The G-String Murders* was ghost-written by Craig Rice
- Burglars hope this is clear
- Initials of creator of first popular detective after Sherlock Holmes
- In Roman numerals, Ray Bradbury's age publishing first detective novel
- Burglar's set of tools
- Boogie-woogie pianist and detective novelist
- His *Stain of Guilt* won 1981 Edgar nomination
- Edgar nominee in 1985 for *Doubletake*
- Flat receptacle for carrying dishes
- Initials of Cold Daggers triple winner
- Townsend, *The Mystery Fancier* publisher
- One of the earliest police proceduralists
- Setting in several Charles Williams novels
- In operation
- Sobriquet of Thurman Warriner
- The whole amount
- Wedge for leveling
- Roscoe, joint nom de plume of two real

- private eyes
- Exclamation of triumph
- Historical period of time
- Initials of author of Best First Novel award from British Arts Council in 1978
- Author of *Gorky Park*
- Inquire
- Man with a contract to kill
- Name preceded by Honest
- Fugitive's possible Hawaiian destination
- Structure containing long-range ballistic missile
- Took straw vote
- Magician/novelist fond of "impossible situation"

DOWN

- Give evidence under oath
- Attention-seeking cough
- The Saint's creator
- Sci-fi film blockbuster
- First-rate
- Pronoun for Bernie Rhodenbarr
- Abbreviation following company's name
- Creator of Ephraim Tutt, who never lost a case
- Kiln
- Trap
- Stout, 1958 Grand Master
- Agree to
- P.I. Chandler
- Cospary, author of masterpiece *Laura*
- The defendant was ordered to ___ \$50 to the witness assistance fund
- Pistol
- Kepley, first law school woman grad
- lethal equalizer
- Elizabeth Mackintosh pseudonym
- Polish author of *The Chain of Chance*
- "So help you, ___"
- Combining form meaning "three times"
- Marvin Albert's P.I.
- Grafton, author of "*A*" is for *Alibi*
- Opposite of "this"
- The limit
- Creator of Prince Zaleski, one of the most bizarre detectives in fiction
- Creator of Scott Jordan, lawyer turned detective
- Creator of investigator whose rule is, "Never drink while on a case"
- Pulpit
- Cheer
- March, M.E. Chaber's P.I.
- Blackjack
- Gardening tool
- Belonging to Inspector Jules Maigret
- Placed in *TAD*, it showcases your book
- Initials of Ann Thorn, spinster sleuth, creator

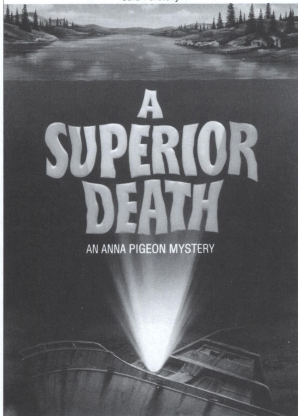
SOLUTION ON PAGE 220

THE SIGN OF THE CRIMES



A SUPERIOR SLEUTH IN EVERY WAY

Agatha Award-winning author of *TRACK OF THE CAT*
NEVADA BARR
"BRILLIANT...A BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED MYSTERY"
Sara Paretsky



That's how readers and reviewers welcomed U.S. Park Ranger Anna Pigeon—and author Nevada Barr—in their Agatha Award-winning debut, *Track of the Cat*. "A real find," cheered Tony Hillerman. Anna's new assignment takes her far from her beloved desert to the cold, dark waters of Lake Superior—and into a mystery and a murder held firmly in Superior's icy depths.

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"A wonderfully satisfying read."
—*The Washington Post Book World*

"Engrossing, entertaining... you'll welcome another chance to spend time with park ranger Anna Pigeon."—*USA Today*

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Anna is a pure joy...A book that is just about perfect."—*Denver Post*

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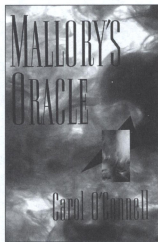
BY MARVIN LACHMAN

Since Joseph Wambaugh's first book, many have been written about police so involved in their work that they destroy their marriages, and even their lives. Few have been better than Ed Dee's first, **14 Peck Slip** (1994; Warner Books, \$19.95). We've seen veteran police detectives like Joe Gregory and Anthony Ryan before. They are cynical, drink too much and exhibit reverse snobbery in their disdain for "civilians." Gregory, the more brilliant but less stable of the duo, has a failed marriage; Ryan has a long-suffering wife whose patience may run out while he struggles to find the right balance between good husband and good cop. They are on stakeout when they observe a barrel being thrown into the East River. (Part of the realism of this book is that the tedium of stakeouts almost becomes boring for the reader, but Dee has the knack of inserting action or insights just in time.) The barrel leads Gregory and Ryan to the corpse of a crooked police detective who was killed ten years before. They become so personally involved in the case they can't drop it, and soon they are operating on adrenaline, which Dee, a former NYPD lieutenant, calls "the cop's drug."

Dee's puzzle is not memorable, and his solution is not remotely fair, though his ending is enormously satisfying. There are errors which could have been captured by tighter editing. Seurat is confused with Monet, and the solution to *Murder on the Orient Express* is gratuitously disclosed. Periodically, Dee attempts to show that Ryan, his first person narrator, has education and culture. He only convinces us that Dee has both. Yet, there is so much that is strong in this book, in particular its limning of a variety of characters on both sides of the law—and many straddling the fence. Some of his pictures of New York City are memorable, including several Bronx neighborhoods and the Fulton Fish

Market, whose sights, sounds and, especially, smells are captured.

As a longtime tennis fan, I prefer to remember Martina Navratilova on the tennis court, where she gave me twenty years of pleasure. **The Total Zone** (1994; Villard Books, \$21.00), which is credited to her and Liz Nickles, is not a promising fiction debut. There are even many tennis errors in the book, making



one wonder exactly what was Martina's role in this project. The plot involves death threats to tennis players. (Newspapers melodramatically refer to "The Curse of the Grand Slams.") Murder on a tennis court is an interesting idea, especially when Wimbledon and the U.S. Open are potential scenes of violence. However, there are too many distracting goofs regarding the latter. Its former site, Forest Hills, is called "Forest Lawn." Flushing Meadows, the present site, is twice said to seat "hundreds of thousands of people," when twenty thousand is more like it. There are soda vendors in the stands, and someone sitting near the court is watching through binoculars. I have seen neither in 45 years of watching tournaments. The book's narrator, a former tennis star, says, "I was ahead 2-6 after the first set," language no tournament

player would ever use. (She would have said, "I won the first set 6-2.")

More importantly, *The Total Zone* never succeeds as a mystery. The killer's motivation is scarcely believable, the writing is careless, and there are many clichés, including a heroine who keeps walking into danger. There are few original characters; most seem based on well known people in tennis. Fans, and even the general public, will have little difficulty recognizing a troubled young player, reminiscent of Jennifer Capriati, and Agassi and Navratilova look-alikes. Martina was a great tennis champion, but it seems that in writing she has fallen off the *def*.

One of the more interesting new characters in fiction is prickly Sergeant Kathy Mallory in **Mallory's Oracle** (1994; Putnam, \$21.95) by Carol O'Connell. Mallory was adopted by Lt. Louis Markowitz as a homeless girl, and now she sets out, with single-minded purpose, to find his killer. Markowitz's death seems connected to his investigation into the series murders of elderly rich women in New York's Gramercy Park. Mallory is said, by O'Connell, to be a computer genius, though I was never convinced by objective evidence to accept this. Also, computer clues slow down the plot and prove a poor substitute for fair-play detection. Mallory is supposed to be so tough she strikes terror in anyone who thwarts her. While she has her sociopathic moments, her ability to evoke fear is not believably presented either.

O'Connell, like most first authors, tends to overwrite. Early in the book, the minds of both a dog and a police detective are each said to be "breaking." Very minor characters are described in unnecessary detail, and all of the major suspects are so eccentric, with such exaggerated traits, that they are hard to accept. A contrived ending doesn't help. Yet, there is something about this book which makes me avidly look forward to

Carol O'Connell's second book. It is because there are times when she writes like an angel, almost poetically. For example, a description of dancing reminded me of Woolrich at his best. There is a great deal of raw talent here.

Obsession has been the subject of several famous mainstream novels with crime elements, namely Nabokov's *Lolita* and Fowles' *The Collector*. Now, straddling the same fence between mys-



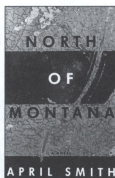
tery and "straight" novel we have Simon Beckett's *Fine Lines* (1994, Simon & Schuster, \$22.00), which is advertised as an "erotic thriller." Donald Ramsey, a wealthy, middle-aged owner of an art gallery, becomes obsessed with Anna, his young assistant, after he accidentally sees her in the nude.

Oddly, he hires a handsome male model to win Anna from her current boy friend, and we come to wonder what are the motives of Ramsey, a secret collector of pornographic art. Complications, including murder, develop, and these are well handled by Beckett, whose forte is suspenseful writing. Unfortunately, despite a few hints, we never get to understand the reason behind Ramsey's sexual behavior. He remains too faceless and unfathomable, causing this first novel to lose much of the impact and emotion it might have had.

North of Montana by April Smith (1994; Knopf, \$23.00) comes with the burden from its publisher of being described as "a novel of literary suspense...about power, class, and identity." It actually achieves a narrower scope: the personal life of its heroine, FBI agent Ana Grey. In narration, Grey speaks with two voices. Most of the time she sounds like a tough-talking, street-wise police officer. However at

other times, she is given a disconcertingly literary voice, clearly more appropriate to Smith than to her creation.

Early in the book, Gray is told that a cousin, whom she never knew, has been murdered. Then, in a gigantic coincidence, she is assigned to the drug investigation of the doctor who employed the cousin, an illegal alien from Central America. While doing her job, Ana is forced to reassess her family



relationships. The personal journey is very interesting, though the book's ending is none too satisfactory. There is good writing along the way, but it is often the literary equivalent of an impressionistic painting, rather than a work of realism.

Pittsburgh and its surrounding valleys, home to many idle steel mills, is a city seldom used in the mystery. That is ironic because one of the earliest regional mysteries was set there: Mary Roberts Rinehart's *The Case of Jennie Brax*, with its excellent descriptions of the city's then annual floods. Pittsburgh cries for a realistic mystery, and Thomas Lipinski has partly satisfied this need in *The Fall-Down Artist* (1994; St. Martin's Press, \$20.95). Its hero is private detective Carroll Dorsey, a freelance operative who generally investigates insurance claims. This book is successful in showing how private eyes actually earn their livelihoods. Dorsey's investigation of a steel worker who conveniently suffered a "disabling" fall just before he was to be laid off leads him to discover a suspicious epidemic of these incidents. He finds a political element to these "accidents" as well, with a left-wing priest possibly behind them. The setting proves interesting, but the plot often becomes repetitious and confusing for both Dorsey and

the reader. Lipinski gives up on having Dorsey solve the mystery by analyzing clues. Instead, he constantly has people conveniently provide him with information, while keeping Dorsey busy trying to fend off the many murder attempts on his life. Lipinski has a great feel for his native Pittsburgh and occasionally writes inspired prose. I hope for a second novel, one which will be shorter and tighter than this worthwhile 266 page first effort.



Considering his track record as one of our best short story writers, it is no surprise that Brendan DuBois' *Dead Sand* (1994; Otto Penzler Books, \$21.00) is one of the best first mysteries of the year. However, the economy of DuBois' short story writing is not always here, and he does allow his hero, Lewis Cole to become wordy and repetitious in his first person descriptions. Considering that Cole is an extremely well-read writer, DuBois also allows him to be annoyingly sloppy in his use of language. Yet, *Dead Sand* succeeds as a thriller and also as a fine picture of Tyler Beach, a sleazy New Hampshire summer resort.

Cole is a man with an interesting past, one which is integrated into the plot in a series of effective flashbacks. He is ostensibly a magazine writer, but he often functions like the town avenger as he involves himself in a series of murders which begin with the hanging of a teenage hotel chambermaid. Cole's detective work is negligible, though DuBois does subtly, but fairly, plant one excellent clue. Still, there is a major hole in the solution, and the killer's motivation is not convincing, despite DuBois' somewhat repetitious explanations. Flaws aside, this marks an impressive debut in mystery novel writing. ■



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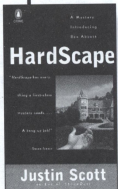
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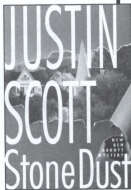
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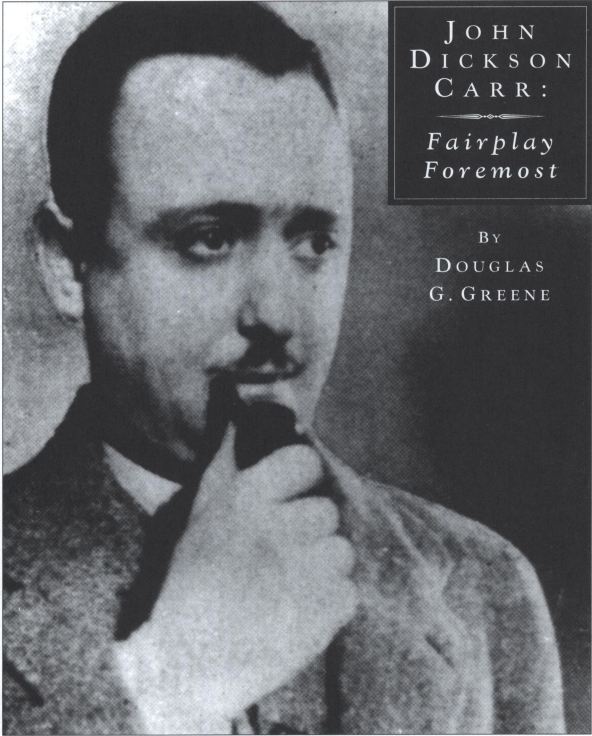
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JOHN
DICKSON
CARR:

*Fairplay
Foremost*

BY
DOUGLAS
G. GREENE

Douglas G. Greene is a widely-recognized authority on detective and mystery fiction. In 1994, he started his own small mystery press, Crippen & Landru, Publishers. He is also the author of the recent biography *John Dickson Carr: The Man Who Explained Miracles*, as well as the editor of several anthologies of Carr's work.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MWA

No writer better exemplifies the “fairplay” school of detective writing than Golden Age great, John Dickson Carr. As an influential literary critic, Carr insisted on three principles for the detective novel: Fairplay, sound plot construction and ingenuity. Even given these advantages, readers of Carr’s brilliant novels seldom managed to solve the mystery before Carr explained it...

In the early 1930s, John Dickson Carr in company with other writers drew a line between thrillers and detective stories:

Broadly speaking [he wrote] a thriller may be defined as a story in which the detective-problem is not of paramount importance because the detective never sits still long enough to think about it. If you see him sitting quietly in an armchair, it is because someone has just knocked him over the head with a life-preserver; he will awake presently.¹

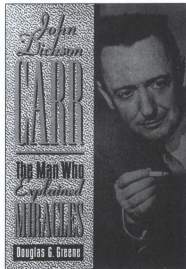
But a decade earlier when as a teenager John D. Carr III began to write, distinctions were not all that clear. Fu-Manchu’s nemesis, Nayland Smith and the dime novel hero Nick Carter were detectives, just as Sherlock Holmes and Father Brown were detectives. Indeed, there were fictional detectives of every variety—police detectives, scientific detectives, “rule-of-thumb” detectives, mystic detectives, thriller detectives, journalist detectives, blind detectives, armchair detectives, lawyer detectives, clergymen detectives, gypsy detectives, jeweler detectives, railroad detectives: the list can be extended almost indefinitely. Some of them were logical thinkers, others intuitive, and others continued the action-packed thriller tradition. Some detectives, especially at the turn of the century, had odd combinations of traits from odd combina-

tions of sources. M.P. Shiel’s Prince Zaleski, for instance, was perhaps the most eccentric of all detectives—a reclusive drug-addict who combines Sherlock Holmes with Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*. Occasionally, as in Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle*, the detective investigates genuine supernatural occurrences. Thomas W. Hanshew, creator of Hamilton Cleek, the Man of the Forty Faces, whose influence permeates Carr’s first adolescent stories, had been a dime novelist, but he was clearly influenced by The Great Detective tradition—and by just about anything else that would sell.

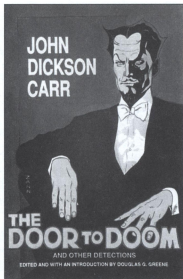
G.K. Chesterton was probably the first to state the principle of “fair play,” that is, that every clue to the solution must be given to the reader at the same time that the detective finds it. For Chesterton as for Carr, the distinguishing element of detective fiction is not investigation of a crime, but mystery and its solution based on clues given to the reader. As early as 1906, Chesterton wrote, “The detective or mystery story need not, of course, be primarily concerned with detectives.... The real distinguishing feature is that the reader should be confronted with a number of mysterious facts of which the explanation is reserved till the end.” In his Father Brown stories, Chesterton himself adhered to the fairplay rule. So did other writers whose first works were

published shortly before World War I, especially R. Austin Freeman in his Dr. Thorndyke stories, the Baroness Orczy in the three volumes about the Old Man in the Corner, Jacques Futrelle in the cases of the Thinking Machine, and Carolyn Wells in her Fleming Stone novels. Moreover, giving all the clues to the reader would become the most firmly held literary principle of John Dickson Carr and of the Golden Age writers in general.

During the “Golden Age” of the 1920s and the 1930s, the puzzle element of the detective story reigned supreme. The decade following the First World War was the great period of games and puzzles, perhaps because they indicated, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that things could still be solved. The crossword puzzle was invented in the 1920s; board games, especially Monopoly, were popular; people played Mah-Jongg, canasta, contract bridge, and (at Carr’s apartment on Columbia Heights and elsewhere) the murder game. Detective-story authors saw their books as contests in which the goal was to fool their readers, and any trick was legitimate as long as all the clues were honorably displayed. The trickiest practitioner of the genre was Agatha Christie who, starting in 1920 with *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, developed a gimmick which came to characterize



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her works: the murderer almost always turns out to be the least-likely suspect. In a Christie novel, one should be suspicious of everyone—the detective in charge of the case, the little old lady crippled for twenty years, the suspect whom the sleuth is trying to exonerate,



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even the narrator. The reviewers of the day more commonly praised books for their plots and how fair they were to the reader than for their development of character or setting.

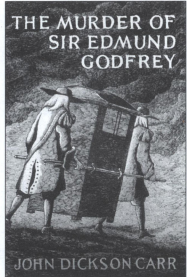
Detective novels from the Golden Age were filled with inventive ways of presenting the clues—sketch-maps of the murder site, lists of items found on the corpse, charts, timetables, transcriptions of interviews, and so on. Some authors—most importantly Ellery Queen, but also including Rupert Penny and Hugh Austin—stopped the action about three-quarters of the way through the story with a note labelled “Challenge to the Reader” informing him or her that all the clues sufficient to solve the crime have now been given. Another writer, Q. Patrick, included in one of his books a tipped-in piece of paper stating that there is an important clue on that page. Clifford Knight had a sealed “Clue Index” at the end of his early books.

In some cases, the puzzle ceased to have any connection to literature at all. Lassiter Wren and Randle McKay produced three *Baffle Books* (1928–1930), which had very short mysteries with solutions given at the end. These were used at parties, and points were awarded to the player who solved the most puzzles. A short while later came Austin Ripley’s *Minute Mysteries* (1932) and J.C. Cannell’s *100 Mysteries for Arm-Chair Detectives* (1932) with even shorter stories whose solutions hinge on tiny details. The final extreme, the Gothic Folly of the challenge-to-the-reader development, was the *Crimefiles* of the late 1930s, designed by J.G. Links and written (if that is the word) by Dennis Wheatley and others. Instead of having any narration, the *Crimefiles* were bound-together collections of clues—police reports, letters, telegrams, photographs, newspaper pages, fingerprints. Physical items were

included in glassine envelopes—burnt matches, stamps, torn-up photographs, railway tickets, even face powder from the victim. Many of the mysteries in the *Baffle Books* and the *Crimefiles* are still fun to work out, and similar game books are occasionally still produced, but they cannot be considered detective stories. For most authors the challenge was how to maintain the puzzle element while telling an interesting story, with believable characters in realistically described settings.

Many of the writers of the Golden Age believed that detective fiction had reached maturity. No longer did the crude sensationalism of thrillers dominate the form; the emphasis was now on the intellectual challenge implicit in the fairplay principle. Some authors, including S.S. Van Dine and Ronald Knox, produced rules to make certain that mere thrillers could not be accepted into the canon. Knox, who was a Catholic priest as well as an important mystery writer, called his list (like Moses’) a Decalogue and included such rules as: “The criminal must be someone mentioned in the early part of the story”; “all supernatural

or prematerial agencies are ruled out as a matter of course”; “not more than one



secret room or passage is allowable"; "no hitherto undiscovered poisons may be used"; and of course "the detective must not light on any clues which are not instantly produced for the inspection of the reader."² In words similar to ones that Carr would later use, S.S. Van Dine, author of the popular Philo Vance mysteries, summarized detective fiction of the Golden Age: "The detective story is a kind of intellectual game. It is more—it is a sporting event. And the author must play fair with the reader.... He must outwit the reader, and hold the reader's interest, through sheer ingenuity."³ This emphasis on fairplay in the clueing dominated The Detection Club, founded in London in 1930 by Anthony Berkeley, and which was made up of almost all of the major writers of the Golden Age.⁴

As with Doyle and his followers, the focus of Golden Age authors was usually on the detective. It is true that some of them created relatively colorless sleuths; it is hard to remember anything about the personalities of John Rhode's Dr. Priestley, Freeman Wills Crofts' Inspector French, and G.D.H. and M. Coles' Superintendent Wilson. For the most part, however, the tradition of The Great Detective with all his eccentricities continued, though he or she had become more human and even occasionally fallible. H.C. Bailey's chubby Reggie Fortune moaned and groaned throughout his cases like, as Carr said, "an animated cream-puff."⁵ In his early cases, Dorothy L. Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey was an aristocrat who collected incunabula and spoke in an affected drawl. Christie's Hercule Poirot was a tiny Belgian with an egg-shaped head, who was vain about his moustaches and spoke about his "little grey cells." A fictional detective was still expected to be larger than life, to make cryptic remarks, to have esoteric knowledge, and be an amateur. Superintendent So and So, Inspector This and That continued to solve fictional cases, but they paled before the successes of the amateurs. Carr summarized the appeal of the amateur:

To begin with, we object to the professional merely because he is a professional. This may seem to be carrying the Anglo-Saxon love of

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OR CARTER DICKSON:

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He Wouldn't Kill Patience
Till Death Do Us Part
The Peacock Feather Murders
He Who Whispers
The Crooked Hinge
The White Priory Murders
She Died a Lady
The House at Satan's Elbow

Excerpted from *The Armchair Detective Book of Lists, Revised*
 Second Edition, Kate Stine, ed., Otto Pensler Books, 1993.


BOOKS BY OTHER AUTHORS:

Ran of the Pit, Hake Talbot
The Hangman's Handymen, Hake Talbot
Nine Times Nine, H.H. Holmes
(Anthony Boucher)
The Big Bow Mystery, Israel Zangwill
Death from a Top Hat, Clayton Rawson
The Chinese Orange Mystery,
Ellery Queen
Scattershot, Bill Pronzini
The Talking Sparrow Murders,
Darwin L. Teshler
Too Many Magicians, Randall Garrett
Invisible Green, John Sladek

amateurism too far: but the reasons, if irrational, are sincere. Nothing galls our romantic minds more than the statement, "It's all in a day's work." A fine corpse, strangled with a green cord and having its mouth stuffed full of gold coins, is not in our day's work. A knifed baronet, with nine suspects skulking in one long procession round the drawing-room windows, is not in our day's work. And if you protest that it is seldom in anybody's day's work, including that of the police, you only stress the reason why we do not like any such admirable carryings-on measured by any rule of thumb—or thumb-print.⁶

Fortunately, if implausibly, the police were always ready to welcome the councils of these amateur sleuths. Wimsey assisted Inspector Parker, Poirot helped Inspector Japp, Anthony Berkeley's Chief Inspector Moresby was amazingly patient with self-styled detective Roger Sheringham. This pattern can be traced all the way back to Thomas W. Hanshew, in whose books Superintendent Maverick Narkom is touchingly dependent on the brilliance of Hamilton Cleek.


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Perhaps the apotheosis of this development is in the clever, though turgidly written, stories by Max Afford whose amateur detective is the roommate of a Scotland Yard Chief Inspector.

John Dickson Carr's principles about the craft and structure of detective fiction remained much the same throughout his writing career. Besides his novels and short stories themselves, the major sources for a discussion of his ideas about the genre are the following: Basil Hogarth's *Writing Thrillers for Profit* (1936), which contains extensive excerpts from letters from Carr and other Golden Age writers; Carr's lengthy essay on detective fiction entitled "The Grandest Game in the World," written in 1946 but not published until 1963—and then only in truncated form (the complete essay was first printed in the revised edition of *The Door to Doom* in 1991); Carr's panel discussions and speeches at the Mystery Writers of America meetings during the late 1940s and the early 1950s; and many remarks in his review column in Ellery Queen's *Mystery Magazine* from 1969 to 1976.

The most fundamental point, repeated over and over in all of these sources, is that John Dickson Carr was a vehement exponent of the fairplay tradition. In Chestertonian fashion, his definition of detective fiction did not emphasize investigation but rather the contest:

The detective story is a conflict between criminal and detective, in which the criminal, by means of some ingenious device—alibi, novel murder method, or what you like—remains unconvicted or even unsuspected until the detective reveals his identity by means of evidence

which has also been conveyed to the reader.... The detective novel at its best will contain three qualities seldom found in the thriller: It will contain the quality of fairplay in presenting the clues. It will contain the quality of sound plot construction. And it will contain the quality of ingenuity.

Carr began his essay, "The Grandest Game in the World," with a quotation from the oath taken by new members of The Detection Club requiring fairplay in the revealing of clues: "and this rule," Carr says, is "the *sine qua non* of

PSEUDONYM P S O U P

John Dickson Carr
a.k.a. Carr Dickson
a.k.a. Carter Dickson
a.k.a. Roger Fairbairn

the profession." He argues that the best sort of clueing should not be based on a single clue, or on one inconsistency but on "a ladder of clues, a pattern of evidence, joined together with such cunning that even the experienced reader may be deceived: until, in the blaze of the surprise ending, he suddenly sees the whole design."⁷ In the complete version of "The Grandest Game in the World," Carr analyzes the techniques used by various mystery writers to provide clues yet fool the reader. Sometimes, it must be admit-

ted, Carr engages in special pleading, as when he tries to show that Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories accepted the fairplay rule long before it was invented, but his analysis of the novels of such Golden Age authors as Berkeley, Christie, Queen, Sayers, and Van Dine is brilliant.

Carr enjoyed speaking about the art of misdirection. "Once the evidence is presented he said, 'there are very few things which are not permissible.'" Mystery writer Harold Q. Masur recalls that at a luncheon meeting, probably around 1949 or 1950, Carr advised him, "Tell every lie as though it were the truth, and every truth as though it were a lie."⁸ Carr described this technique in more detail at a craft meeting of the New York Chapter of the Mystery Writers of America during the late 1940s. Carr shared a panel with Hugh Pentecost and Ellery Queen (both Frederic Dannay and Manfred Lee) on the topic "Writing the Mystery Novel." According to the report of the session recorded by another writer, Dorothy Gardiner, Carr said:

Write a lie as though it were true, and the reader, intent on his own detecting, will swallow it.... Clues should be stressed in different parts of the book, and a good clue should be given at least twice. The most important clue should sound like the wildest nonsense; in placing a cryptic clue, be sure that your reader never sees it at eye-level. This can be done by using love scenes or comic scenes.

Gardiner included her own response to Carr's advice: "Yes, Mr. Carr—you can do it. But the rest of us?"⁹

Carr said that as long as the author has planted his clues cleverly, he can include the most wildly improbable solutions. Detective fiction, Carr firmly believed, belongs in the realm of romance rather than realism. Carr's detective character, Dr. Fell was quite willing to discourse at length on this topic:

A few people who do not like the slightly lurid insist on treating their preferences as rules. They use, as a stamp of condemnation, the word "improbable." And thereby they gall the unwary into their own belief that "improbable" simply means "bad." Now, it seems reasonable to point out that the word improbable is the very last which

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should ever be used to curse detective fiction in any case. A great part of our liking for detective fiction is based on a liking for improbability.¹⁰

In the 1960s in a review of a book by another writer, Carr remarked, "that I of all people should complain of improbable solutions would be like Satan rebuking sin or St. Vitus objecting to the twist."¹¹

Carr disliked the hardboiled private-eye story that emerged during the 1920s in the pages of *Black Mask* and other pulp magazines, and was best represented in the novels of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. There are exceptions, but most hardboiled tales emphasized action rather than hoodwinking clues and misdirection, and the Golden Age writers of The Detection Club found such tales closer to thrillers than to detection as they understood it. "A clueless and featureless riot of gunplay" was how Carr in 1941 described private-eye stories.¹² Hardboiled operatives act, Carr said, "for no reasons at all, or for no reasons that are ever explained."¹³ (This is in many ways a fair criticism of Raymond Chandler, for one, who often did not explain all elements of his mystery satisfactorily. The most famous example is his failure to tell the reader who killed the chauffeur in *The Big Sleep*.)

Carr found the hardboiled writers to be part of the 1920s school of realistic fiction which he abhorred—and many modern scholars, who do not abhor that school, also classify Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and their followers with F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. "My real objection to the hard-boiled school, even" (he added significantly) "among those who are grown up is that it isn't toughness at all; it is merely bad manners. And bad manners I dislike more than anything on this earth."

There are several ironies in Carr's attitude toward the hardboiled writers.

First, Carr did not understand that the private eye's tough manners were just as much a protective mask as Carr's emphasis on correct behavior. Unlike some critics, he realized that the sarcastic language of the hardboiled sleuth was not realistic, but he saw nothing positive in being impolite in either fiction or life.

It isn't that they don't write the English language. The trouble is that they don't write the American language. What they write is a kind of Jabberwocky, built up between the films and the cheaper magazines, which has no more relation to everyday speech than Esperanto. As for the conduct of the people concerned, do they honestly believe people act like that in real life? Or, which is more important, ought to act like that?¹⁴

This leads to another irony: Raymond Chandler was actually just as much a romanticist as John Dickson Carr, and his detective, Philip Marlowe, is as much a lone adventurer as any character whom Carr created or admired. But Carr disliked Chandler's novels more than those of any other writer, and Chandler hated Carr's. They depicted the world differently. Chandler

wrote of streets that were not only mean but often grimy; Carr may at times during his life have seen the world in the same way, but he would not write of it like that. As early as the years when he wrote for the *Uniontown Daily News Standard*, he argued that literature should not portray the world as sordid and that there is nothing to admire in a character who does not talk courteously.

In 1950, Carr wrote a review for *The New York Times* of Raymond Chandler's *The Simple Art of Murder* in which he criticized Chandler while, unexpectedly, finding some good things to say about Dashiell Hammett. In the title essay, Chandler had attacked the British detective novel and The Detection Club for not being realistic

about murder. Carr responded forthrightly, "anything is real if it seems real," a sentence which summarizes his view of the debate on probability. Chandler's problem is that:

he can't explain why the characters acted as they did, and he can't even talk intelligibly.... Few writers have been more mannered (I do not say ill-mannered) or more uneven. His similes either succeed brilliantly or fall flat. He can write a scene with an almost suffocating vividness and sense of danger—if he does not add three words too many and make it funny. His virtues are all there. If, to some restraint, he could add the fatigue of construction and clues...then one day he might write a good novel.

Chandler was furious with the review—calling Carr a "pip-squeak" in a letter—yet Carr actually had said some complimentary things about the stories in *The Simple Art of Murder*: "Two are first-class," he admitted. But even Carr's compliments were double-edged: "When [Chandler] forgets he cannot write a true detective story, when he forgets to torture words, the muddle



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resolves and the action whips along like a numbered racing car." In the midst of all this, however, Carr stopped to praise Dashiell Hammett: "Mr. Hammett has never disdained clues and has always given them fairly."¹⁵

Carr's kind words for Hammett and a pair of Chandler's stories indicates that he was mellowing slightly in his attitude toward private-eye fiction. A few months after he wrote "The Grandest Game in the World," Carr told Frederic Dannay that "I have no objection to the hard-boiled school as such. I object to it only when it is phony or pretentious, as it nearly always is."¹⁶ In 1949, as an advertisement for the Doubleday Mystery Guild, Carr wrote a brief essay about types of detective fiction. "Once upon a time, mind you, I didn't like [tough writers]. I didn't like them, that is, until suddenly—amid a spinning of blood, brass-knuckles, and flying bodies—I discovered that the author was calmly inserting the evidence into the bureau drawers."¹⁷ Toward the end of his life in his reviews for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, Carr praised private-eye novels by Ross Macdonald and young writers like Bill Pronzini and others who included plot construction and ingenuity in clueing.

John Dickson Carr was a major contributor to the Golden Age tradition and a major propagandist for its standards, but his stories have a different flavor from cozy country-house mysteries of Christie, Sayers, Berkeley, and the others. More than any other writer after Poe, Carr showed in his works the connection between the gothic novel and the detective story. The Bencolin novels retain Poe's gothicism; they begin with mysteries and horrors and seemingly genuine supernaturalism. Many reviewers and critics of the 1930s saw Carr basically as "that splendid master of the macabre"¹⁸ and often overlooked his role in the fairplay style. An article in a 1935 issue of *Publishers Weekly*, for instance, classified mystery readers as of "two kinds: those who will read supernatural tales and those who will not. The second group is denied the pleasure of writers like...John Dickson Carr."¹⁹ It is not surprising that the first book-length study of Carr's works

was written by S.T. Joshi, an expert on the horror-writer, H.P. Lovecraft. But the Bencolin novels remain by Carr's definition detective stories. They begin with horrors, but the solutions to the mysteries are materialistic and rational, with all clues given to the reader.

Carr based the structure of his novels partly on Chesterton: begin with a bizarre statement of the case, then investigate it not according to physical clues but according to finding the real pattern. Chesterton, writing short stories, had the unmasking of the criminal take place at the same time the true pattern is revealed. Carr, usually writing novels, made it harder on himself by having one mystery followed by another, with more than one pattern to be revealed. This technique allowed him to explain the puzzles more gradually. Perhaps about two-thirds of the way through the novel Carr usually would explain one of the most important mysteries—the locked room, or for the imposture, or the strange actions of the victim, or whatever other riddle Carr has tantalized us with—but there will then be a final stage in the novel in which the murderer is finally identified.

"Ingenuity" is a word often used accurately to describe Carr's books: there is ingenuity in method, normally associated with the impossible crime, and there is ingenuity in narration, as Carr sprinkles clues to the resolution of each of the mysteries. Most of his books are extraordinary accomplishments viewed merely as technical achievements; in handling a complex puzzle plot, no other detective story author can consistently match John Dickson Carr. But Carr's stories are more than mere technique, more than challenge-to-the-reader puzzles. In order to be read generation after generation, the detective novel's story itself, not just the riddle, has to be interesting. It is here that the other weapons in Carr's armory come into play—his sense of atmosphere and hints of the supernatural, his love of color and the incongruous, his descriptions of ancient lore and past events, his ability to describe a place, and the sense of wonder and excitement of his stories. ■

¹ "The Lure of Detective Fiction," *London Morning Post*, August 30, 1937.

² Ronald Knox, introduction to *The Best Detective Stories of the Year 1928*, Ronald Knox and H. Harrington, eds. (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929).

³ Van Dine's rules are quoted from material published in his *The Winter Murder Case* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1939).

⁴ There has been much debate about the date of the founding of The Detection Club. Carr always thought it was 1932, based on the date of their bylaws. But John Rhode, in the introduction to a club anthology, *Detection Monthly* (1939), says that it grew out of dinners held by Anthony Berkeley in 1928; a letter from The Detection Club was printed in the *Sunday Times* in 1930; and their round-robin novel, *The Floating Admiral*, was published in 1931. The problem has been solved by a collection of early Detection Club material described in Ferret Fantasy Catalogue Q91, December 1990, p. 26. Among the documents are a letter from Berkeley to G.K. Chesterton, December 27, 1929, proposing such a club, and a list of "members to date" dated January 4, 1930. Clearly it began at the very end of 1929 or in the first days of 1930.

⁵ "The Grandest Game in the World," *The Door to Doom*, p. 316.

⁶ "The Lure of Detective Fiction," *Morning Post*, August 30, 1937.

⁷ "The Grandest Game in the World," *The Door to Doom*, pp. 308–312.

⁸ Harold Q. Masur (L), October 5, 1988.

⁹ "Writing the Mystery Story, First New York Craft Session" (Mystery Writers of America papers, Mugar Memorial Library, Boston University).

¹⁰ *The Three Coffins*, Chapter 17.

¹¹ "Murder Fancier Recommends," *Hopner's Magazine*, July 1965, p. 105.

¹² JDC to Frederic Dannay, October 20, 1941.

¹³ "The Grandest Game in the World," *The Door to Doom*, p. 321.

¹⁴ JDC to Frederic Dannay, May 26, 1946.

¹⁵ "With Colt and Luger," *New York Times*, September 24, 1950; Raymond Chandler, *Selected Letters* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), p. 238.

¹⁶ JDC to Frederic Dannay, September 17, 1946.

¹⁷ "A Mystery Addict Speaks His Mind," *New York Times*, on the dust jackets of book-club editions of *Behind the Crimson Blind*, *Night at the Mocking Widow*, and probably other books.

¹⁸ Basil Hogarth, *Writing Thrillers for Profit* (London: A. & C. Black, 1936), p. 88.

¹⁹ Helen R. Tiffany, "Pacifying the Public with Mysteries," *Publishers Weekly*, August 24, 1935, p. 498.

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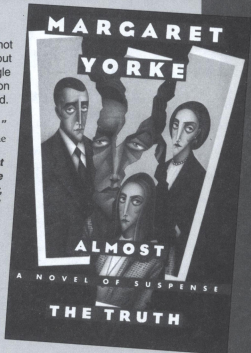
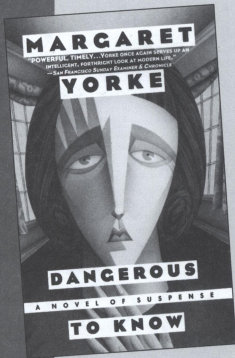
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Murderous Affairs

BY

JANET A. RUDOLPH

LOTS OF NEWS TO SHARE WITH YOU ALL. THE MYSTERY WORLD IS REALLY JUMPING WITH AN EXPLOSION OF EVENTS, CONFERENCES, SPECIALTY BOOKSTORES, PERIODICALS AND BOOKS, OF COURSE. THIS ISSUE, MY COLUMN WILL BE DEVOTED TO UPDATING YOU IN SOME OF THESE. MIND YOU, THIS IS JUST A RANDOM SAMPLING. IF I DIDN'T MENTION ONE OF YOUR FAVORITES, PLEASE CONSULT PAST ISSUES OF

The Armchair Detective, or let me know. I'll try to mention it in a future issue.

First, I want to tell you that the Fall 1994 issue of the **AARP Bulletin** had an article on "Grayhaired Gumshoes."

In a sidebar, there was mention of the Fall 1994 issue of the **Mystery Readers Journal** which focused on "The Senior Sleuth." *MRJ* received over 1400 responses. There are a lot of people who read *AARP*—and obviously many of them read mysteries. The requests for that issue are still coming in. Anyone else out there who would like a copy of *The Senior Sleuth* issue (one of *MRJ's* largest issues to date), send a check for \$7.00 to Mystery Readers International, PO Box 8116, Berkeley, CA 94707-8116.

Molly Johnson Weston writes **Meritously Mysteries**, in which she tries to highlight new authors or those who may not be picked up by the newspaper media. To receive a free sample issue, send a SASE to Molly Johnson Weston, 500 West Chatham St, Apex, North Carolina 27502. This newsletter is distributed to independent bookstores and libraries. Cost to subscribers will be \$10/year.

Most Loving, Mere Folly is the journal of the **Ellis Peters Appreciation Society**. This periodical is packed full of information on Ellis Peters and her works, as well as information on medieval life in England. To subscribe, send \$15/year to Sue Feder, 7815 Daniels Ave, Parkville, MD 21234. (Please make checks payable to Sue Feder.)

The Hart Beat is Carolyn Hart's brainchild. It's "A Guide to Carolyn G. Hart Mysteries" but it's more. Carolyn not only tells you where she's going and what she's writing, but also offers tidbits of information on other writers and reading. To receive the newsletter, write to The Final Edit, 4425 Creek Ford Trace, Duluth, GA 30136.

The Saint Club was formed in 1936 by Leslie Charteris with the aim of providing a constructive fan base for Saint devotees. This is the only club devoted to the adventures of Simon Templar and the writing of Leslie Charteris and sells authorized merchandise such as mugs, photos, notepaper, ties, etc. The Club has a newsletter called **The Epistle**. To join, send \$5/year to Ian Dickerson, Honorary Secretary, The Saint Club, Shandy St, Stepney, London E1 4ST, England. (Checks payable to "The Saint Club.")

Cracked Mirror Mysteries is a tri-annual digest of fiction and non-fiction mystery and suspense. "From psychological thrillers and hard-boiled detective stories to flash suspense and gothic ghosts. I haven't seen this periodical yet, but I saw an ad in **Over My Dead Body!** Single issue \$4 or \$11.50/year. Check, money order payable to D.L. Gish, Editor, 370 E. Woodlawn, Le Center, MN 56057.

The Edgar Wallace Society has a new organizer, Kai Jorg Hinz, AM Felshang 18, D52223, Stolberg, Germany. The Edgar Wallace Society publishes **The Crimson Circle**.

Murder & Mayhem, the brainchild of Fiske & Ellie-Ann Miles, has expanded into a slick full-size periodical from its former pocket-size format. Subscription rates—\$15/6 issues (a good buy). Sample copies of *M&M* are \$3.50. Write to PO Box 415024, Kansas City, MO 64141.

Mostly Murder is a great mystery review magazine. There are also features (the last issue I saw had articles by Walter Mosley and James Lee Burke.) If you'd like to subscribe to *Mostly Murder*, enclose a check for \$10 to Mostly Murder, PO Box 191207, Dallas, TX 75219.

InterPOLICE is a new bimonthly publication in Russia (and in Russian), but plans are afoot for English editions in the future in order to make it an international police magazine. The first part is a best-selling detective novel. The second, documentary part covers topics about the most dangerous criminals wanted by Interpol and other law enforcement agencies of different countries, details of the most famous criminal cases in Russia and abroad, and other fascinating information. B. Gurnov, Editor in Chief, writes "The major aim of our project is to obtain the active participation in the new magazine of police agencies and mystery, crime, and detective magazines of different countries." For more information, write to B. Gurnov 5, Apt. 2, Rostovskaya nab, Moscow, 119121, Russia. I haven't seen *InterPOLICE* yet, but it sounds very interesting. I'll need to wait for the English version.

Murderous Intent plans to publish its first issue in April 1995. Editors Margo

Power and Marie Gerules are interested in both fiction and nonfiction submissions. For guidelines and information, send SASE to Marie Gerules, 10102 W. 97th Terrace, Overland Park, KS.

Red Herring Mystery Magazine, a quarterly which debuted last June, welcomes well-crafted short stories up to 6,000 words in length for publication. Stories must be unpublished mystery or suspense; no true crime, horror or supernatural, no gratuitous sex or violence. SASE for guidelines, PO Box 8278, Prairie Village, KS 66208.

Jeffrey Norwood of **Chico's** (formerly Tower Books) **Mystery Newsletter** tells us that the August 1994 issue was his last issue. However, the newsletter will go on in a new format. Kara Robinson at Kent State, Alan Rollins in Florida and Jeff have been discussing plans to make it an e-newsletter. Alan will be collecting the reviews and posting the monthly newsletter at DorothyL. (see below)

DorothyL is an electronic bulletin board devoted to mysteries. Each day the 1400 members receive a digest of the previous day's messages. The digest comes to you as e-mail. To subscribe to DorothyL, you need a way of get-

ting e-mail via the Internet. America Online, CompuServe, Prodigy, Genie and eWorld will all do that for you. You simply send a message to: LISTERV@kentvm.kent.edu saying: subscribe DorothyL [your full name.] You type in your first and last name. You will be asked to confirm, and you're on. Instructions will be sent to you.

The Baker Street Dispatch is a bimonthly newsletter devoted to Sherlock Holmes. Edited by Thomas Biblewski and Janet Biblewski since 1990, this 8-page newsletter is Ohio's largest circulating newsletter and perhaps the USA's largest Sherlock Holmes newsletter. Subscriptions are \$7.50 for 6 issues and \$1.25 for a sample copy. Checks and inquiries should be sent to: Baker Street Dispatch, Box 5503, Toledo, OH 43613.

There is a new German crime and mystery magazine **speakeasy** which will be published four times a year; issue 1 is now available. *speakeasy's* contents include national and international information, articles, interviews and of course, reviews. Address: Alibi Krimibuchhandlung, Engelberstr. 11, D-50674 Köln, Germany. Fax 49-221-24 44 96.



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Magalog, a magazine and catalogue from Vienna, Austria, has been published since mid-1993. Issue 3 was published in June. *Magalog's* contents include reviews and some articles. Address: Krimi Galerie, Burging 1, A-1010 Wien, Austria. Fax 0043-1-596 14 94.

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More Mystery Bookstores and Mail-Order Catalogues

I really enjoy the catalogue from **MysteryBooks** in Washington, D.C. because books are listed in categories. In the Spring/Summer 1994 catalogue, there was a sidebar of Senior Sleuths. To receive the catalogue, call (800) 955-2279. **MysteryBooks** is located at 1715 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20009 (near Dupont Circle).

The **Cornstalk Bookshop** located in NSW, Australia, publishes a catalogue of Australian crime fiction. To get their catalogue, write to PO Box 336, Glebe NSW 2037, Australia, or call (02) 552-1070.

The **Rue Morgue**, the Boulder, CO, mystery bookstore, has a terrific

publication, **The Purloined Letter**. It is now available by subscription. You will receive it free if you continue to buy \$100 worth of books a year, but starting this fall, they will charge \$15/year. I think this newsletter with its many reviews is well worth it. Write to 946 Pearl Street, Boulder, CO 80302.

The **Snooper** is the newsletter from **Snoop Sisters Mystery Bookshope & Boutique**, 566 N. Indian Rocks Rd, Belleair Bluffs, FL 34640-2016. In the latest issue there's an original story by Walter Satterthwait. The **Snoop Sisters** also have a **Morning Mystery Book Club**. Write or call (800) 584-4370 for more information.

Booknews from The Poisoned Pen is another great newsletter/catalogue. Barbara Peters, owner of The Poisoned Pen is responsible. The catalogue is divided into categories of the latest mysteries. 7100 B East Main, Scottsdale, AZ 85251 or call (602) 947-2974.

Science Fiction, Mysteries & More is located at 140 Chambers St (just off West Broadway) in New York. Check with them for signings and special events. (212) 385-8798

The **Black Orchid Bookshop**, 303 East 81st St, NY, NY 10021, opened its doors on Monday, August 15. There are two floors of spy novels, hard-boiled, police procedurals, manor house murders and more. Bonnie Claeson and Joe Guglielmelli, owners. They will have a series of monthly "Cocktail Hours" for customers and frequent author signings. A bimonthly newsletter will alert customers to

upcoming events, new releases and more. For more information, stop by or call (212) 734-5980.

Mystery Tales is a new bookstore in Annapolis, Maryland, which opened in March 1994. Plans for the future include a children's section, a store newsletter, and a book discussion group. 24 Annapolis St, Annapolis, MD 21401. (410) 280-0660.

Partners & Crime Mystery Bookstore opened in June 1994 at 44 Greenwich Ave, New York. Special features include a rental library and a "Mystery Reading Room" with a secret door and haunted fireplace. The room is used for readings and signings. There are 5 partners and is headed up by bookseller John Douglas.

Jane Syrk's **Murder & Mayhem** has moved across the street to 6411 North Carrollton in Indianapolis. Stop by.

Book Groups

Richard Rodda of **Borders Books & Music** at Rt 4 and Rt 17, Paramus, NJ, has started a chapter of MRI at the bookstore. This group will meet monthly to discuss mysteries. If you are interested in joining this group, call Rich at (201) 712-9171.

Bloody Thursdays X 1994/1995 (Friends of Mystery) To find out more about Friends of Mystery (and to join), write to Friends of Mystery, PO Box 8251, Portland, OR 97207. All meetings are open to the public and begin at 7:30 on the lower level of the Northwest Service Center, 1819 NW Everett.

Oklahoma Mystery Writers (whose members are published writers, unpublished writers and mystery fans) meet on the third Saturday of January, March, May, July, September and November at 12:30 p.m. at the Western Sizzlin' Steak House, 21st & Sheridan, Tulsa, Oklahoma, for lunch followed by a speaker. Guests are welcome. Dues are \$10/year. For more information, call Jean Hager at (918) 492-8614.

Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter of MRI meets at the **Mystery Bookshop: Bethesda**, 7700 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda, MD 20814.

The **Poisoned Pen**, 7100 B East Main Street, Scottsdale, Arizona has the **Mystery Discussion Club** meeting once a month at The Poisoned

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Pen. Call (602) 947-2974 for more information.

John Bierman would like to join others in forming a chapter of MRI. Please contact him at 5273 Bittersweet Dr., Dayton, OH 45429 or call (513) 438-0211.

Seattle Mystery Readers Club meets at the **Seattle Mystery Bookshop**. Call Sandy at (206) 363-2541 for more on times and updates.

Chris Myers is head of the **MRI chapter in Albany**. Meet at **Haven't Got a Clue Bookstore** (owned by Betsy Blaustein). For more information call Chris at (518) 235-0249.

The **Minneapolis chapter of MRI** meets at **Once Upon a Crime**, 604 W 26th St, Minneapolis, MN 55405. For more information on discussions, call (612) 870-3785. Non-members encouraged to attend.

The **Northern California chapter of MRI** holds weekly classes on thematic mysteries. Classes held in Oakland, California. Once a month, MRI has an "At Home" with visiting writers. For schedule, write to PO Box 8116, Berkeley, CA 94707.

Check with your library, your mystery bookstore, your extension program, or your local chapter of MRI for bookgroups. Remember this is just an update.

Events

April 28-30, 1995: **Malice Domestic VII**. Malice Domestic is a mystery convention which is devoted to "comfortable crime," held at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, Maryland (near Washington, DC). For more information, write to PO Box 31137, Bethesda, MD 20824-1137. Membership includes the Agatha Awards Banquet and the Agatha Christie Tea. \$95 Full participation. Sold Out.

June 15-19, 1995: **Eyecon '95** at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee. Guest of Honor: Sue Grafton; Toastmaster: 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. Sunday will feature the first PWA Writers Conference designed for

new writers. The PWA Lifetime Achievement Award and St. Martin's Best First P.I. 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. \$100/through January 15, 1995. 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.

July 21-24, 1995: **Dorothy L. Sayers Convention** at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. Theme will be Norfolk and the Wimseys. Dinner will be held in the Sainsbury Building, preceded by a viewing of the Sainsbury family art collection. For more information on this and the **DLS Society**, write to Christopher Dean, Rose Cottage, Malthouse Lane, Hurstpierpoint, W Sussex BN6 9JY, England.

August 4-6 1995: **Sisters in Crime Writers Workshop**. Details to come. Ann Brazier is Workshop Chair and Kathy Trocheck will act as Editor/

Agent Liaison. Submit workshop proposals and/or suggestions to Ann at 1616 Isham Dr, Lawrenceville, GA 30245-2871.

September 28-October 1, 1995: **Bouchercon 26** (World Mystery Convention) will be held in Nottingham, England. Write to Bouchercon 26, Broadway, 14 Broad St, Nottingham, England NG1 3AL. Panels, social events, readings, trips and more.

The fifth **John D. MacDonald Conference on Mystery and Detective Fiction** is being organized. It is to be held at the Bahia Mar Marina and Yachting Center, Ft Lauderdale, Florida. For more information, write Ed Hirschberg, Editor, JDM Bibliophile, Dept. of English, Univ. of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620.

And as always, I depend on you to keep me up-to-date on all the mystery events, bookstores, clubs, periodicals and "happenings." Send information to **Janet A. Rudolph, MRI, PO Box 8116, Berkeley, CA 94707-8116**.

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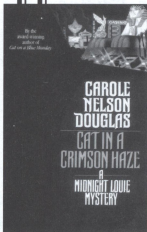
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THE CRIME SCREEN

BY RIC MEYERS

The great thing about English-speaking film centers forgetting (or never knowing) what a story consists of is that critiquing becomes all the easier. Save for four American movies in 1994, I could give a blanket review for every other I've seen: "Starts well, ends badly." True of *Interview With a Vampire*, painfully true of *Love Affair*, frighten-



RALPH FIENNES AS CHARLES VAN DOREN IN *QUIZ SHOW*

ingly true of *Francis Ford Coppola's Kenneth Branagh's Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, and annoyingly true of *Star Trek Generations*.

In fact, the only four 1994 films it was not somewhat true of were *Forrest Gump*, *The Lion King*, *Quiz Show* and *Pulp Fiction*. **Quiz Show**, although not a box office success and a trifle overlong, was still extremely intelligent and had a point—both obvious and obscure—to make. Obvious: if we don't control television, it will control us. Obscure: television will eventually make everything on it—be it game show, sports or news—"show business." I.e.; truth is secondary, drama is everything.

That's a very important point, so naturally television went out of its way to downplay it. Coincidence? Well, you know me and conspiracy theories (*Thelma and Louise* + box office success = *V.I. Warshawski*, *A Stranger Among Us*, and *Alien 3*). In any case, it

was an extreme pleasure watching Paul Scofield calmly and quietly wipe everything else off the screen.

In *Quiz Show*, Scofield is to Ralph Fiennes as Ralph Fiennes is to Rob Morrow. In fact, Morrow, of *Northern Exposure* fame is the only misstep, and mostly because his Boston (pronounced Bass-ton) accent sounded like a bad cold. So, while the Robert Redford-directed movie sinks in the theaters, rest assured it will rise again in the video stores as the hottest ticket amongst the *Searching for Bobby Fischer* set.

Do not suspect the same fate of **Pulp Fiction**, which is justifiably seen as the hippest thing to hit Hollywood since *Barton Fink*. Quentin Tarantino has paid off the promise of his previous film, *Reservoir Dogs*, with a 2 1/2-hour-plus noir epic that is the first movie that cannot, literally, be predicted. No one in the theater, most of all me, knew what was going to happen next. And, sure enough, it did...or didn't, depending upon what sequence you're considering.

Wait a minute, let's get oriented. *Pulp Fiction* is five interlocking tales of hit men, crime slime, dames and dementia broken into three labeled parts. Only thing is, Tarantino merrily jumps back and forth in time depending upon which story he's showing. And, because every single character on screen is capable of sudden violence, the suspense that is created and the way the audience's imagination is engaged and energized is unparalleled.

As a result, everyone thinks *Pulp Fiction* is far bloodier than it is (same thing happened in *Jaws*—people remembered far longer and more detailed scenes of mayhem than there actually were). Actually the violence and gore is minimal here, but when it comes, it almost never fails to surprise, intrigue and provoke.

When given such a prime piece of pulp to chew on, actors who were given up as dead suddenly take on new life. John Travolta, Bruce Willis, and Uma

Thurman—thought of as on the way out—are back on the "A" list. Danny DeVito, as *Pulp Fiction's* executive producer, is back in the game after directing and costarring in the disastrous *Hoffa*. Meanwhile, Samuel L. Jackson finally gets his star-making role after floundering in such sputum as *National Lampoon's Lethal Weapon* and *Amos & Andrew*.

Of course, the real winner in all of this is Quentin Tarantino, who deftly juggles farce, tragedy and suspense (while indulging his penchant for pop culture, the poetry of profanity and such cinematic allusions as a solid gold "McGuffin.") Tarantino is so successful, in fact, that the Hollywood backlash has already started against him, led by the people responsible for turning his original script of *Natural*



UMA THURMAN AND JOHN TRAVOLTA IN QUENTIN TARANTINO'S *PULP FICTION*.

Born Killers into the hopelessly hip self-reverential morally muddled plastic refuse it turned out to be.

STARTS WELL, ENDS BADLY AD INFINITUM

My nomination for the goofiest crime movie of the year is the French/English hybrid **The Professional**. It's a simple story: hardened hit man takes twelve-year-old girl whose family has been

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slaughtered by corrupt DEA agents under his wing, learns to care despite having his physical and emotional world turned upside down, then must take on the combined N.Y.P.D. to save her.

Now I know how the French feel when we make movies set in France. The tiny, telling, lapses in the way-things-actually-work keep this effort from being totally acceptable, but what really separates the puritans from the Gauls is director Luc Besson's approach to the budding friendship between the hit man and the pre-pubescent. You would think, by the American reviews, that the two were rolling around in bed together. At the very least, American critics were falling all over themselves to reprimand Besson for supposedly making the camera a leering, dirty old man.

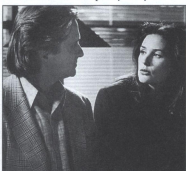
I can imagine the director and the French audience (who have already made *The Professional*, which is called *Leon* there, a hit), who have no such guilt, scratching their heads in bewilderment over that one, then shrugging. If their repressed cousins across the water want to project their own base desires onto Besson, so be it...as long as they come to the cinemas.

The Professional moves along quite nicely, with Besson showing the style that made his previous picture, *La Femme Nikita* such a film festival fave (and fostered the inferior American remake *Point of No Return*). That is, until just after the climax, when the movie itself gets provincial. I can just hear the American studio execs: "Luc, baby, you can't have a twelve-year-old girl blowing a guy away at the end of the picture! The great unwashed just won't go for it! It's not us, Luc sweetheart, honeydoll, it's that darned stupid audience out there!"

In any case, the result is an entertaining action film with heart, that ends in a clearly unsatisfactory way. Interestingly enough I can accept such lapses as having Leon kill and/or maim four guys in DEA headquarters, then stay in town; or having a big time Little Italy deal-maker not covered in bodyguards; but when Danny Aiello, playing that selfsame Italian bigwig, gives up Leon's address to the bad guys and steals all his money, there's no way the movie wouldn't build up to the girl taking revenge at the fade-out.

But of course, she doesn't and the film-

makers expect the audience to forget, or at least, forgive. That, alone is what keeps *The Professional* from being classic noir. Instead, it will have to rank as a nice try, with some heart and plenty of style.



BRUCE FEMER

MICHAEL DOUGLAS AND DEMI MOORE IN "DAT" WARNER BROS. PICTURE, *DISCLOSURE*.

WHAT IS DAT?

I think I liked *Disclosure*, not because it's a great movie, but because after suffering through the many movie disappointments which immediately preceded it, the fact that it did not crash into a fiery celluloid wreck by its end was enough to satisfy me. But then the aftertaste kicked in.

There's a book I hate called *The General's Daughter* by Nelson DeMille. In it, DeMille uses the ignominious gang rape of the title character as a red herring in an otherwise pedestrian hard-boiled mystery. The one thing I took away from this distasteful exercise in obfuscation was that the only way it could have worked is if the woman's subsequent murder was committed by one of her previous rapists because she was about to do what her father prevented her from doing years before: bring down West Point by going public with her attack by cadets.

Instead the author had a wiseacre, apathetic male investigator go through the motions, bring a basically unrelated perpetrator to light, find true love, and ride off into the sunset—leaving a huge injustice still hanging over the book like a dead weight. Why bring up this obviously annoying literary incident? Well, because *Disclosure* is like that. It isn't about sexual harassment, it uses sexual harassment as a plot point in an otherwise okay big-business thriller.

Otherwise, there's a lot to commend

the movie on. Director Barry Levinson does a thoroughly professional job, giving the essentially routine suspense a sumptuous look and watchable style. The cast is especially commendable. Michael Douglas is just smart enough, and his character just Neanderthal enough to make his motivations, weaknesses, and strengths credible. Demi Moore creates the perfect visual balance between strength and sexiness.

But it is Donald Sutherland who is the real M.V.P. here, giving one of the best subtle screen performances since Roy Scheider in *Jaws*. He isn't showy, doesn't have a huge amount of screen time, and certainly not a lot of lines, but he makes every screen second count. Watch him in the climactic confrontation: in a three-second, silent close-up you can see him consider his options, momentarily decide to tough it out then cave. Now that's acting!

These are the kind of things you have to concentrate on simply to avoid the unavoidable: *Disclosure* is a movie that gives shelter to real sexual harassers out there. Coming out at the same time as *Oleanna*, David Mamet's slanted adaptation of his own infuriating, but thought-provoking play, it should be of great comfort to those who see all women as dangerous, emasculating bitches and any woman who claims sexual harassment as either a cunning harrier or a deluded victim of feminist terrorists out to empower herself.

The final nail in *Disclosure*'s coffin, however, is the last plot point. Douglas is able to foil the villains' insidious plot by asking a Malaysian contact whether his office has "DAT." The contact replies that he would have to check, then the following morning, incriminating fixes start pouring into Douglas' office. Okay, let's have a show of hands: how many of you know what D.A.T. is? Well, if you're watching *Disclosure*, you better know, because they don't explain it in any way.

It's Digital Audio Tape, which computer folk use to "back-up" their machine's memory so if your hardware "crashes" (because there's a power surge, outage, or too many people wearing the wrong kind of sweater), you won't lose all your files. After using both sexual harassment and virtual reality as red herrings, DAT ends up the pivotal plot device.

So...dat's DAT!

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**A WOLFE
IN STOUT
CLOTHING**

By Aurelius Priest

Casting a critical eye over the corpus Lupina, this essay reveals a startling conclusion about the true identity of "Rex Stout" and his "creation," Nero Wolfe.



Casting a critical eye over the *corpus Lupina*, this essay reveals a startling conclusion about the true identity of "Rex Stout" and his "creation," Nero Wolfe.

I became acquainted with Nero Wolfe at an early age and was at once enchanted. I have grown up with the saga from its very beginning to its demise. The thrill of discovering a new Nero Wolfe mystery never paled for me, and even now I can be found lurking about the mystery section in bookstores ever hopeful that somehow a new one has appeared. Wolfe taught me much about life and about myself; in particular, he taught me to turn a sharp and critical eye on all matters of importance. In time, my suspicions were aroused, and I trained such an eye on the Wolfe saga itself. I realized that there was a deeper mystery than was contained in the cases. After reading the other mysteries by "Rex Stout," the ones without Nero Wolfe, my suspicion became a conviction: we were all being gulled. I pursued the evidence, each note in the saga that jarred. Not for nothing had I pored endlessly over the *corpus Lupina*. At last, early in the 1960s, I wrote the preliminary report that follows.

Yet I thought it best not to hurry to publication. After all, Wolfe had gone to considerable lengths to conceal his shenanigans. Revealing them to the

public might well annoy him. And I had read enough to know that annoying Wolfe was a very bad idea. So, with some regret, I consigned the typescript to a drawer, preferring prudence to reckless valor. By the mid-1970s, however, it became clear that Wolfe was *hors de combat*, whether dead or retired at an extreme age. Preoccupied with other concerns, I allowed myself the vague hope that some other student of the saga would reveal the truth and save me the trouble. Time passed, but no revelation appeared. Then Bantam began



to reprint the entire Wolfe corpus: the definitive edition I had called for was coming into being, each volume with an introduction by a famous Melanolyologist.¹ Surely, I thought, now the revelation will come. Many volumes have now appeared, each with a scholarly introduction, but Wolfe's secret remains intact. If anyone else knows the truth, he too, awed into the habit of deference to the genius, refuses to reveal

what he has discovered. My duty to history, therefore, must at last be served. The truth must now be told. To that end I present my report, just as it was composed more than three decades ago.



918 West 35th Street² between Eighth and Ninth Avenues is the address of a justly famous old brownstone house belonging to Nero Wolfe. No one knows just how many there are who share an intensive, intimate, almost familial interest in all that happens there. Many of us have set out in that direction at some time or other, intent upon a closer look. Still, short of a sudden murder on our hands, there seems small likelihood of any of us being invited inside. Certainly a frontal attack, i.e. just marching up to the door, is unthinkable, though as recently as last August I went so far as the five hundred block before turning back. Such a maneuver became unthinkable when I had a sudden vision of Archie Goodwin coming to the door, making a quick check through the glass, unlatching the chain, and asking me my business.

Goodwin, as everyone knows, is a constantly observed celebrity around town, hailed on sight by doormen and *maitres d'hôtel*, a man not averse to seeing his face in public print. Every detail of conduct and wardrobe indicates vast



Aurelius Priest is the pen name of two historians, Donald Kagan, who is Bass Professor of History and Classics and Western Civilization at Yale University and Walter A. Ralls, Professor Emeritus of History at Hobart and William Smith College. They are grateful to Fred Kagan, who pried this essay from the drawer where it had lain for more than three decades (it was written in 1965), improved it and insisted on its submission for publication.

areas of self-confidence and self-esteem. One of his more developed minor skills is the dexterity with which he gives a fast and ungente brush to pokey idlers and all meddling souls who have difficulty coming to the point. Nor would matters be much improved if Fritz Brenner, Wolfe's inspired resident chef, were to answer. A good deal more polite and restrained, Brenner is nevertheless a genius in his own way and by every indication a busy man. One can imagine the long stare and growing Swiss chill as one fumbles, "Er, who lives here, really? I mean, how is everyone?" As for Wolfe himself actually standing there, filling the hallway, door, and stoop—well, the mind boggles. Prudence would suggest dropping the matter. Archie's pen often drips acid, and his next report would no doubt have a terse reference to my visit as typical of the kind of witless gaucherie with which the higher fame brackets have to contend.

To speak of "dropping the matter," suggests that something is askew, yet, in this instance, even a tenuous unease might seem inappropriate. Last year's report³ was reassuring enough: Theodore Horstmann continued to preside over the fourth floor orchid plantation, Archie still reserved the red chair for Inspector Cramer, and a hundred other details remained in the same familiar pattern established over thirty years ago. Thirty years, however, is a considerable period of time. Perhaps my vague disquiet arose from the unconscious recognition that time, even at Casa Wolfe, was moving on. An incredible thought! Archie still dances all night on occasion, Wolfe continues to quaff eight bottles of beer daily, Saul Panzer, when required, can still remain immobile in the shadows for eighteen hours at a stretch. Nothing has changed.

It is, of course, never that easy. Once even a ghost of concern is raised about

affairs at the old 35th Street brownstone, only a thorough sifting of the facts will lay it to rest. And, if a personal trip down there is impractical, then all the case books, the oldest and the latest, must carefully be read again. The first reported adventure was *Fer-de-Lance*. As it opens Wolfe is sampling legal bottles of 3.2 beer, and professing to find them potable. This small episode gives us a firm *terminus ante quem* for the date of composition, for the 21st Amendment went into effect on December 5, 1933. Elsewhere in the account one finds that Wolfe's



CLOTHED IN HIS VOLUMINOUS CANARY YELLOW PAJAMAS, NERO WOLFE ALMOST MET HIS END IN *TOO MANY COOKS*.

investigation of the mysterious disappearance of Carlo Maffei, which is the starting point of the case, began on Wednesday, the 7th of June. The calendar shows that the corresponding year for such a date is 1933. In this way we learn that Wolfe and Goodwin began their association about 1926, for *Fer-de-Lance* further reveals that Archie at that time had been living in Wolfe's house for seven years.

In another passage we discover that in 1933 the brownstone house itself had belonged to Wolfe for some twenty years which means he acquired it just before World War I, in 1913. There is no telling how old Archie

was when Wolfe took him on in 1926, but incontestably he was no minor. In view of the demanding and dangerous work required of him, he should not have been much under twenty-five. Still Archie is nothing if not precocious, so, granting him an early start—he skipped college—he may have reached a bare majority when first employed. On this reckoning his birthday can be placed no later than 1905.

Wolfe's age comes harder. In light of what we are told of the extensive, if shadowy, adventures of his early manhood, however, he could not have been much less than thirty when he purchased his W. 35th Street home in 1913. Wolfe's frequently avuncular treatment of Archie, moreover, suggests that the great detective was born some twenty years before his younger colleague, in the mid-1880s.

Consideration of these dates produces a jolt, but reflection reduces the alarm. Archie's splendid physical condition and attractiveness to women are entirely creditable when one recalls that he is the same age as Cary

Grant. Wolfe, on the other hand, is about the age that Goethe was when he fell in love with an eighteen year old girl, or if that is unseemly, remember that Ranke, born in 1795, was Wolfe's age when he was just beginning his *Weltgeschichte* in 1876. Still, sound in mind and limb though they be, and however remarkable, Goodwin and Wolfe are mortal, and some day their saga will end.

A lugubrious conclusion, but at least I had traced the source of my concern for the inhabitants of 918 West 35th Street, and my mind could be easy for the time being. But not entirely, for the inescapable truth about Nero

Wolfe and Archie Goodwin is that they are no longer mere mortals. They have long since been apotheosized in the sizeable library of their case studies, read and commented upon around the world. These reports differ from all other annals of crime in that they present two men who are peculiar by virtue of their sanity. Compared with the run of men, caught in a tenebrous Freudian undergrowth, leading lives not only of quiet desperation, but of sweaty fears and ignoble compromises, emasculated in spirit before they are even pubescent, or worse, learning to hold outward tensions of manhood through a dual polarity of cynicism and brutality, Wolfe and Goodwin are gods. And now the true pea at the bottom of the seven mattresses revealed itself: it is not for Wolfe and Goodwin themselves that one fears, but rather lest we should cease to have the fullest possible reports of their doings. At present we have only a fraction of all the possible case studies. Circumstantial evidence shows that for every case reported there are at least nine not yet released. Of these surely a third would be as intriguing as those already published. Three times the present corpus—what a feast!

Yet these very figures are the real source of alarm, for if Wolfe is somewhere around eighty at this moment, who is going to do the monumental prodding necessary for him to finish all these reports in the usual full fashion? It is true that Ranke began his world history at eighty-one and Will Durant at the same age is working twelve hours a day to get through the last third of his, but these are industrious men. Wolfe is a notorious sluggard. It is no good gesturing wildly in the direction of Archie and "Rex Stout." The received idea that they, in some kind of labyrinthine collaboration, write all these studies is not merely improbable, it is well nigh impossible. Consider this: Archie is a brilliant verbatim reporter, a splendid transcriber of notes taken in his own peculiar shorthand. But he clearly is incapable of producing the sophisticated

and ironic prose that distinguishes these case studies from all others. The seeming artlessness of the style is a measure of the literary skill hidden behind it. Archie is anything but literary. He is a natural man, his reading confined to newspapers; his world is one of action. When he is bored or Wolfe too lazy to work, he is at cards, or the theater, or a



THE "STOUT KING" OF DETECTIVES.

supper club, or womanizing. By his own admission when he must write, it is at the typewriter, in a sparse and rudimentary office prose, with near-perfect copy the first time. One might as well say that Sergeant Purley Stebbins is the author.

Convention is strong, and we have been habituated to accept Archie, the

narrator of the stories, as the source of all our pleasure, but to believe that Archie is their author would be puerile. Consider the *argumentum e silentio*: we are massively well informed of Archie's activities. Never is he out of our sight, from his solitary breakfast in the kitchen with his *New York Times* propped on its rack in front of him, until his retirement in his room (one wonders if a picture of "September Morn" still hangs in his bathroom) for his usual eight hours of sleep. If he changes his pattern of life between cases, if he gulps books and worries about dangling participles on the side, it has been brilliantly concealed. Only a witing could believe he is a writer, much less the author of the brilliant reports of the career of Nero Wolfe.

To fall back on the easiest and most widely accepted hypothesis—that "Rex Stout" is the author—is, upon reflection, equally useless. The idea is that Archie presents "Rex Stout" with the raw data and it is he who provides the literary skill. The problem for us is who, precisely, is "Rex Stout"? The name obviously is a pseudonym—mothers do not name children in this fashion. Part of the difficulty is trying to discern the true identity behind one of the most elaborate literary smoke screens of modern times. Some years back a *New Yorker* profile had "Rex Stout" born a midwestern Quaker lad, serving as a stripling seaman on Teddy Roosevelt's private yacht, and then becoming the children's banker of the nation, a sort of Pied Piper for Chase National, finally building a mountain chateau with his bare hands in wildest Connecticut. These touches are clearly the product of a rich and baroque imagination, and so compelling that "Rex Stout" is on the roster of past presidents of the Mystery Writers of America. With even more prestige and implausibility he is currently referred to as the head of the Writers' Guild of America. There are even various pictures in the papers of a rather indistinct face with piercing eyes



The Nero Wolfe Novels

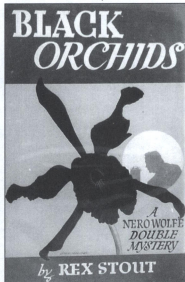
by
"Rex Stout"

- Fer-de-Lance, 1934
- The League of Frightened Men, 1935
- The Rubber Band, 1936
- The Red Box, 1937
- Too Many Cooks, 1938
- Some Buried Caesar, 1938
- Over My Dead Body, 1940
- Where There's a Will, 1940
- Black Orchids, 1942 *
- Not Quite Dead Enough, 1944 *
- The Silent Speaker, 1947
- Too Many Women, 1947
- And Be a Villain, 1948
- The Second Confession, 1949
- Trouble in Triplicate, 1949 *
- Three Doors to Death, 1950 *
- In the Best Families, 1950
- Curtains for Three, 1950 *
- Murder by the Book, 1951
- Triple Jeopardy, 1951 *
- Prison's Base, 1952
- The Golden Spiders, 1953
- Three Men Out, 1954 *
- The Black Mountain, 1954
- Before Midnight, 1955
- Might As Well Be Dead, 1956
- Three Witnesses, 1956 *
- Three for the Chair, 1957 *
- If Death Ever Slept, 1957
- Champagne for One, 1958
- And Four to Go, 1958 *
- Plot It Yourself, 1959
- Three at Wolfe's Door, 1960 *
- Too Many Clients, 1960
- The Final Deduction, 1961
- Gambit, 1962
- Homicide Trinity, 1962 *
- The Mother Hunt, 1963
- Trio for Blunt Instruments, 1964
- A Right to Die, 1964
- The Doorbell Rang, 1965
- Death of a Doxy, 1966
- The Father Hunt, 1968
- Death of a Dude, 1969
- Please Pass the Guilt, 1973
- A Family Affair, 1975

(*novellets)

Note: All dates are for U.S. publication

behind a massive and rococo beard. But, *nota bene*, when the chips are down, "Rex Stout" is never produced. Last spring the cultural leaders of America were invited to the White House. One would think that his connection with the Writers' Guild alone would entitle "Rex Stout" to an invitation. It never came, he was not invit-

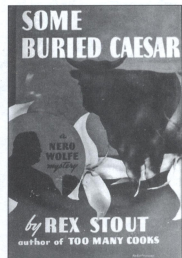


ed; he did not even have a chance to turn it down in front of the newsreels. Why? The answer must be that there is no "Rex Stout"—the name refers to "the stout king," the stout king of the detectives. "Rex Stout" is the pseudonym of Nero Wolfe.

A clue everyone missed some time back should have warned us that "Rex Stout" was tricky and represented devious thinking. We all laughed at his essay in Holmesian scholarship which proved Watson to be a woman, and yet surely the irony had to go deeper, for this was a subtle attack on the clarity of authorship of all mystery writers. Now it is clear that Wolfe was having his fun with everyone, all the way around. Over the years we have overlooked a mountain of evidence proving Wolfe's authorship. If Archie is virtually unlettered, Wolfe is a cornucopia of literary allusions and verbal distinctions, with a rich and lavish command of the language. His defense of the integrity of his adopted tongue—he is fluent in seven others—is a recurring theme. Consider the opening scene of *Gambit*. Wolfe is pictured as "in the

middle of a fit," seated in front of an open fire "on a chair too small for him, tearing sheets out of a book and burning them." The volume being destroyed is the latest edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary, Unabridged*, which Wolfe judges "subversive of the English language." (Rightly so, for it accepts "infer" as a synonym for "imply".) The report adds, "in the past weeks he has given a thousand examples of its crimes." For Wolfe, book-burning must be the ultimate sacrifice, but it is the very concern for language and literature which makes a rare *auto-da-fe* necessary. (He has burned another book out of concern for his other passion; he once tossed a cookbook to the flames when it advocated removing the hide from a ham end before putting it into the lima bean pot, with Archie commenting, "Which he loves most, food or words, is a tossup.") Wolfe reads all the time and announces his judgments in his usual magisterial style: poor books are dog-eared, unfinished, and thrown away; better ones may be kept for a time and deserve conventional page-markers; a few outstanding ones are permanently shelved with gold book-markers five inches long and an inch wide.

Such a gold star author was Paul Harvey who brought Wolfe the case (recounted in *Plot It Yourself*) which



most clearly called upon his literary and critical skills. The issue was the authorship of three stories apparently written by separate writers. Wolfe tells Archie

that he knows them all to be the work of one author.

"What is it," said Archie, "fingerprints?"

"Better than fingerprints. These stories were all written by the same person."

"Yeah? Not on the same typewriter, I compared them with a glass."

"So did I." He rattled the sheets. "Better than a typewriter. A typewriter can change hands." He glanced at the top sheet. "In Alice Porter's story a character avers something six times. In Simon Jacob's story, eight times. In Jane Ogilvy's story, seven times. You know, of course, that nearly every writer of dialogue has his pet substitute, or substitutes for 'say.' Wanting a variation for 'he said' or 'she said,' they have him declare, state, blurt, spout, cry, pronounce, avow, murmur, flutter, snap—there are dozens of them; and they tend to repeat the same one. Would you accept it as a coincidence that this man and these two women have the same favorite, 'aver'?"

"Maybe with salt. I heard you say once that it is not inconceivable that the fall in temperature when the sun moves south is merely coincidence."

"Pffui. That was conversation. This is work. There are other similarities, equally remarkable, in these stories. Two of them are verbal." He looked at the second sheet. Alice Porter has this: 'Not for nothing would he abandon the only person he had ever loved.' And this: 'She might lose her self-respect, but not for nothing.' Simon Jacobs has this, 'And must he forfeit his honor too? Not for nothing.' And this: 'Not for nothing had she suffered torture that no woman could be expected to survive.' Jane Ogilvy has a man say in reply to a question, 'Not for nothing, my dear, not for nothing.'"

I scratched my cheek. "Well. Not for nothing did you read the stories."

The contrast is plain enough: one man is a professional, seriously involved in the selection and arrangement of words; the other types accurately and, in terms of textual criticism, never gets beyond the study of fingerprints and the eccentricities of typewriting machines. But there is another difficulty. If Archie has been eliminated, at least in part because there is no conceivable time of the day when he could get the writing done, Wolfe's schedule is even more iron-clad from the time he rises at eight, breakfasts in his room still clad in those yards of canary yellow pajamas, makes his daily

No man was ever taken to hell by a woman unless he already had a ticket in his pocket, or at least had been fooling around with timetables.

—Archie Goodwin, *Some Buried Caesar*, 1938

two trips to the plant rooms for two hours each, works or reads in full sight of the household, with hallowed time out for an undisturbed lunch and dinner. To be sure, Archie's narcissism, hubris, and libido conspire to get him out of the house from time to time, but it would be fatuous to suppose that Wolfe waits impatiently for such snatched moments to get at the exacting work of writing the reports. We would appear to be stumped.

The stout king of detectives, however, is a master of concealing as well as uncovering. Witness the countless times Inspector Cramer and Sergeant Stebbins have been left livid with rage at some sleight-of-hand business they


were intuitively aware of but could not prove. So there must be something overlooked, some time of the day he is covering but not accounting for. If this be true such a time can be discovered, assuming, as Wolfe admits, that he is "merely a genius, not a god."

There is a gap in that apparently packed schedule and to the skeptical eye it is soon apparent: the four hours with the orchids. A sensitive reader is always uncomfortable with the incongruous, and Wolfe's attitude toward the orchids is at least that. No doubt he really enjoys the things; the money he spends on them, his correspondence with experts, his willingness to undertake dangerous automobile trips to dis-

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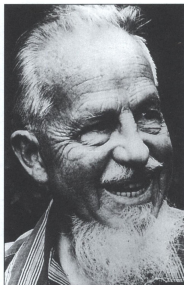
This group of "Melanocologists" organizes the annual Black Orchid Banquet in October and Shad Roe Banquet each spring, both held in New York City. They also bestow the annual Nero Wolfe Awards for books in the tradition of the great detective. The \$25 membership fee will also get you four issues of their newsletter *The Gazette*.

play them, all testify to that. But it is inconceivable that a man of his mental equipment could spend four hours of every day tending to their needs (and hire a professional to care for them as well). Say what you will about their beauty and the joys of retreat from the world of detection, such an occupation for so long a time is unbelievable. The truth is apparent: the whole elaborate operation on the top floor of Wolfe's brownstone is only flummery and the instrument of a grand deception. What Wolfe is actually doing there for the

major part of the four hours a day is writing the case reports under that cover name "Rex Stout." The dour Horstmann is his chief confidant; he is seldom known to talk. Archie appears not to be privy to the secret, nor is Fritz. The apparatus of the writer, nothing more than pen and paper, are easily and quickly concealed, for the elevator which normally provides access would be noisy enough to give warning. The only danger would be from Archie who has an aversion to the elevator and occasionally might burst in unexpectedly. For this reason Wolfe has instituted a strict rule that he is not to be disturbed under any circumstances during his stay in the plant room.

But Archie is irrepresible and impetuous and not to be trusted, so the plant rooms are arranged to give some opportunity for swift concealment even on those rare occasions when he comes bounding in unannounced by way of the staircase. Fritz, characteristically, hates this kind of quick shifting and responds sharply to all such interruptions. In "The Zero Clue" from *Three Men Out*, we learn of precisely such an interruption and Wolfe's reaction:

I went up three flights, on past the bedroom floors to the roof where ten thousand square feet of glass in aluminum frames make a home for ten thousand orchid plants. The riot of color on the benches of the three rooms doesn't take my breath away any more, but it is unquestionably a show, and as I went through that day I kept my eyes straight ahead to preserve my mood for yapping intact. However, it was wasted. In the intermediate room Wolfe stood massively, with an Odontoglossum seedling in his hand, glaring at it, a mountain of cold fury, with Theodore



REX STOUT—DO MOTHERS NAME THEIR CHILDREN IN SUCH A FASHION?

Horstmann, the orchid nurse, standing nearby with his lips tightened to a thin line.

As I approached, Wolfe transferred the glare to me and barked savagely, "Thrips!"

I did some fast mood shifting. There's a time to yap and a time not to yap. But I went on.

"What do you want?" he rasped.

"I realize," I said politely but firmly, "that this is ill timed, but I told Mr. Heller I would speak to you. He phoned—"

"Speak to me later! If at all!"

"I'm to call him back. It's Leo Heller, the probability wizard.... I thought I might as well run over there now—it's over on East Thirty-Seventh Street—and find out if it looks like a job. He wouldn't—"

"No!"

"My cardrums are not insured. No what?"

"Get out." He shook the thrips-infected seedling at me. "I don't want it! That man couldn't hire me for any conceivable job on any imaginable terms! Get out!"

Only a jackass or a jenny could chalk all this up to thrips or Wolfe's ill will toward Leo Heller. This is the panicky response of a man close to exposure, for much of Wolfe's enjoyment in writing these reports of his activities (which permits him to be twice the star of his own show) must lie in his preserving strict anonymity. But vices, even Wolfe's, will out: a good share of



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each day finds Wolfe hidden behind his exotic foliage, busily producing his own peculiar memoirs. Or rather, for such steady industry seems out of character, on some days, when he is not just sitting there watching Horstmann work, he writes.

The problem, then, is how to pry the rest of the exceptional cases out of Wolfe. Frontal attacks, such as marching on his door *en masse* won't do, nor is a monster petition addressed (to play his little game) to "Rex Stout" likely to move his sixth-of-a-ton by much. But there is, perhaps, a way: his pride, his really enormous vanity. Pepper him with objections, count for him the many unraveled threads remaining from old cases, how many questions and paradoxes abound. For instance: who, really, was Wolfe's great nemesis? More dangerous than Holmes's Professor Moriarty and Colonel Sebastian Moran rolled together, he once drove Wolfe from his house in fear of his life. Archie is forbidden to mention his very name, and who appears in the reports under the highly unlikely name of "Arnold Zeck" ("A" to "Z" indeed!)? Point up the confusion over details: was Wolfe born in Montenegro or the United States; support exists either way. We know nothing of the events leading up to the first association of Wolfe and Archie. We do know that Wolfe's mother, who lived in Budapest in 1933, was receiving monthly checks from her dutiful son; did she ever visit him? How precisely did he come to adopt a little Montenegrin girl? Why was he given a house in Egypt in 1923? Did Henry H. Barber somehow displease him, or perhaps did he die, to be replaced by the esteemed Nathaniel Parker as Wolfe's lawyer? A similar problem exists with Harry Foster of the *Gazette*, for long Wolfe's pipeline to the press; why has Lon Cohen of the same newspaper replaced him? Entire cases are alluded to but not described, e.g., the Goldsmith case in which District Attorney Anderson usurped credit for Wolfe's work; or the unexplained incident when a taxi driver ran out on Wolfe in the Pine Street episode. And this is only the begin-


ning. Pepper the man, make him hot. Not for nothing has he all those orchids to work behind!



Three decades after this first, feeble investigation, the need is greater than ever. "Rex Stout" is dead, no longer available for questioning, while other men publish pitiful simulacra that claim to be new accounts of Wolfe's unrecorded adventures. Perhaps, one day, reliable manuscripts may be found, like the dusty palimpsests and parchment rolls that revealed the golden world of antiquity to the hungry eyes of the men of the Renaissance. Meanwhile there is much work for scholars in the existing corpus, questions to be posed and answers to be sought. Surely that is what the fat king of detectives would have expected of his best readers. ■

Notes

1. Melanology is the study of the career of Nero Wolfe.
2. There is some confusion about the correct address of Wolfe's house as W.S. Baring-Gould in *Nero Wolfe Thirty-Fifth Street* (Viking Press,



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New York, 1969): "Archie is evasive about the exact number. He gives it as 506 in *Over My Dead Body*, as 618 in *Too Many Clients* and *'Blood Will Tell'*, as 902 in *Murder by the Book*, 909 in *'Before I Die'*, as 914 in *Prisoner's Base* and *The Doorbell Rang*, as 918 in *The Red Box* and *'Method Three for Murder'*, as 922 in *The Silent Speaker*, as 924 in *'Man Alive'*, and as 938 in *Death of a Dwoy*."

Since Wolfe himself says it is 918 in "The Next Witness", only a jackass or a jenny would accept a different address.

3. *A Right to Die*, 1964.



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Report from 221B Baker Street

BY

SHERRY ROSE BOND
AND SCOTT BOND

PETER CUSHING

ST. PETER IS DEAD. AUGUST 11, 1994 MARKED THE PASSING OF ANOTHER GIANT FROM THE SHERLOCKIAN WORLD AS CANCER CLAIMED THE LIFE OF ENGLISH FILM STAR PETER CUSHING. MR. CUSHING, A LEGENDARY PORTRAYER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES AND A TRUE GENRE SUPERSTAR, SUCCUMBED AT THE AGE OF 81 IN A HOSPICE IN CANTERBURY,

England. To your columnists, it feels especially like the loss of an old friend, for we had first become familiar with the work of this remarkable gentleman while still in high school, and were able to meet him briefly in 1975.

In America most of the official obituaries stated that Mr. Cushing would be remembered principally for his many roles in horror films, where he was frequently paired with his old friend, Christopher Lee. He is perhaps not more associated with Sherlock Holmes here because he made only one major theatrical release as the detective, the 1959 Hammer Films movie, *Hound of the Baskervilles*. Certainly the British got to see more of his Holmes than we did. In 1969 he made sixteen teleplays for the BBC Sherlock Holmes series, replacing his predecessor, Douglas Wilmer in the title role. For these programs he was featured along with Nigel Stock as the formidable Watson, a pairing which found favor with critics and public alike. In spite of a severely rushed production schedule, the programs were well received, but they have never been televised in America. Finally, late in his career, there was the TV movie, *The Masks of Death*, which featured John Mills as Watson. This last effort did not, unhappily, get a great deal of exposure here, and the projected sequel never materialized owing to Mr. Cushing's retirement due to ill health.

Peter Cushing was born in 1913, in Kenley, England. After working briefly as a surveyor's clerk, he studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. His acting career began in 1936 with a string of roles in repertory theater. He visited this country in the early 1940s, appearing in a number of film projects, including a bit part in *Two Chumps at Oxford* with Laurel and Hardy. Upon returning to England, he made his London stage debut in 1943, as Captain Ramballe in *War and Peace*. Cushing went on to become a member of Sir Laurence Olivier's Old Vic company, and appeared as Osric in Olivier's renowned film production of *Hamlet*. It wasn't until the early 1950s, however,



that Mr. Cushing became a major star in England as one of the busiest and most popular actors in the infancy of British television. Tony Howlett, one of the founders of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, commented to us that during this period all the pubs would empty out early every Saturday

night, because everyone wanted to see what Mr. Cushing was doing on television that week. He appeared in 1984, *Beau Brummel*, *Julius Caesar* and *Pride and Prejudice* among others. International film stardom arrived in 1957 when Peter joined the stock company of a small, independent film production house called Hammer Films.

Hammer's stock in trade was to be horror of a particularly rich and colorful (i.e. blood red) style. We remember vividly the review which appeared on the front page of the Sunday *New York Times*, heralding the release of Hammer's first American release in 1957, *The Curse of Frankenstein*. The review promised rich production values, superb color (a first as a Frankenstein saga), and a new star in one Peter Cushing, as Baron Frankenstein. Also mentioned was another newcomer—though a heavily disguised one—Christopher Lee, who played the role of the hapless creature. With the next release, *Honor of Dracula*, it was Lee's turn to become a star in the title role, this time supported by Mr. Cushing as Prof. Van Helsing. These two films were only the first of many for the pair, and of course both went on portray Sherlock Holmes, and in Lee's case, Mycroft Holmes as well. For a young horror fan, Cushing and Lee were towering icons, Hammer's equivalent of Karloff and Lugosi. Each new release was eagerly awaited, whether it was a new Frankenstein, a new Dracula, or an adventure of Sherlock Holmes. Over the years Cushing made numerous film appearances, sometimes playing the hero, sometimes the villain, as in George Lucas' *Star Wars*, in which he was the evil Grand Moff Tarkin. Though Peter's gaunt features, thin lips and piercing blue eyes could convey

chill and menace, his versatility and great personal warmth made him equally effective in sympathetic parts. Co-workers remember him as a meticulous professional, unfailingly courteous on the set, but a demanding perfectionist in his own work and those about him.

Mr. Cushing had the distinction of appearing in the first Holmes adventure to be shot in color, the 1959 *Hound of the Baskervilles*. The film featured Hammer Film's typically lush color and period costuming, well displayed in what is still the best dramatization of the legend of the Hound. Though Cushing had the good fortune to be paired with the no-nonsense Watson of Andre Morell, and delivered an eccentric, flavorful performance, in other respects the film was a sub-par effort for Hammer. Most of Sir Arthur's finely-tuned plot was trashed in favor of decidedly inferior inventions, while the special effects department failed to produce a suitably horrific hound despite Herculean efforts (see our column in *TAD* 22#2 for Mr. Cushing's bemused recollection of these difficulties). Critical reception of the film and Cushing's portrayal was mixed. While America's *Newsweek* was warmly enthusiastic, many in Cushing's native land felt his portrayal was too neurotic and lightweight, especially in the presence of towering fellow actors such as Christopher Lee (Sir Henry Baskerville) and Francis deWolfe (Dr. Mortimer). Nevertheless, Mr. Cushing's interpretation was a decided break from the long-held notion of Holmes as traditional hero, and a precursor of the approach Jeremy Brett would make famous in the eighties.

Our brief encounter with Mr. Cushing occurred in 1975 at a fan convention in New York, hosted by Warren Publishing. Warren's flagship publication at the time was Forrest J. Ackerman's *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, the premier magazine in the horror/sci-fi fan market of that time. We had no idea Mr. Cushing was scheduled for an appearance when we arrived, but to our surprise and amaze-



PETER CUSHING AND
ANDRE MORELL AS
HOLMES AND WATSON IN
HAMMER FILMS' HOUND OF
THE BASKERVILLES, 1959.

ment an enormous banner proclaimed his presence. Early that afternoon when he arose to speak before a packed auditorium, the roar of approval was enough to shatter windows in Hoboken. Though obviously showing the effects of serious illness, "Saint Peter," as Forry Ackerman dubbed him, turned in a courtly, humorous performance. He spoke affectionately of his life and career, his late wife, Helen, and expressed a definite interest in playing Sherlock Holmes again. Later that day he autographed two pictures for us of himself as Sherlock Holmes. Over the years those signatures have faded to the point of invisibility, but our memory of Mr. Cushing will remain forever green, for he has surely joined Mr. Gillette, Mr. Rathbone, Mr. Wontner, and Mr. Norwood in our pantheon of cinematic immortals. ■

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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.

Hensley, Joe L.

Grim City

New York: St. Martin's, 1994. (1/4)
In Grimsley City, Kentucky, the beautiful Shirley Kentner is tried for arranging the murder of her elderly husband Fiala by Mexican handyman Jose Ramon Garcia. The presiding judge asks his newly appointed probation officer, James Carlos Singer, a sight-impaired former spy with a "Tex-Mex" background, to observe the trial. The courtroom action, from jury selection through defense presentation, is some of Hensley's best. The novel displays one advantage of the author's customary small-community background: the principal court officers can credibly have personal connections to the deceased and/or defendant. In an interesting afterword, Hensley writes that the procedures of the book combine

Kentucky's legal system with that of his own state of Indiana, and that he "changed what [he] wanted and, at times, made up [his] own law."

Klavan, Andrew

Corruption

New York: Morrow, 1994. (B)
In the upstate New York county seat of Auburn, drug dealer Vince Scotti is tried for the murder of lawyer Billy Thimble.



According to the defense Scotti is being framed by Sheriff Cyrus Dolittle because he *witnessed* another murder: that of 17-year-old Teddy Woczek, who was completing a drug deal with Scotti when shot by sheriff's deputies. The most interesting part of the 22 scattered pages of competent courtroom visits comes with the testimony of a well-coached young State's witness, who among his

likes, *okays*, and *you know*s parrots phrases like "in my experience" and "as a result of that conversation." The trial is seen from the viewpoint of small magazine editor turned greenhorn journalist Sidney Merriwether, whose boss Sally Dawes has a longstanding feud with Sheriff Dolittle. Apart from slightly overdoing the Thomas Wolfe bit at times, Klavan is a formidable stylist and cunning constructionist.

Levine, Paul

Mortal Sin

New York: Morrow, 1994. (B)

In fifty-plus pages of courtroom action, the fourth Jake Lassiter novel visits a bar disciplinary hearing where Jake is accused of surreptitiously tape-recording a client and later on makes a quick stop at a boring condemnation trial where fugitive Jake poses as an alternate juror. The centerpiece, though, is a civil trial to determine whether Lassiter's developer client Nicky Florio is liable for the death of an environmentalist party guest who had too much to drink and froze to death in his host's wine cellar. The trial is excellent, expertly described and unusual (for fiction at least) both in its form and its implications, and the whole novel is a considerable advance over Levine's earliest books, complexly plotted and rich in legal and personal ethical dilemmas for its trouble-prone, decent hero. Levine picked a good book to dedicate to his fellow Floridian novelist, the late John D. MacDonald.

Tanenbaum, Robert K.

Justice Denied

New York: Dutton, 1994. (B)

The main plot of the sixth novel about Butch Karp, homicide bureau chief of the New York District Attorney's office, involves the assassination of a Turkish diplomat, of which jeweler and Armenian nationalist Aram Tomasian is accused. But only one of the thirty-plus

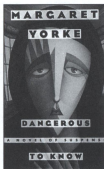
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pages of trial action—a brief visit to the bail hearing—involves that case. In a sub-plot, Karp, on crutches after recent knee surgery, prosecutes homeless black Hovie Russell, charged with the murder



of Susan Weiner, a case followed from pre-trial hearing to verdict and attended by some exceptionally lively and quirky action. At one point, the action shifts back and forth between the Russell trial and the murder arraignment of Vinnie Bogulusco. The novel, more upbeat than usual for the author, includes a Tanenbaum tradition, the not-quite-believable movie-ish contrivance, in this case Karp's nighttime shower-room colloquies with the jail trustee he's prosecuting for murder. (In an extraordinarily frank acknowledgement, Tanenbaum credits "my partner and collaborator, Michael Gruber, whose genius flows throughout this book, and who is primarily responsible for this manuscript.")

Yorke, Margaret

Dangerous to Know

London: Hutchinson, 1993. New York: Mysterious, 1994. (B)

In a story that strongly parallels, whether by design or coincidence, the scenario presented in the controversial 1993 book *The Diary of Jack the Ripper* (Hyperion), Yorke presents the case history of an abusive marital relationship. Suburban husband Walter Brown terrorizes his wife Hermione, but his brutality doesn't end at home. About 17 effective pages are devoted to a Crown Court murder trial, including a brief scene in the jury room. For once, identifying the defendant and charge would reveal too much about the book, an effective example of the British domestic crime novel pioneered in the '30s by Francis Iles. ■

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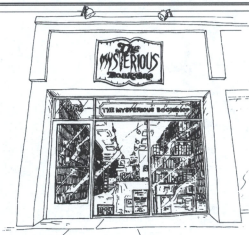
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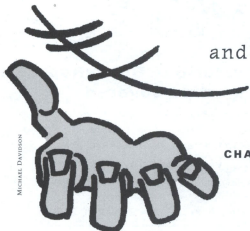
with Liza Cody,



Michael Z. Lewin

and Peter Lovesey

BY

CHARLES L. P. SILET



 Three writers from England made an impact here last Fall with something different in promotional tours. "Wanted for Murder," with Liza Cody, Michael Z. Lewin, and Peter Lovesey, visited eight cities in twelve days, mainly at libraries and universities. They gave a prepared program that illustrated the mystery writer's craft in innovative ways, using dramatic sketches and readings, audience participation, sound effects, juggling and surprise. With the emphasis on visual interest and entertainment, they produced a show remarkably unlike the panels and Q & A sessions generally offered at bookstore signings or conferences. 

TAD: How did you begin making these presentations? What motivated you?

CODY: The difficulty of staying visible in the States when you aren't here.

LEWIN: It's hard for American publishers to promote writers who live in Britain, because they have to think in terms of flying people over and back, before anybody has waved a book at anybody. We met originally at a lunch-

eon in Bath for the West Country Chapter of the Crime Writers' Association. As we talked about problems of promoting work in the U.S. someone floated the idea...

LOVESEY: Come clean, Mike: you floated it. He's the man who floats ideas. We make some casual response and when we next see him he's been on the phone to America.

CODY: It wouldn't have happened

at all without him.

LOVESEY: It isn't quite persuasion...

CODY: No, it's planned before you know it. It becomes an offer you can't refuse, especially when he says he'll do the dirty work. And he does.

LEWIN: We all developed the idea of going with people we already knew, having shoulders to cry on if necessary. They might come to see Peter Lovesey

Charles L.P. Silet teaches contemporary fiction and film at Iowa State University. He is currently writing a history of the American hardboiled detective novel.



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Left to Right: Michael Z. Lewin, Liza Cody and Peter Lovesey.

and then get to know what Liza and I are like. So we all help each other. That was the kind of thinking that got this project off the ground.

TAD: And that was in...?

LEWIN: We talked about it in early 1989 and the first tour was over here in May of 1990. The three of us with Paula Gosling.

TAD: How did you decide to do something other than just a series of readings? How did you come up with the idea of a performance?

CODY: That developed gradually. The first tour was more based on readings than the one we're doing now. We

decided it was too boring just to schlep around with our latest book.

LOVESEY: One gets weary of panels, too. This is a way of controlling things, keeping them on boil.

TAD: That first show with Paula was called "Murder We Write." Give me a brief description of it.

CODY: It was designed like a book. It began with openings and ended with endings. We used the beginning of Peter's *Bertie and the Seven Bodies*.

LEWIN: So you remember? Sing it together!

CODY: It's in dialogue. Peter was the

voice of the Prince of Wales and I was Princess Alix.

LEWIN: That's one of the principles we worked on: if you have four people the idea of doing readings with more than one voice is possible. Then you introduce movement, interaction, all that sort of thing.

LOVESEY: So as we became more confident in the try-outs we did near home, "Murder We Write" began to get more ambitious. To illustrate the history of mystery writing we evolved a sketch supposedly enacting the secret ritual of the Detection Club, vintage 1931, using a skull and wearing scarlet capes and going through the promises and threats.

LEWIN: Avoiding divine revelation, feminine intuition, mumbo-jumbo, jiggery-pokery, coincidence or acts of God.

TAD: You're playing off each other, too?

CODY: Just as we're playing off you right now.

LEWIN: What was essential to get the thing started was a care element in that we all get along—and you know, in a way, that shows in the performance. We are each very different writers, respecting each other, and because the way we go about things is different, there's friction around. It makes for better theater.

TAD: What about the competition among writers? A great clash of egos?

CODY: That is a myth really, particularly in the crime scene, where there seems to be a very guild-minded bunch. Most people cooperate.

LOVESEY: Mystery writing can mean almost anything, there's such a breadth in the genre. OK, if I were on a panel with three other people who write Victorian mystery, there might be some kind of scoring off each other. It rarely happens.

LEWIN: When we began we had no model of other people doing it. We invented the wheel in that sense. We spent quite a long time, the four of us, trying to think out what we could do, both for the audience and for ourselves. At the beginning everybody was sitting down and we each had a script—for self-protection really. Now nobody speaks from a seated position for any length of time and there are long sections which are learned by heart as performance things.

CODY: That's one of the reasons why it's difficult to describe what we do, because now a large part of it is performance.

TAD: OK, let's talk about your present show, "Wanted for Murder." Just three of you this time.

CODY: Yes, unfortunately Paula wasn't quite fit enough to go touring.

LOVESEY: In this show we're still concerned with the craft of writing. There's a serious element even in something which appears to have entertainment value and laughter.

CODY: We begin with what is lovingly called the "cod piece." Because one thing about being a mystery writer is that you are consistently very badly misrepresented all the time. Everybody *thinks* they know what you do. If people read Agatha Christie all the time, that's what they think the mystery is. So we begin with the "cod" whodunit scene and then basically debunk it.

LOVESEY: The character of Miss Prendergast arrives on stage. She announces that she is not the murderer, but she knows who did it. Then a threatening voice interrupts her. Fortunately, the Scotland Yard man is sitting in the audience and arrives apparently to save the day, but not so. Miss Prendergast falls dead, poisoned. The sort of cliché about mystery writing which we're sending up a bit and attempting to redress.

LEWIN: This is the core of what we try to do. Rather than telling points we illustrate them and if we've touched on a point early in the show we try to find a different convention to do it later. So there's a section illustrating a childhood memory of Liza's that is a source for her Eva Wylie books that we dramatize and act. Then there's a bit of a radio drama based on a real radio adaptation of

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Peter's *Rough Cider* that we do with sound effects live on stage, using a bucket, a watering can, a drinking straw, and other things including music.

LOVESEY: Then to show the thinking that went into *Underdog*, Mike goes into the audience to get them reflecting on the problem he had with his initial idea and to spur them into thinking the way an author has to.

CODY: Actually, "Wanted for Murder" is designed to answer the most asked question that all of us get, which is, "Where do you get your ideas from?"

TAD: What would you like your audience to come away with?

LOVESEY: Apart from a signed book?

CODY: The idea that a writer is not very different than anybody else. We're using the same things they experience in relationships and conversations; we're using our memories and who we are. We're using stuff we find out, we're



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OTHER

And Baby Will Fall, 1988 (Adele Buffington)*The Next Man*, 1976 (a novelization)

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PETER LOVESEY

SERGEANT CRIBB AND CONSTABLE THACKERAY

Wobble to Death, 1970*The Detective Wore Silk Drawers*, 1971*Abracadaver*, 1972*Mad Hatter's Holiday*, 1973*The Tick of Death*, 1974(in U.K. as *Invitation to a Dynamite Party*)*A Case of Spirits*, 1975*Swing, Swing Together*, 1976*Waxwork*, 1978

THE "BERTIE" (ALBERT, PRINCE OF WALES) MYSTERIES

Bertie and the Tinman, 1988*Bertie and the Seven Bodies*, 1990*Bertie and the Crime of Passion*, 1995

THE PETER DIAMOND MYSTERIES

The Last Detective, 1991*Diamond Solitaire*, 1993*The Summons*, 1995

OTHER

The False Inspector Dew, 1982

(winner of the CWA Gold Dagger)

Keystone, 1983*Butchers and Other Stories of Crime*, 1985*Rough Cider*, 1987*On the Edge*, 1989

using a problem-solving technique.

LEWIN: I think we get it across in this particular program quite effectively.

TAD: So basically what you're doing is illustrating your method?

CODY: Oh, yes.

LEWIN: What we address through the core of the show is how do writers write books that are new. So as well as showing the sources of our ideas we give readings to illustrate them, but using other sorts of theatrical conventions as well. As Liza is talking about something, Peter gets up and explains a little bit of what happened to him in a similar situation and then Liza goes on.

LOVESEY: That's a good example. Questions often come up about whether television or films made of your books influence your writing in any way. Since Liza's character Anna Lee is on TV now in the United States this is a hot topic. I supplement a little by speaking of my experiences with the TV series featuring Sergeant Cribb a few years back.

CODY: The serious point being how your own vision can be interfered with by a real actor speaking in a different voice than in the one you hear, looking quite different than the one you have in your head. We've got quite a light touch with it and there's a lot of laughter and so on, but at the end of it people should come out with some idea of what your thinking was when you faced this problem.

LEWIN: Yes, at the end of the show we try to sum up what we've covered. We've shown them certain objects at the beginning that actually symbolize the three different ways we go about starting books. At the end, we return to these objects—an apple, a doll's head and a ball of string—and use them as a finale in ways that would be impossible for a panel who came together just to appear at a bookstore.

LOVESEY: This is Mike being modest again. Say it, Mike. At the end, you and Liza are very skillful. They demonstrate the different elements that go into our books by juggling.

TAD: Juggling?

LEWIN: Well, in talking about the different elements that go into a book, you can say a writer juggles plot, characters and so on. If you use the word "juggling," you automatically think, "Is there a way we can demonstrate this?"

CODY: "Show, don't tell."

LOVESEY: After that, we take a break.

CODY: We need a break.

LOVESEY: Then we're back to face anything from twenty to forty minutes of questions.

CODY: The unrehearsed bit.

LEWIN: Well, one of the skills at question time is to take a question and turn it to the answers that we know get a good response, regardless of what the question is. That's wonderful, you know, to be able to work with interaction with the audience.

LOVESEY: The good thing about appearing with people we know is that we can feed each other lines. Liza's very amusing on the subject of word processors. Mike has a routine on research. And I have a collection of strange letters from readers.

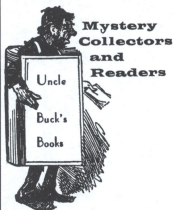
TAD: Have you found that doing this for a long period has any crossover effect in your writings?

LEWIN: What writing?

CODY: Precisely.

LOVESEY: I think there is a crossover. I'm certainly influenced by the way Liza and Mike go about writing their books. My approach was structured and I've been influenced by the things they've said about giving the

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characters more freedom to act. I had a startling experience in *The Last Detective* when my detective, Peter Diamond, resigned from the police in a scene that I hadn't planned. I put it down to my association with these two. Mind you, I bet their work has improved no end since they started working with me...

LEWIN: I'm working now on a book that I've done from an outline—which I've never done before. Now Peter's outlines are maybe ten or sixteen pages. Mine was sixty. I can't tell you whether this has a happy ending till I've finished with the book. Liza's been uninfluenced by either of us.

CODY: More handicapped.

TAD: Obviously you tour in the U.K. as well as the U.S. Is there a difference in the versions you use?

LOVESEY: The thing never stays still. It has always evolved. We're always editing and rewriting.

LEWIN: Bright ideas.

CODY: Appalling things happen on trains. We leap off the train and disappear in different directions to collect the new equipment we need.

LEWIN: To do something in public that we've never done before.

CODY: It frightens the life out of me.

LEWIN: If we get a bright idea, it's editing, it's like rewriting the book, we're constantly rewriting. We added something last night.

CODY: Yes.

LEWIN: At 7:00pm when we wanted to be going upstairs to get ready, you had a new idea.

CODY: Stupid of me.

LEWIN: To do one thing different, it took about ten minutes to sort out. Last night it actually seemed to work all right.

CODY: Yes, it was very funny.

LEWIN: Since I was lying on my back behind the stage I couldn't really see whether it worked or not.

LOVESEY: But you need to be flexible because you're doing it in different places all the time, making entrances from different points. When we get there we decide quickly, perhaps only an hour before the show. Are we coming from the audience, stage left, or stage right? And there may not be doors.

LEWIN: Setting up the show is vital. We have a list of things we must do beforehand. With so many props, we have a checklist that we must religiously go through.

TAD: Are American audiences different?

CODY: Very different, yes. They are much more demonstrative here. We really know how we're doing as we go along. At home it's much quieter, isn't it?

LOVESEY: Oh, yes, English formality is hard to break down.

TAD: Do you find you present the same material in both the U.S. and the U.K. or do you vary it?

LEWIN: We really put "Wanted for Murder" together for this U.S. tour. We did three warm-up programs in the U.K. spread over about three months.

CODY: We're getting more experienced, so we try something and talk about it afterwards and say, "Oh, well, that didn't work, stop this."

LEWIN: "Must do better."

CODY: Or, "That went well, so we can build on that."

LEWIN: And it is really one of the crucially nice things about touring with colleagues. When you're doing any kind of work it is good being able to talk shop. It is almost necessary. If we were touring solo, or with a publisher, or a publisher's minder, after the show there

will be no one who really understood what was happening. No one to be able to talk about the good, the bad, the funny, the mistakes.

CODY: And it's also reassuring. While Mike is doing his section, both Peter and I can watch quite objectively the reaction that he's getting. The person who is standing there is feeling like a prat and trying to hide it, trying to look confident, but dying inside. The other two sit quietly and observe what is either going right or going wrong. One of the very interesting things Peter and I have observed is the Midwest reaction to Mike's storytelling, because his section on *Underdog* has to do with stringing stories together. In the Midwest they are demonstratively appreciative of the kind of rhythm, the kind of country speech that he's using.

LOVESEY: Yes, and they really are pleased to know that Mike still can speak with an Indiana voice. Early on in the show it's his twenty-years-in England voice, then you can sense the relief.

LEWIN: Happily none of us is wedded to anything that doesn't work. We all want a show that works as opposed to, "My bit stays and to hell with yours." Mutual respect. It's one of the things that makes it possible for us to go off on physically difficult, intensive tours.

LOVESEY: Mystery writers might be encouraged by our experience as a great way to promote books. But they should be aware, I think, that a tremendous amount of organization goes into a tour like this and perhaps Michael can say more about that because it falls largely on his shoulders. Negotiating fees and expenses; planning an itinerary that makes sense; advising our hosts of basic requirements for the show; air tickets and car rentals.

LEWIN: You two take on a share of it. There's the publicity material we need to sell the show. Pete writes it and Liza does the artwork and sets up the photography. We're a team.

LOVESEY: As we're reminded each

time we haul the luggage from hell out of a hotel and into a taxi. OK, we all pull our weight on tour, but the bulk of the preparation is down to Mike and his fax machine and his phone. I mean, I don't know how you write books at all when you're preparing for a thing like this.

LEWIN: Well, I don't either. But the last thing in the world you want when you're out on the road is organizational problems, so anything you can do ahead must be done and there are lots and lots of bits and pieces.

TAD: This is probably not the time to ask my next question, since you're in the middle of a tour, but is this something that you'd like to continue to do?

LEWIN: This is not the time to ask.

LOVESEY: So many things happen everyday. It's a wonderful way to see cities you haven't been to: Indianapolis, Muncie, St. Louis, Kansas City.

CODY: Des Moines, Oklahoma City, Milwaukee, Portland, Seattle.

LOVESEY: Meeting people, meeting readers.

CODY: It's also fun.

LEWIN: We've had better nights and worse nights, even now, which is about midway through. Things happen that are funny to us but no one else knows about.

LOVESEY: And that is sustaining for all of us.

TAD: You ought to write something like, "Murder on Tour," one of those collective mysteries where every member does a different chapter.

LEWIN: That would be doable.

CODY: Would you like to appear in it?

LEWIN: Well, I don't know. Make us an offer.

LOVESEY: There he goes again. Watch him. ■



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WHAT ABOUT MURDER?

BY JON L. BREEN

Gorman, Ed, ed.

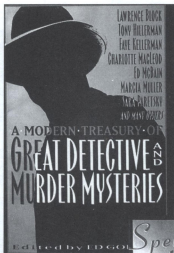
A Modern Treasury of Great Detective and Murder Mysteries
New York: Carroll & Graf,
1994. xiii, 402p. Bibl.

With the exception of the recently deceased Margaret Millar and Robert Bloch, the 25 Americans represented in this impressive volume, 13 men and 12 women, are active contemporaries. My own four-page introduction (brilliant and incisive, I think, but you decide) discusses developments in the mystery genre since 1970. Editor Gorman's headnotes, usually literary rather than biographical remarks on the authors, are typically acute. An appendix provides eleven pages of recommended reading lists, most reprinted from *The Fine Art of Murder* (Carroll & Graf, 1993). Original to this volume is the two-page listing of twenty significant mystery reference books.

Hubin, Allen J.

Crime Fiction II: A Comprehensive Bibliography 1749-1990
New York: Garland,
1994. 2 volumes. xxix, 1568p. Index.

The latest edition of the reference masterpiece known simply as Hubin (see *WAM* #118 and *WAM2* #548) adds two new features: listings of individual stories in over 4500 short story collections (a few hundred for which contents could not be verified are listed with a plea for reader help) and a separate index of all film adaptations cited, giving title, studio, year, director, screenwriter, and source author and work. The first volume is comprised entirely of the main listing by author, while the second volume includes the various indices: title, setting, series, series character chronology, film title, screenwriter, and director. For me, the most interesting feature of this single most valuable mystery fiction reference has always been



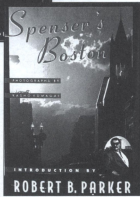
the pseudonym information. Users of the new edition will discover, for example, that Laura Black was yet another pseudonym of the prolific Roger Longrigg (a.k.a. Ivor Drummond, Frank Parrish, and Domini Taylor). Sorting out the various *noms de plume* of the prolific P.C. Doherty, who between 1985 and 1990 turned out a mere eight books under his own name, will have to wait until the next edition. (The set is available for \$195 from Garland Publishing, Inc., 717 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2500, New York, NY 10022.)

Parker, Robert B.

Spenser's Boston: Photographs by Kasho Kumagai
New York: Penzler, 1994. 200p. Illus.
(Originally published in Japan in 1989.)

The first book-length secondary source about Parker provides maps and a selection of stunning color photographs of Boston with accompanying quotes from the Spenser novels. It is in the tradition of, but

even more visually attractive than, the 1987 Elizabeth Ward/Alain Silver volume *Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles* (see *WAM2* #210). Parker's original contribution is 23 pages in Spenser's voice, as the private eye takes Susan Silverman and Rachel Wallace on a tour of the city. The photographer's three-page afterword acknowledges Parker's assistance in his picture-taking. A seven-page "Guide to Boston" discusses twelve landmarks, five of them accompanied by quotes from the Spenser canon.



Slung, Michele and Roland Hartman, eds.

Murder for Halloween: Tales of Suspense
New York: Mysterious,
1994. xiv, 362p.

Though the majority of the 18 stories in this theme anthology are reprints, there are originals by Dorothy Cannell, James Grady, Michael Z. Lewin, Peter Lovesey, Ed McBain, and Peter Straub, whose novella "Pork Pie Hat" appeared in *TAD* 27#4 (Fall 1994) simultaneously with its book publication. The two-page introduction and the story headnotes serve more to set the mood than to provide any kind of reference value, but brief biographical notes on the authors follow each story. Along with major names from the past (Poe, Stoker, Boucher, Queen) to the present (Hoch, Muller, Saylor) comes one relatively unfamiliar byline, the late Judith Garner. (I suspect few knowledgeable readers will have much trouble guessing the true identity of co-editor Hartman, described on the jacket as "a legendary mystery bookman" who "[i]n his roles as publisher, bookseller, collector, and scholar...has been one of the most influential figures in the genre.") ■

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Dial N for Nonsense

By
LOUIS PHILLIPS

Persistence Pays Off

I came across the following item in an old collection of Ripley's *Believe It Or Not* cartoons: "John Creasey of Bodenhams, England, who has had 549 mystery novels published under 25 names, received 743 rejection slips before his first book was accepted."

Hmmm. Is that a record or just an author's exaggeration?

Crime on the Internet— Who Will Investigate?

The October 1994 issue of *Internet World* features an article on hyperspace crime—"Magical Mystery Score"—in which it is noted that Jacob Schuster, the victim of a scam, "promptly called the Worcester police, who said that the alleged crime did not fall within their jurisdiction. Jacob tried to find someone who dealt with crimes on the Internet, and called everyone from the FBI to the Secret Service, with no luck."

Maigret on Postage Stamps

Ms. Denise Hatton writes the "World

of New Issues" column for *Linn Stamp News*. She reported that on October 15, 1994, Belgium, Switzerland, and France issued stamps honoring Georges Simenon. The stamps all feature the same portrait of Simenon but have a different background design. (The 16-franc stamp from Belgium shows a view of Liege, the town where Simenon was born on February 13, 1903.)

Mystery Writing as Romance

"All mystery writing is romance, for its genesis is the passion to reveal a hidden, elusive, possibly forbidden truth. Our very lives are predicated upon mystery: who are we? Out of what matter do we originate?..."

—JOYCE CAROL OATES, in *The New York Times Book Review*, October 2, 1994

The Policeman's Lot

When a felon's not engaged in his employment,

Or maturing his felonious little plans,

His capacity for innocent enjoyment

Is just as great as any other man's.

Our feelings we with difficulty smother

When constabulary duty's to be done:

Ah, take one consideration with another,

A policeman's lot is not a happy one.

When the enterprising burglar's not a-burgling,

And the cut-throat isn't occupied in crime,

He loves to hear the little brook a-gurgling,

And listen to the merry village chime.

When the coster's finished jumping on his mother,

He loves to lie a-basking in the sun:

Ah, take one consideration with another,

A policeman's lot is not a happy one!

—W.S. GILBERT

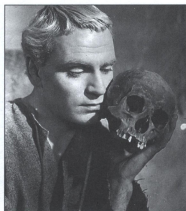
Hamlet on Trial

Jan Hoffman, writing for *The New York Times* (October 18, 1994), covered the arguments of the hearing, *People v. Hamlet*, as conducted before a packed house at the City Bar Association in Manhattan. The *Times* reported:

The client, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, was in trouble, big time: he survived a poisoned-tip duel only to be convicted in the deaths of Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Laertes and Claudius. In mounting an appeal of those convictions last week, the Prince's self-appointed lawyer, Daniel J. Kornstein, did not deny that Hamlet was linked to the deaths; instead, he asked a three-judge panel to consider

his client's rotten mental state.

Hamlet, Mr. Kornstein said, was the product of a dysfunctional family and had a flair for delusional behavior. The convictions should thus be reversed he argued, because Hamlet had been temporarily insane.



SIR LAURENCE OLIVIER AS HAMLET—
WITH YORICK, WHOM HE KNEW—
OR WAS HE TEMPORARILY INSANE?

John Buchan's Recipe for Writing Thrillers

Dr. Greenslade, a character in John Buchan's book *The Three Hostages* tells how to write a "shocker." Dr. Greenslade's approach to writing is not too different from the method used by Buchan himself:

"I begin by fixing on one or two facts which have no obvious connexion...Let us take three things a long way apart...say, an old blind woman spinning in the Western Highlands, a barn in a Norwegian saeter, and a little curiosity shop in North London kept by a Jew with a dyed beard. Not much connexion between the three? You invent a connexion—simple enough if you have any imagination, and you weave all three into the yarn. The reader who knows nothing about the three at the start is puzzled and intrigued and, if the story is well arranged, finally satisfied. He is pleased with the ingenuity of the solution, for he doesn't realise that the author fixed upon the solution first, and then invented a problem to suit it."

Oops!

The *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* once printed the following:

A grand jury in Los Angeles have indicted welter-weight Art Aragon on a charge of offering a bride to an opponent. ■



SOUNDS OF SUSPENSE?

BY DICK LOCHTE AND TOM NOLAN

Jeffrey Archer

Twelve Red Herrings

read by Alec McCowen

(Harper Audio, 6 hrs., abridged)

Regardless of the title, not all of these dozen stories deal with crime, but the ones that do are splendid. Not unlike the short stories of Roald Dahl, they cover the waterfront when it comes to variations on the seven deadly sins. In one, a hapless husband is not only cuckolded, he's set up for a murder that was never committed. In another, a young man comes up with a new insurance scam. In all cases the droll British actor Alec McCowen complements Archer's flair for storytelling.

Laurence Block

A Long Line of Dead Men

read by Ken Howard

(Harper Audio, 3 hrs., abridged)

It's been a long time since we've had a private eye investigating tontine murders, but trust Block to figure out a way to make those elements blend splendidly in a contemporary setting. It's becoming increasingly clear with each succeeding Matt Scudder novel that the detective's progress with his case is not quite as important as his progress with his life. Good choice. Another good choice is reader Howard who can make even the repetitious "Prey" series sound interesting.

Lionel Davidson

Kolymsky Heights

Read by Theodore Bikel

(Audio Renaissance,

4 1/2 hrs., abridged)

Rave reviews greeted the appearance in England of this 1994 thriller by three-time Gold Dagger Award-winner Davidson. Messages smuggled out of Siberia send Johnny Porter, legendary scholar and man of action, on a solo mission into the frozen Russian province. Scientists there have been working for years on a secret project



ALAN POPE

KATHLEEN TURNER (LEFT) REPRISSES HER SCREEN ROLE ON TAPE IN PARETSKY'S *SKIN DEEP*. DEREK JACOBI READS AND PORTRAYS ELLIS PETERS' BROTHER CADFAEL.

whose startling results might greatly aid or harm mankind. Davidson's plot is worthy of Peter Hoeg, John le Carré or Martin Cruz Smith; and this lengthy abridgment, superbly performed by Bikel, retains much of the book's excitement.

Anthony Boucher and Denis Green

The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Volume 26

Original radio broadcasts

(Simon & Schuster, 1 hr.)

The authorship here belongs not to Doyle but to Anthony Boucher and Denis Green who toiled in the radio vineyards to create series episodes loosely based on events in the original works. This latest, and final volume includes the last show that starred Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce as Holmes and Watson. "The Baconian Cipher" was broadcast on May 27, 1946. In it the world's greatest sleuth solves a tricky attempted murder involving the "agony column" in a London newspaper, a woman pistol expert and a famous French detective. When the guilty parties were safely in custody, the radio show left the airwaves for

the summer and Rathbone left the show forever. Bruce returned in the fall with a new Holmes, Tom Conway. The other episode in this volume aired the week before "Cipher," but for reasons not explained but probably illness, Bruce did not appear as Watson. "The Haunting of Sherlock Holmes" transports the sleuth to a Balkan country where he and Watson witness the execution of a beautiful spy. But the lady is very hard to kill, apparently. Both shows are fine examples of the golden age of radio and one would hope that S&S, or some other publisher, might be moved to investigate the availability of the many pre-1945 Rathbone-Bruce shows that have not been reproduced.

Dick Francis

Wild Horses

read by Simon Jones

(Simon & Schuster, 3 hrs., abridged)

Film director Thomas Lyon hears an enigmatic deathbed confession from an old friend that not only affects the movie he's currently shooting but makes him the focal point for some very ruthless killers. Movie-making

has proven almost as popular a background as racing for Francis. (Odd considering his books rarely become films.) And here we experience once again the author's remarkable ability to match credible surroundings with dimensional characters, though the motive for the long-hidden murder that turns this plot seems a bit of a reach. Reader Jones, who played Arthur Dent in the tele-version of "The Hitchhiker's Guide," with his wry, British delivery is an excellent choice to narrate this tricky mystery.

Sara Paretsky

Skin Deep

read by Kathleen Turner
(Durkin Hayes, 3 hrs.)

The combination of Paretsky and Turner fares a bit better on tape than on film with the latter reading four short stories featuring V.I. Warshawski. In the title tale, the detective aids a beautician who's been accused of murdering her client. In "Strung Out," murder takes place on the tennis circuit. "Three Dot Po" is a golden retriever that helps V.I. find a killer. And in "Settled Score," V.I.'s close friend Lottie is involved in the murder of a famous musician.

Ellis Peters

The Holy Thief

Read by Paul Scofield

One Corpse Too Many

Read by Derek Jacobi
(Durkin Hayes Audio, 3 hours each, abridged)

These two chronicles of Brother Cadfael, Peters' twelfth-century monk-detective, are well-served in audio versions by two world-class actors. In *The Holy Thief*, the well-crafted nineteenth tale of the British Benedictine, Cadfael labors to restore the sanctified bones stolen from his abbey and to find the murderer of a possible witness to the theft. This nicely tangled skein involves a musically gifted novice and a troubadour's apprentice drawn to his charms, roving bandits, a mischievous local lord and the ongoing civil war. Scofield brings his formidable gifts to this condensed text, with striking results.

One Corpse Too Many, the second in

the series, is one of the more action-packed chronicles. In it, Cadfael sorts out the treachery behind the extra body in a pile of hanged prisoners. Two murders and a stolen treasury are discovered; and the herbalist-sleuth plays a clever double role, both serving justice and aiding the rebel forces with whom he sympathizes. Jacobi, television's Brother Cadfael, gives a splendid performance of this satisfying abridgment.

Anthology

Hard-boiled

read by Stacy Keach
(Durkin Hayes, 5 hrs.)

Nine tough tales of deduction are given proper noir renditions by one of Hemming's better sleuths ("Mike Hammer"). Included are four by Bill Pronzini ("Skeleton Rattle Your Mouldy Leg," "Cat's Paw," "Cain's Mark" and "Strangers in the Fog"), three by John Lutz ("Tough," "High Stakes" and "The Real Shape of the Coast") and two by Stuart Kaminsky ("The Man Who Shot Lewis Vance" and "Bitter Lemons").



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ARMCHAIR REVIEWS

MYSTERY SOAPBOX

by Keith Kahla

By the time you read this, the MWA will be having their annual banquet to announce and honor the winners of the 1995 Edgar Allan Poe Awards. As I write this, the list of this year's nominees (printed elsewhere in this issue) has just been released to the public. The nominees and their publishers have only started their anticipatory fingernail chewing and the Edgar judges, who read through hundreds if not thousands of submissions in the past year, are undoubtedly enjoying a well deserved nervous breakdown.

For the devoted mystery reader, the Edgar finalist list is that most cherished of objects—a recommended reading list. In the informal game of how-many-of-the-finalists-did-you-read-before-they-were-announced played amongst my friends, I have once again scored a miserable under-25%. Sigh. At least I'll have something to read in the coming months.

Since only one book in each category will win the Edgar, a lot of truly excellent books have been nominated over the years but didn't win. Runners-up have always held a special place in my heart, so here is my completely idiosyncratic list of the top five must-read finalist books that didn't win the Edgar.

1. *The Talented Mr. Ripley* by Patricia Highsmith (nominated for Best Novel, 1956). Highsmith has never been to everyone's taste but here she is at her very best. Should not be missed.
2. *Sleeping Dog* by Dick Lochte (nominated for Best First Novel, 1986). Perhaps the best humorous mystery ever published. Should be re-read at least once a year.
3. *Blood Innocents* by Thomas H. Cook (nominated for Best Paperback Original, 1981). Yes, it's a psycho-killer

novel but Cook did it earlier and much, much better than almost anyone else.

4. *Parade of Cock-eyed Creatures* by George Baxt (nominated for Best Novel, 1968). Very silly with extremely broad humor, it is a bit dated now but still one of the best of its kind.

5. *In the Last Analysis* by Amanda Cross (nominated for Best First Novel, 1965). The first Kate Fansler and still one of the best.

(For those of you who want to play along at home, a complete list of nominees and winners of all the mystery awards can be found in *The Armchair Detective Book of Lists*, revised 2nd edition, edited by Kate Stine, Otto Penzler Books.

As for the actual Edgar winners, last year's winner for Best Paperback Original, returns with another superior book which is this month's featured review.

FEATURED REVIEW

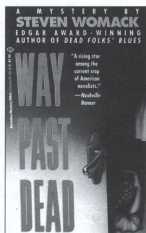
Way Past Dead

by Steven Womack. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995. \$4.99

Slim had joked about "the late Rebecca Gibson" the night before when she kept the audience at the Bluebird Cafe waiting, but he was dead silent when he found her body early the next morning, beaten to death in the bedroom of her apartment. Slim and Becca had been married, co-wrote and co-owned songs, shared royalty checks, and sang together in public before the final split. At the time of her death, Becca was sitting on the doorstep of success, with big money and smart promoters behind her new record album while Slim Gibson was still a struggling songwriter. The cops

have only one suspect with motive, means, and opportunity: Slim Gibson. Slim says he didn't kill Becca, and he wants private eye Harry James Denton to prove it.

Denton, who put in fifteen years as a newspaper reporter, has only been a private eye for two years, and he's got troubles of his own. He just finished a long stakeout on a wheelchair-bound bricklayer, about to get a big accident



settlement. But he just couldn't resist showing his stuff on a basketball court, and Harry's got the hour-long video to prove it. Now the insurance company is still stonewalling Harry on his fee.

And then there's the little matter of Harry's girlfriend, Marsha—a.k.a. Doc Helms, the Assistant Medical Examiner for Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County. She and four other employees are being held hostage in the morgue by members of the Pentecostal Evangelical Enochians, a fundamentalist religious group that some say is a cult. They want the body of Evangeline Lee Hogg, the wife of the PEE founder and leader, who died under suspicious circumstances. The PEEs don't smoke, drink, dance, or have autopsies; if they do, they can't be resurrected on Judgment

PAST CRIMES

by Charles L.P. Silet

The Affair of the Jade Monkey:

A YOSEMITE MYSTERY

by Clifford Knight.

Yosemite, CA: Yosemite Association, 1993. \$9.95

This period crime novel is a real curiosity. First published in 1943, it was one of several regional mystery novels written by Kansas City newspaper editor, Clifford Knight, who in the late 1930s began a series of books all featuring an amateur sleuth, Huntoon Rogers, an English Professor, and set in various natural areas throughout the West. With titles such as *The Affair at Palm Springs* (1938), *The Affair in the Painted Desert* (1939), and *The Affair in Death Valley* (1940), Knight's classic detective novels relied as much on their settings for interest as they did in the actual solving of the crimes. These books have long been unavailable and now Yosemite National Park in California has just brought his fourteenth book, *The Affair of the Jade Monkey*, back into print.

The story, set in Yosemite National Park, begins when Chief Ranger Floyd Plummer calls his friend, Professor Rogers, to investigate an unidentified body which emerged from the melting snow during the spring thaw. The professor also happens to be working on a hush-hush project for the government and suspects that the victim is part of an espionage operation to smuggle top-secret plans out of the country to the Axis powers. The solution to the mysterious death must wait, however, until he can connect it with an apparently disparate group of tourists who have signed up to take one of the national park's standard week-long, loup hiking tours.

The tour is led by Assistant Park Naturalist, Bruce Milbank, and contains an odd assortment of hikers, including a secretary from San Francisco, her unwanted suitor, a school teacher from Oklahoma, a former cowboy, a radio singer and Hollywood voice dubber, a compulsive fisherman, an architect from San Diego, an 80-year-old retiree, a sculptress, and assorted other tourists with curious backgrounds and questionable associations. Day by day as the hiking tour progresses various members of the party meet with violent deaths: each of which introduces puzzling motives and complicates the plot. Professor Rogers joins the party and tries to solve the murders by suggesting possible motives which implicate almost all of the hikers at one time or another. The denouement of the novel is sorted out Agatha Christie style with a group confrontation during which Rogers explains the various deaths and ties the murders together with a plausible explanation of how they are related to the frozen body from the story's beginning and the rather flimsy espionage "McGuffin" which involved the professor in the first place.

The pleasures of this novel reside not as much in the unraveling of the mystery as in the evocation of the locale and in the 1940s atmosphere of the style. At one point Knight rhapsodizes:

It was the old hike stuff proving out once more; you couldn't herd a crowd of people together for a week on mountain trails where they broke with the routine of everyday life without smoothing out a lot of kinks. There was something in mountain air and far visions and hard hiking in high country that recreated human beings.

And there is something in this novel which does the same for mystery readers. Unlike Nevada Barr's equally atmospheric contemporary series featuring park ranger Anna Pigeon (*Trace of the Cat* and *A Superior Death*), this novel is gentler and more romantic, recalling classic plots, period characters, and a simpler view of things. Clifford Knight's *The Affair of the Jade Monkey* summons a nostalgic glimpse into the past and a smooth evening's read.



Day, and they lose their only chance for everlasting life. Armed and ready for all-out warfare, the PEEs have circled their Winnebagos around the fortress-like morgue that sits with its back to a bluff overlooking the river. Nobody leaves until the PEEs recover Sister Evangeline's whole body.

Finally, Harry relents and takes Slim's case; a deadbeat client who's probably guilty is better than no client at all. At least working on the case puts Harry in the center of Nashville's Country & Western music business, where managers, agents, accountants, and lawyers deal and double-deal behind a facade of creativity, artistic expression, and professionalism.

Even the minor characters in *Way Past Dead* are wonderfully drawn. Reporter Agon Dembler—all 350 pounds of him—is willing to share the latest Music City gossip. Buddy Lonnie (and his junkyard dog Shadow) sometimes works repos and skip traces or snags bail jumpers just for the fun of it. The tenacious Lee family puts in long hours at Lee's Szechuan Palace. And

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the mysterious threatening caller seems to know Harry's every move.

Way Past Dead is a solid private eye tale, strong in action and humor, filled with interesting characters, and set against the C&W music scene in Nashville today. Steven Womack is a very talented writer, and *Way Past Dead* is an exceptional book.

—Ronald C. Miller

GENERAL

Baby, Would I Lie?

by Donald E. Westlake. New York: Mysterious Press, 1994. \$19.95

The streets of Branson, Missouri, have turned into long parking lots of station wagons, RVs, and tour buses since the main drag became lined with theaters featuring country music legends like Loretta Lynn, Roy Clark, and Merle Haggard. Business is good everywhere, but it's really booming at Ray Jones's place where every show is a sellout. Ray Jones may not be the biggest country music star, but two things make his show the biggest draw in town. First, Ray is about to go on

trial for the rape and murder of his 31-year-old theater cashier. Second, if Ray manages to beat the rape and murder charges and stay out of jail (no mean trick), then the Internal Revenue Service is going to take everything Ray's got for unpaid back taxes, including penalties and interest.

Ray's trial is the media circus of the moment. Reporters covering the trial run the gamut from the sleazy tabloid gossip mongers at the *Weekly Galaxy* to eminent legitimate journalists from New York City's *Trend: The Magazine for the Way We Live This Instant*. Interestingly, Sara Joslyn and Jack Ingersoll, the heroes of *Trust Me on This*, have departed the *Galaxy* and are now displaying their journalistic talents at *Trend*. Both are in Branson for Ray's trial. Sara is after an exclusive interview with Ray, and Jack, holding a grudge, plans an exposé of the *Galaxy*.

Meanwhile, Ray Jones is living every day as if it were his last day of freedom. (It may be.) He's belting out the lyrics to "If It Ain't Fried, It Ain't Food," "New York Sure Is a Great Big City," and "Singing for the IRS" to standing-room-only audiences. Ray is also scheming to beat the odds on staying out of prison and holding back a few dollars from the eager hands of Leon "The Prick" Caccatorro, chief negotiator for the IRS. Ray ain't holdin' his breath.

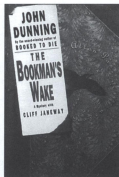
Whether writing under his own name, as Richard Stark, or under a handful of other pseudonyms, Donald E. Westlake is at the top of his profession. Recipient of the Mystery Writers of America Grand Master award, the three-time Edgar winner was nominated for an Oscar for his screenplay of *The Gifters* in 1991. *Baby, Would I Lie?* is a comedic cornucopia combining zany characters, courtroom drama, and country music backgrounds in a caper novel that lampoons journalists, contemporary music, entrepreneurs, and the IRS, among others. Buy it. Read it. Laugh and enjoy.

—Ronald C. Miller

The Bookman's Wake

by John Dunning. New York: Scribner, 1995. \$21.00

Dunning's *Booked to Die*, a tale fea-



turing an ex-cop cum rare book dealer, took the mystery world by storm and surprise a couple of years ago, but he had previously written three others in the period 1975-82, two of which (*Deadline* and *Looking for Ginger North*) were nominated for Edgar Awards. Dunning himself is a rare book dealer, operating an appointment only business in Denver, the setting for his bibliomysteries.

Cliff Janeway is visited at his bookstore by a ghost of his profession past, in the person of another ex-Denver policeman for whom he had and has no use whatsoever. The man is now a private detective, and wants to hire Janeway to go to Seattle and pick up a young woman who has skipped out on her bond. The money's good, the job sounds easy, and the case has a rare-book angle, so Janeway accepts. When he gets to Seattle, however, he begins to have doubts. The case revolves around a dead limited-edition book maker and his maybe mythical last production—a 1969 handcrafted edition of Poe's *The Raven*. The situation is fraught with peril for the young woman, and Janeway has to decide where his allegiances lie; and while he's at it, wade through a bucket or two of blood.

Although I enjoyed the first Janeway book considerably, I thought it had some structural problems in that it seemed almost to be two books—one about crime, one about books, the two imperfectly integrated, and the latter considerably better than the former. I found the same situation here, but to a much lesser degree. I think Dunning is at his best when writing about books, which he obviously loves and of which he is



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immensely knowledgeable. And that isn't to say at all that he isn't a good crime writer, too. His characterizations and dialogue are good, and when he remembers to tell his story (which, to be fair, is most of the time) he tells it well. The criminous plot is somewhat reminiscent of Ross Macdonald, though not quite as twisty, perhaps.

There's a difference, however, between being an avid reader and loving books *qua* books, and I think how much you enjoy this one may depend in large part on the latter quality. I liked it a lot, and I'll look forward to his next.

—Barry W. Gardner

Burglars Can't Be Choosers

by Lawrence Block. New York: Dutton, 1995. \$19.95

Bernie Rhodenbarr is back! Actually, he "came back" in Block's *The Burglar Who Traded Ted Williams* in 1994 but in addition Dutton has issued the first Rhodenbarr book, originally published over fifteen years ago. This is a fine introduction to the devious burglar with his idiosyncratic honesty. He's been given the job of "recovering" a blue leather box from Apartment 311 in a classy 67th Street building and when done, he will get \$5,000. While he's searching for the box, the cops, Ray Kirschmann, a professional acquaintance of Bernie, and Ray's new partner, Loren Kramer, arrive. Rhodenbarr bribes them to not arrest him. Kramer goes to the bathroom and on the way sees a dead man in the bedroom. Bernie figures his bribe will not cover the new development, dashes away, is now #1 suspect and needs a hide-out.

Bernie may not be Irish but he has that proverbial luck and remembers an old acquaintance, Rodney Hart, who lives alone and is away for two months. So Bernie moves in—he doesn't need a key. He also knows Kirschmann is not going to look for another suspect when Rhodenbarr is so handy and with the help of a new friend, Ruth Hightower a.k.a. Ellie Christopher, he chases down clues, people (especially the one who set him up for the murder) and finally the solution.

One of Rhodenbarr's lines is "Nobody changes," and Bernie Rhodenbarr doesn't, for which readers are grateful. *Burglars Can't Be Choosers* is full of what we came to expect from Lawrence Block in his later books—the offbeat repartee, the well-crafted plot, the comic touches, such as Hart having 63 cans of Campbell's soups, and the logical unfolding of the puzzle. And though he doesn't need any compliments from any reviewer, in some ways his books remind me of Raymond Chandler's with a more philosophical understanding of the mean streets.

Best of all, where else do you find a contemporary Robin Hood who is so unpretentious and likeable?

—Maria Brolley

Double Plot

by Leo Axler. New York: Berkley Prime Crime, 1994. \$4.99

This is Leo Axler's second novel featuring undertaker Bill Hawley, who says that he's known as "the sleuthing undertaker." And if this seems an odd combination of professions, Hawley convinces readers that detecting and undertaking go together very well. After all, the undertaking business is "based primarily on concealing uncomfortable truths." He then describes in gruesome detail exactly what happens to a body after death.

The mystery itself, involving the supposed suicide of an antiques dealer who specializes in Russian icons, is competently plotted and written, but what gives the novel its special edge is Hawley's profession. Of course he would know a great deal about death, of course he would see right away if something were different and out of the ordinary about a corpse since, as he tells us, "Nobody knows a dead body better than an embalmer." Who could argue with this? He gives the reader insider's tips on the problems an undertaker faces, particularly during the typical autopsy. As a character, Hawley comes with many of the trappings familiar to contemporary detectives: his adored wife is a person in her own right with a profession of her own; he has a drinking problem that, at least in this novel, is under control; and he has

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a lifetime of guilt for causing the accident that put his brother in a wheelchair. It is his profession (his day job?) that takes him out of the ordinary and makes him into a detective with a unique perspective, one that is heavily laced with gallows humor. Axler's first Bill Hawley novel, *Final Viewing*, has also been published by Berkley. I can't wait to read it.

—Joan Kotker

Hammurabi's Code

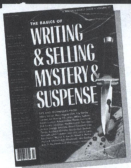
by Charles Kenney. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. \$22.00

Hammurabi's Code, carved in stone many centuries ago, was in general humane but did intend literally its directive: "...an eye for an eye." And this is what Kenney's book is about—retribution. Councillor Philip Stewart, "the most beloved individual in Boston," is listening to his last Red Sox game when someone asks him, "Isn't it true that you are an evil man?" and then kills him.

Boston is outraged by the murder of a man who never turned away anyone asking for help. But findings, such as \$70,000 in cash in Stewart's closet, make Det. Thomas McCormack of the Boston Police Dept. Homicide Division wonder about Stewart's saintly halo. As it happens, Frank Cronin, reporter for *The Boston Post*, is assigned to do a story on Stewart and begins to uncover the man's mean spirit, venality, and plenty of enemies who are happy to see him dead.

McCormack and Cronin are old friends and exchange information along the way. There is also a master manipulator Mafia boss, Joseph Bufalino; a fanatic do-gooder, Father Patrick

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Boyle; and Stewart's political advisor, Donald Deegan, who are all suspects.

Almost all satisfying mystery novels have endings with a twist and Kenney gives us an exceptionally gripping one. Some may find fault with the sentimental, heart-rending family tragedies portrayed but they are integral to the plot. My only objection to the book is that Cronin is so perfect—he's handsome, intelligent, graduated from Dartmouth, a star athlete, goes to Catholic mass three times a week, and has a farmhouse in eastern Vermont—but nevertheless his virtue serves a purpose.

Kenney writes intelligently, knowledgeably, suspensefully and *Hammurabi's Code* should make the best-seller list.

—Maria Brolley

Happy Are the Poor in Spirit

by **Andrew M. Greeley**. New York: Jove Books, 1994. \$5.99

In *Happy Are the Poor in Spirit*, Bishop Blackie Ryan has been called upon to shake a ghost out of Bart Cain's closet. How's that for raising Cain? There have been several near fatal attempts on Bart's life and the family suspects an ex-sweetheart and Bart's high school prom date, Mary Anne Haggerty. The problem is that Bart Cain was accused of murdering Mary Anne in 1947 on the prom night when she disappeared. The mystery of her disappearance was never solved and Bart was never convicted of her murder.

Candi Cain, daughter of wealthy commodities broker Bart Cain, calls on the Bishop to help clear up this problem. As a result of his efforts, Blackie Ryan uncovers an alarming number of skeletons that explain why terrifying things are happening to the Cains.

Greeley presents a warm caring man of the cloth that everyone would love to have fighting their battles and solving their problems. While Ryan sees what he suspects is not quite proper, he never preaches and gives advice only when asked.

A fine read that will have you page turning as you search for the answer and get to know Bishop Blackie Ryan.

—Catherine M. Nelson

Life Itself

by **Paco Ignacio Taibo II** (translated by **Beth Henson**). New York: Mysterious Press, 1994. \$18.95

Jose Daniel Fierro is a famous author of police thrillers, known as a political leftist but not, so to speak, as a man of the barricades. This is about to change. One fine night he is visited by a group of men from Santa Ana, a city in Northern Mexico with a leftist government that has proved to be a large thorn in the side of the PRI, Mexico's monolithic political party. The town's last two police chiefs have been assassinated, and the men want Fierro to take the post; their thinking is that the government would not dare to assassinate someone so prominent for fear of the publicity. Against all reason and his own better judgment, Fierro accepts and finds himself in a new and precarious world. Soon after he arrives a *gringo* photographer is found dead in a Carmelite church, murdered and nude. The resulting investigation stirs the political stew and threatens many things—maybe for Fierro, life itself.

Taibo is best known here for his series featuring a Mexican PI with the



unlikely name of Hector Belascoran Shayne, a dark and mordant group of stories that have received considerable acclaim but which I've never been able to enjoy. This is far different in tone, if not in substance. The narration is wry and semi-humorous, accomplished through a combination of Fierro's third-person viewpoint and letters from him to his indignant wife. Underneath are the same anger and disgust with the political state of his country that infuses all of Taibo's work that I've seen. It's an odd sort of book, or perhaps I should say that it's odd that I liked it. The basic plot device is silly—perhaps

not in that a writer could be appointed police chief, (I'd be reluctant to rule out anything in Mexican political life,) but certainly in that he would be allowed to function as such—and characterization is sketchy for the most part; but it still works. While I liked the voice of the novel, with translations one never knows whose voice it really is. I found the picture of Mexico's politics particularly fascinating in light of the turmoil there in recent years. Of course, the political subtext loses its impact as it crosses the border, but it's still an enjoyable novel. I'd like to see more of this from Taibo, and less of Shayne.

—Barry W. Gardner

Martians in Maggody

by Joan Hess. New York: Dutton, 1994. \$18.95

Okay, hold on to your seats, because you're headed for a bumpy ride to Maggody, Arkansas, where space aliens have landed and taken over. Arly Hanks, the chief of police of Maggody, Arkansas, (pop. 755) is up to her hip boots in UFOs, Martians, Bigfoot, and tabloid reporters, in this eighth adventure. All this because Raz Buchanan's cornfield has some strange, unexplained geometric designs swirled into it. Meanwhile, Ruby Bee's neon sign outside the Flamingo Motel now reads "no v can y" and she's dishing up chicken-fried steak at her bar and grill and her cash register is playing dollar signs. As the crowds roll in, Raz's admission price rises. Pondering the down-to-earth puzzle, Arly suspects an extraterrestrial hoax.

The small town becomes a three ring UFO circus with reporters nosing around and inventing stories and one Maggody resident fears she has been abducted and is pregnant with an alien baby. But when Brian Quint, a young ufologist is found dead of carbon monoxide asphyxiation, Chief Hanks suspects foul play.

Another zany misadventure that has the townspeople in a panic and their police chief scratching her head. Joan Hess at her usual best. It's a guaranteed all time good read packed with fun.

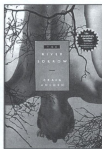
—Catherine M. Nelson

Murder Is My Business

edited by Mickey Spillane and Max Allan Collins. New York: Dutton, 1994. \$19.95

Crime writers are nostalgic about the old days when there was a market for short stories in publications like *Black Mask*. Reprising the anthology format of the defunct magazines, Collins and Spillane persuaded 19 of today's established writers to contribute to *Murder Is My Business*, which is built around the theme of "murder for hire." The editors intend to produce a series of such collections, each with a different unifying theme.

Though each story in this collection is anchored by the imposed necessity of having a hit man (OK, sometimes a hit person), they are remarkably var-



ied and inventive. In length they range from only two and a half pages to a novella by Mickey Spillane that runs 77 pages. In tone they range from the near-sick to the rather offhanded "he deserved it anyway" kill. One murderer is a 14-year old whose bullying goes too far, another is an apprentice hitter who bumps off his mentor—the rotten father who had abandoned his family. One is an ex-cop who belatedly discovers his homosexuality.

Two that stand out in the potpourri: Collins' "Guest Service" has a retired assassin getting back in harness to put away a wife beater and all-around crumb. Lawrence Block sends his urban pro off into a little Wyoming cow town where the locals are a whole new experience for him.

This is a collection that has something for every reader. Don't rush through the book; it's better in bites of one or two at a time so you can enjoy the diversity and versatility. Then try to guess what unifying theme Spillane and

Collins will choose for the second in the planned series.

—Donald H. Buck

The River Sorrow

by Craig Holden. New York: Delacorte, 1994. \$21.95

Adrian Lancaster is a young doctor in a trauma unit who has been given a second chance after his heroin addiction leads to a morphine bust. Lancaster has returned to the Midwestern city of Morgantown, located on the banks of the River Sorrow, to put his life back together and practice medicine. When a couple of past drug acquaintances are murdered, Lancaster immediately comes under suspicion. The chief investigator on the case is Frank Brandon, a respected veteran living with the aftermath of his wife and child's tragic automobile accident at the hands of a drugged-out driver. Brandon has a reason to hate Lancaster, who could not save his child on the operating table and who is, of course, a former drug user himself. But Brandon doesn't hate Lancaster. In fact, he has a hunch that

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Lancaster is innocent of the crimes. A strange young woman named Storm enters Lancaster's life, and is the impetus for the actions that follow.

The three of them—Lancaster, Brandon and Storm—go underground and around official corners to get to the bottom of the murders. Lancaster has to for redemption; Brandon has to because it's his job. In the process, they will find what they've been coming to all along.

The River Sorrow is Craig Holden's debut novel, and an exceptional debut it is. The thriller elements are complex and believable, the resolutions satisfying, always credible, and surprising to the last page. This would have been a solid book on the strengths of its unusual story alone, but the author's gift for characterization puts this in the category of memorable. Frank Brandon, in particular, is richly realized; Holden gets so deeply into Brandon that at times the reader feels that he is leading Brandon's life.

The most original element, however, is Holden's matter of fact, nonjudgmental treatment of the '90s fallout from '80s addictions—drugs, yes, but also money and power. I can't remember seeing one pop-culture reference in the book, but this is the most modern feeling crime novel I've read in the last few years.

If I have one complaint, it is that the novel is written in the present tense, which practically screams the word 'literary.' Since it is often necessary for the author to switch tenses in the course of the narrative, the device becomes little more than an unnecessary distraction.

Presumably, Holden's intention was to separate himself from the rest of the genre-fiction pack. Ironically, he has done so with the simple power of his prose. It has always been my opinion that a good crime novel is a literary novel. This is a very good one, indeed.

—George P. Pelecanos

COZY

The Dandelion Murders

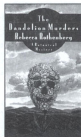
by Rebecca Rothenberg. New York: Mysterious Press, 1994. \$18.95

The first introduction of Rothenberg's heroine, microbiologist Claire Sharples, met with critical acclaim and nominations for highly prestigious awards for *The Bulrush Murders*. This second outing for Claire is no less gripping in both its suspense and its characters. In *The Dandelion Murders*, Claire is still not fully comfortable with her move from New England to California's San Joaquin Valley. To add to her confusion and dissatisfaction, life with her botanist lover is slowly disintegrating, largely because his two hyperactive sons are spending a month with Claire and Sam.

While investigating a possible field test site for an experiment, Claire discovers the body of *LA Free Press* journalist Jonathan Levine. Further investigation by Claire and the local police ties Levine to the persistent rumors of illegal usage of pesticides in the Valley and with the deaths of two migrant farm workers. Claire sets out to solve the mystery of Levine's death and finds herself again butting heads with angry

farmers and the Valley's good ol' boy network.

Her only real clue is a dandelion-like flower that grows nowhere in the Valley. She must first find out where Levine had been on the day of his death, and afterwards connect him with someone in the area where he died. Claire plunges headlong into a mystery involving abuse of migrant workers, murder, and familial jealousies among the citrus trees and vine-



yards. In the midst of the investigation she also sorts out some of her feelings about Sam and his sons. The conclusion of both plots, lover and murder, will surprise the reader with its ingenuity and its logic. A tale worthy of following *The Bulrush Murders*.

—Christine E. Thompson

Hangman's Root

by Susan Witting Albert. New York: Scribner, 1994. \$20.00

It's tempting to call this a woman's book, except that it begins with a vividly detailed and overlong description of "rattlesnake sacking," a two-man sport that could catch on only in Texas. Fortunately for readers of either gender it has nothing to do with the plot and no further reference is made to it.

Everything centers on China Bayles, heroine of this successful series. She used to be an intense criminal lawyer (nicknamed "Hot Shot") but gave it up to open an herb shop. That's a transition almost as dramatic as Saint Augustine's from sinning to piety.

One of China's buddies is a crotchety biology teacher who devotes her time, income, and property to the care and feeding of stray cats—hundreds of them. This annoys the hell out of her neighbor (a crotchety biology teacher). They verbally spit and scratch at one

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another, which wouldn't seem too important, except he's found hanged at the university where they both teach.

And a lot of evidence points to the cat lover.

It's up to China and two other buddies to find out who the real murderer was—no cat fancier could be a murderess—and the search takes them into college faculty politics, grant money shenanigans, and a quite unusual family arrangement.

Why think of it as a woman's book? Well, there's quite an emphasis on herbs. How to grow 'em, cook with 'em, dry 'em, dye your hair with 'em (no, really). Plus considerable lore on catnip, which is the source of the book's title.

There are three pages of herb reference books at the end, and the address where you can send for a sample copy of the author's herbal newsletter. As comedian Dave Barry says, I'm not making this up.

All that aside, the plot and the characters are quite good, so even if you're not inclined to roll around in catnip with the felines, you'll still enjoy the book.

—Donald H. Buck

The Julius House

by Charlene Harris. New York: Scribner, 1995. \$20.00

Six years ago the Julius family—mother, father and teenage daughter—disappeared without a trace. Nothing was missing; all vehicles were in the garage; and there was no trace of a struggle. When Aurora Teagarden, former librarian and now heiress, receives the Julius house as a wedding gift from her husband, she starts to wonder what happened that fateful day years ago.

Aurora, known as Roe, has other things to worry about as well. Her new husband is keeping some deadly secrets, it seems, and without much explana-

tion, he installs his old friends, Shelby and Angel Youngblood in the addition to their home. Shelby and Angel's behavior, however, does not strike Roe as that of mere house guests. They seem to be well trained in martial arts and are very secretive about their past. Although she deeply loves her husband, Roe begins to wonder whether their marriage is breaking apart even before it has really started.

One day, without warning, Roe is attacked by an ax-wielding stranger near her garage and is saved from sure death only by Angel's quick action. It is then that Roe discovers some crucial clues that reveal the fate of the Julius family and just who the Youngbloods really are.

Told with a sense of humor and a light touch, this latest Aurora Teagarden mystery is quite a lot of fun. The writing is what could be termed as "breezy" and very readable. The plot moves relatively quickly along (although there are some tedious and uninteresting details about the preparations for the wedding). The suspense is maintained and the reader is given a bit of the flavor of living in a small town like Lawrence, Georgia. The characterizations are not exactly the strongest point of the book, but Roe is mostly a likable, reasonable woman although she shows a severe lapse in logic when she decides to marry a man whom she knows very little about.

—Lorrie K. Inagaki

HISTORICAL

The Eye of God

by C.L. Grace. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. \$18.95

C.L. Grace (the pseudonym of Anglo-Irish professor of History, P.C. Doherty) has made this new novel the second in a new medieval mystery series featuring physician Kathryn Swinbrooke and her tough-minded, fiercely loyal companion, Irish soldier-of-fortune, Colum Murtagh. Like its predecessor, *A Shrine of Murders*, the storyline links up to the themes and characters of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Its literary antecedents and very evident deep knowledge of late medieval society gives solid buttress to the excitement of a fast-paced style adopted for dialogue and descriptive backgrounds.

Power politics and greed are the main ingredients here for murder. An ancient Irish pendant of great craftsmanship and beauty called "The Eye-of-God" has been "appropriated" from its Dublin cathedral home by the Yorkist princes who fight for the Throne of England against bitter Lancastrian rivals. This is the time of civil war, the War of the Roses (1450s-'80s). Treachery and massacre are all too common. The Yorkist Edward IV in 1471 is riding the crescendo of success for his family. But the gold pendant with its sapphire heart has disappeared. It is worth a king's ransom literally—and has both sacred and political significance as a symbol of power.

The last holder of this talisman was the Earl of Warwick, once a friend to both the House of York and Colum Murtagh. Warwick had laid his ambition with Lancaster—and lost his life

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in battle. Who now held the precious pendant? It was up to Colum to find out as a royal commissioner for King Edward. Suspicious deaths were occurring in Canterbury, and Colum needed the medical and "detecting" abilities of his secret love, Kathryn. The mystery novel keeps contrasting the two characters, each bedeviled by his own evil ghosts of the past—like all the characters in this fifteenth century drama. Colum is still under sentence of death by assassination from 'The Hounds of Ulster,' a terrorist group he once aided as a boy in Ireland. He is now a traitor to them—and all his Irish friends as well. Poor Kathryn labors under a bad marriage, a disappeared husband who may be alive or dead. Her medical practice is delightful to read but terrifying, too, in its struggle against local ignorance and corruption.

Doherty uses his Irish and English characters to explore the strengths and unique facets of medieval society. Catholicism is pervasive in nearly all aspects of popular life and is treated with great respect (while noting the

baser motives of some local clerics and such as the 'pardoner' class—again, a reference to Chaucer's *Tales*). The real life of soldiers in castles, the grime of local towns, the vitality of the guilds, the influence of women in medicine (only stopped by the age of the Reformation), the interplay of *de facto* justice and chivalric honor with royal power, local fairs, etc.: all these are part of the "meat" of this mystery tale.

There is good wit and humor here to balance out the horror of varied violent deaths. Logic and common sense are followed moreover to the full by our two heroes who let their Irish and Anglo-Saxon cultures live in mutual respect. Recommended for some grand reading as well as a grand learning experience.

—Thomas M. Egan

Night Train to Memphis

by Elizabeth Peters. New York:

Warner Books, 1994. \$21.95

On her second adventure, assistant curator of the National Museum in Munich, Vicky Bliss, is pushed into taking a trip down the Nile on a luxury ocean liner cruise. As an operative, her quest is to obtain information for an intelligence agency. Certain information has come to their attention which indicates that a major heist of Egyptian antiquities is in the works. With no time to waste, Vicky is whisked away on a luxurious cruise before she can explain everything to her inquisitive boss Herr Dr. Schmidt.

En route to Egypt, Vicky spots the man who was her occasional lover, frequent adversary, and an art thief. To make matters worse he brought along his bride.

A body is dumped overboard which Vicky learns was her contact. If that isn't enough to raise the hairs on the back of her neck, her ex-lover has brought his mother-in-law, who has become ill, and Herr Dr. Schmidt joins the group.

When Peters sets out to give you a tour of Egypt via Vicky Bliss, sit tight and hold on to your seat: you're off on a dangerous adventure! Schmidt adds just the right touch. As always Peters delivers an entertaining, great read.

—Catherine M. Nelson

Sins of the Wolf

by Anne Perry. New York:

Ballantine, 1994. \$21.50

There is more than a touch of Jane Austen in Anne Perry's writing, even though her setting is many decades later. England still has gentry, servants, manners, a sense of social status, and an elegant way of speech.

But Jane Austen was hardly capable of characters like Hester Latterly and William Monk. She is a nurse, recently back from the carnage of Crimea, during a time when only the magnificence of Florence Nightingale's pioneering has made nursing a respectable occupation. Like Florence, Hester is a woman of good breeding who has chosen nursing in spite of its low esteem. Fiercely independent, she has often alienated her colleagues—to the point of expulsion from hospital work.

Monk has a similar prickly personality. His passion is justice and truth, and his intolerance of inept superiors has brought about his forced retirement from police work. The two appear together for the fifth time and continue their complex relationship of mutual respect and verbal warfare.

This time Hester is falsely accused of murder. Much of the book is a suspenseful prelude to the trial and a fine description of the courtroom process. The historical Florence Nightingale appears as a character witness on Hester's behalf, and Anne Perry gives her a speech that eloquently conveys the nobility of their calling, chastises the male chauvinism directed against it, and portrays the horror of war.

William Monk is of little help to Hester until after the trial, and it is then that the author has this strangely matched pair swing into action to untangle one of the strangest messes any "respectable" British family ever got itself into.

Hester is so noble and true-blue that you root for her and want to shake the irascible Monk for not getting down on one knee and begging her hand in marriage. Anne Perry is skillful enough to let that happen somewhere along the line and still continue this charming series.

—Donald H. Buck

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NONFICTION

Clive Barker's Short Stories

by Gary Hoppenstand. Jefferson, NC: MacFarland & Co., 1994. \$32.50

You kind of get the idea from the endflap. "Unlike other horror fiction and fantasy writers, Clive Barker is true to the literary heritage of the genre. Though aware of the importance of entertainment in his writing, he embraces the traditional formulas of horror fiction and builds upon them...."

What we get here is another study of a genre writer, trying to show that the writer is unfairly dismissed because genre fiction is considered substandard in this country, but who is worthy of consideration because he is so much more than a mere genre writer.

It is also a haunted book. A spectral figure called 'Stephen King' keeps wandering through the halls, conjured up to be dismissed by Hoppenstand. 'King,' we are to understand, embraces genre writing and aspires to be nothing more than a mere entertainer, while Clive Barker's genre writing has stuff like literary references and identifiable themes in it.

Hoppenstand really knows how to discuss a story succinctly and yet with enough detail to make it enticing. Your best bet is probably to skip the grand expanses of the preliminary material and start reading at page 22, where the book gets down to specifics. This will allow you to miss the statement that H.P. Lovecraft never really scared anyone, and a sentence I haven't quite made up my mind about: "He inks his pen in the life force of the essential story" (p. 15).

There's plenty left, though, if you want to tackle the broader themes. Does Hoppenstand's ability to pick out archetypes and traditional folkplots in Barker's stories really make the stories literature? What do you think of his quick history of the division between real literature and genre fiction? How do you feel about his making the modern horror story a direct descendant of the eighteenth century Gothic novel, with most of what came between mere cousins?

There is much to like and much to dislike in this book, as well as what matters to many readers: much to argue about. On the whole, if you are interested in modern horror writing, you should have it. If nothing else, there is a foreword by Clive Barker, welcoming Hoppenstand's analysis, but declining to analyze it. An afterword by Stephen King would have rounded it off nicely, but you can't have everything.

—Dan Crawford

Detective Fiction:

The Collector's Guide, 2nd edition

by John Cooper and D.A. Pike.

Aldershot, UK: Scholar Press, 1994.

\$59.95

If you're going to collect detective fiction not just as reading material but as pieces of publishing history, as collector items, one of the chief problems is knowing whether what you come across is the real thing, the true first, or a book club reprint on cheap paper with a flimsy dust jacket. Obviously, a guide that will tell you what to look for has to help.

This guide defines detective fiction rather strictly, specializing in the books with a murderer, a detective, and plenty of clues while excluding spies, thrillers, Gothics, hardboileds, and other variations. Chandler, Hammett, Grafton, and Paretsky, all eagerly sought by collectors, are represented, but those wishing to know that Black put Morrow dust jackets on its Perry Mason reprints will have to wait for another book.


For each writer listed, as complete a bibliography as the authors could compile is included of works in the field—be they novels, short story collections,

or uncollected stories in magazines. Attention is drawn to variant titles, abridged editions, and pen names. The reader is warned about books written by ghost writers under the names of more famous creators.

The authors have tried to describe as completely as possible all the crucial first editions, while limiting these to books they have actually seen. Color, format, telltale clues in printing are listed in a way that the beginner will be able to follow, without going into the minutiae of counting blank leaves or measuring the height of the volume. At least one picture is included for each writer's work, with a section of color pictures in the middle, so you will recognize those all-important dustjackets (djs) when you see them.

There are some niggling flaws in this volume. British first editions were easier for the authors to examine than American ones, perhaps limiting the usefulness of the entries for authors from this side of the Atlantic. Pocket Book editions are listed throughout as "Spivak," though all other American paperback companies are listed by company name. The title character in Gypsy Rose Lee/Craig Rice's *Mother Finds a Body* is referred to as "the Ethel Merman character from *Gypsy*." And did the authors really mean to refer to Sue Grafton's "*A*" as *Is for Alibi* as Kinsey Millhone's "initial appearance"? Shame on them either way.

Nitpicking aside, this is a useful guide. (Most of the serious detective first edition collectors I know collect British authors.) A nice facet of the book is the attention drawn to dust-jacket art, which has lagged behind paperback art as an object for study in the mystery field. There are bibliogra-



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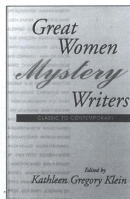
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phies for British authors less than famous, or even unpublished, in this country.

Some people do feel the collection of first editions as objects of value is counterproductive, immoral. One should collect books only as things to read, in this view. Well, okay. Some people think reading books about crime at all contributes to the degeneration of our society. It takes all kinds.

"Initial appearance." Talk about degeneration.

—Dan Craford



Great Women Mystery Writers
edited by Kathleen Gregory Klein.
Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994.
\$49.95

Here is another guide to women who wrote mysteries, following *By a Woman's Hand* by just a few months. This volume contains 117 biobibliographies of writers, not all of whom are necessarily "great," though all seem to be worthy of attention, at least to judge by the summaries in these fairly friendly articles.

Each entry is signed by one of 86 expert contributors, and each follows roughly the same outline. A brief synopsis of the writer's life is followed by a discussion of the books, which forms the major part of each entry. Then comes the increasingly common recommendation section, recommending other authors you may enjoy if you like the books under discussion. As in *By a Woman's Hand*, the bulk of the recommendations are to other mysteries by women, only a few token men slip in.

The entries also suggest which books

by the writer the new reader should approach first. Most authors of entries have let this pass with the usual "You should really read the books in order, so as to follow the evolution of the characters, and of the author's style." Most mystery readers do not, however, embark on a study of an author: I prefer those authors who have made specific recommendations of what they consider the "really good stuff." It has always seemed to me that someone could prepare a reference book picking out those books of a writer which should serve as a new reader's introduction: not the best books, since everything after that would be a let-down, but those books that are most characteristic, to show off the author's addictive points. Some authors of entries here seem to have felt that way about it too.

After the recommendations comes a selected bibliography of books falling within the guide's purview. Critical articles about the author are also listed.

The entries are informative and interesting. This guide reaches back into the nineteenth century, which *By a Woman's Hand* did not, preferring to concentrate on those writers who had penned a book within the past quarter century. Depth and usefulness do vary from entry to entry, of course. (The article on Marie Belloc Lowndes is fun to read even if you were forced to read *The Lodger* in English class.) Romantic suspense seems to have been slighted: writers like Phyllis Whitney, Mary Stewart, Victoria Holt, Velda Johnston, and Helen McLlnes appear only in the recommendations. The entry for Craig Rice makes no mention of Gypsy Rose Lee.

After the entries come the appendices, always a dependable source of fascinating trivia. The major celebrity entry is here, with an article on Sisters in Crime by Sara Paretsky. Other appendices include a summary of the Edgar Awards, with a list of women who have been nominated, an article on mystery conventions and what is to be found at them, a list of specialty bookshops, a list of female nominees for the Agatha Award, a listing of mystery fiction by category (almost as pop-

ular a pastime as the 'if you like this author you may like that one' game), and so forth.

As a reference book, this may be marginally more useful than *By a Woman's Hand*, covering as it does a broader range of writers. For a really good reference shelf, you should probably have both. Because if you liked *Great Women Mystery Writers*, you'll probably like...

—Dan Craford

POLICE PROCEDURAL

Death in the Off-Season

by Francine Mathews. New York: William Morrow, 1994. \$23.00

Death in the Off-Season introduces Nantucket detective, Meredith Forger, daughter of the chief of police on the small island. The book begins with the death of Rusty Mason, black sheep of the Mason family, who had left the country ten years earlier after an unsuccessful attempt to take over the family business. Family members aren't exactly overcome with grief over his death—it turns out Rusty had some blackmailing schemes in mind upon his return from Brazil.

Meredith's investigation of Rusty's death soon uncovers a tangled web of family intrigue that gradually begins to include some outsiders, as well: a schoolteacher hiding from her abusive husband; a lawyer and his girlfriend, a clothing designer; a local restaurateur, whose son discovered Rusty's body; and Meredith's ex-boyfriend, Rafe, who now works for Rusty's brother, Peter.

While trying to prove to her father that she can handle her first murder investigation, Meredith also finds herself becoming increasingly attracted to Peter. But before Peter can do anything about his own feelings for Meredith, he has to deal with unresolved feelings toward his ex-girlfriend, Alison, who left Peter for Rusty ten years earlier. For the last decade, Peter has sealed himself off from the world, and it's not until Alison returns to the island that all the pieces come together—both in terms of relationships and murder.

Death in the Off-Season starts slowly and then gradually builds in intensity and action to finish with a bang. It takes a few chapters to sort out the different characters, but once they're in place, the story works well. Mathews is far more ambitious in her plotting than is typical in many mysteries—she goes beneath the surface to dig at the underlying emotions. She develops threads that connect characters to the past and present, creating a wonderful mosaic of time and place. Nantucket, itself, plays a role in the book—the fog, the ocean, the isolation in the off-season that attracts certain personalities. Small touches make scenes come alive, such as the look and feel of roses or the painful rejection of a high school student faces from his peers for being “different.”

When an author places the focal murder in the first chapter of a book, it's often difficult to keep the reader's interest throughout the rest of the story, but Mathews keeps introducing new twists and turns, so my interest never waned. Between the interesting characters and the multi-dimensional plot, I was riveted until the very end. I was also sad when I turned the last page—I didn't want to say goodbye to these characters. I'm looking forward to the promised sequel.

—Liz Currie

Fare Play

by Barbara Paul. New York: Scribner, 1995. \$20.00

Marian Larch, newly promoted to lieutenant and newly assigned to a Manhattan precinct, doesn't know what to make of a subway killing. An elderly man—Oliver Knowles, the retired president of a toy company—was shot in his seat. The other passengers, including a private detective agency operative who was shadowing the man, didn't see the killer.

That's the main case in *Fare Play*, the third Larch mystery by Barbara Paul and a dandy one.

Larch has her hands full. The men under her command have a hard time taking orders from a woman. An old boyfriend comes back into her life—Curt Holland, a private detective who

now specializes in preventing computer crimes. A young woman hanger-on is stalking her actress friend Kelly Ingram, and while she seems harmless—there's always a chance she'll push too hard. And Larch's former partner, Ivan Malecki, is getting married and he wants her to be...his best man.

The subway killer strikes again, forcing Larch and her detectives to think and rethink their suspects. Chief among them are the dead toymaker's son, Austin, who stands to inherit; also Dave Unger, who's become president of the O.K. Toy Co., and Elmore Zook, corporate lawyer. But her suspects won't crack. And what's the connection with the latest victim, a young woman with a mysterious job as a courier? Or with a merchant killed on an airplane?

An accomplished writer, Paul melds these several plot lines and a couple of others effortlessly into a grabbing suspenser.

—Bernard A. Drew

Hard Currency

by Stuart M. Kaminsky. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1995. \$20.00

Some things have changed in Russia. The Cold War has ended; the former Soviet Union has been ripped asunder; Lenin's statue has fallen; and Communism is giving way to capitalism. And some things never change. The Russian people remain stoic; long lines of shoppers wait for meager supplies of food; and political struggles pervade the highest echelons of government. For Police Inspector Porfiry Rostnikov and his comrades, the work remains the same.

Rostnikov is getting a change of scenery. The taciturn policeman with the game leg and a fear of flying has been sent to Cuba, once the U.S.S.R.'s staunchest ally. Igor Shemenkov, a Russian engineer, has been accused and nearly convicted of the murder of Maria Fernandez, who sometimes entertained visitors from a variety of countries dealing in hard currency. Along with his assistant, Detective Elena Timofeyeva, Rostnikov must investigate the crime in crumbling Havana and try to save not only the former Russian advisor's life but also the honor of the Mother Country.

Back home, “grisly” is the only word to describe the sexual mutilation murders—now numbering forty—that plague Moscow. Inspector Emil Karpo leads the manhunt to capture the serial killer that Karpo simply calls “Case 341.” The killer seems to have a studied approach to his crimes that shows no pattern and leaves no clues to follow. “Case 341” is becoming as much an institution for eliminating citizens in Moscow as the Capones gang is for terrorizing Metro passengers, pedestrians, and shopkeepers.

Stuart M. Kaminsky has written eight earlier Inspector Rostnikov novels, including *A Cold Red Sunrise* that won the Edgar Allan Poe Award for best novel in 1988, as well as the Toby Peters private eye novels set in Hollywood in the 1940s. Kaminsky has strong, interesting characters and skillfully evokes the Russian scene. *Hard Currency* is the latest and best in the Rostnikov series.

—Ronald C. Miller



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Lying in Wait

by J.A. Jance. New York: William Morrow, 1994. \$17.95

Though this is not one of the more exciting tales in Jance's J.P. Beaumont series, it is always nice to spend a few hours with an old friend. This is twelfth in the series for Beaumont, Seattle's intrepid homicide detective. In this adventure, Beaumont crosses paths with Nazis, both Hitlerian and neo versions.

When Gunter Gebhardt is found dead on his torched fishing boat with his fingers and toes chopped off and left in a pan, it is clear that this is more than a random murder. While Beaumont and new sidekick Sue Danielson are pursuing various leads and clues, a woman is found slain in similar circumstances on nearby Camano Island.

Gebhardt's daughter's research into her grandfather's sordid Nazi past and her father's collection of miniature wartime German soldiers sends Beaumont after a pair of operatives for the Simon Wiesenthal Foundation, known for its ongoing pursuit of Nazi war criminals. Are these Nazi hunters gone bad, or are they pursuing the same killers Beaumont is after?

All the familiar characters are at least mentioned, and Jance further develops Beaumont's family history as she blends personal details with her narrative. This novel is a little slow in developing, but Jance's fans will be pleased with this addition to the Beaumont series.

—Douglas G. Simpson

Sanctuary

by Faye Kellerman. New York: William Morrow, 1994. \$22.00

Faye Kellerman's mysteries manage to be both "haimish" (meaning full



of homey warmth) and evil in the same book. Rina Lazarus, more-Orthodox-Jew-than-not housewife, and her husband Peter Decker, LAPD homicide detective, are a familiar pair from Kellerman's earlier mysteries and ever so easy to like. When Honey Klein, a classmate of years ago, calls Rina to ask if she and her four children might spend a week at Rina's and Peter's San Fernando Valley ranch, of course the answer is yes. At the same time, Peter and his LAPD partner, Marge Dunn, are asked to investigate the disappearance of the Yalom family. One person missing would go to Missing Persons but when a family of four goes missing, foul play is suspected and justified when the bodies of Arik and Dalia Yalom are found. Dov and Gil, the teen-age sons, are nowhere to be found but Peter suspects they ran away having been forewarned of danger when he noticed the mezuzah ordinarily placed on the outside of the door, is mounted on the inside of the Yalom door. On dismantling it, he finds the space where the holy prayer parchment should be is empty. He figures diamonds or money had been stashed there for a quick getaway.

While this is going on, Honey Klein

and her children have also suddenly disappeared. This is when Rina decides to participate in the chase. Peter reluctantly accepts Rina as a necessary partner when the clues lead them to Israel and Rina has the knowledge of the country and its language.

As in almost all of Faye Kellerman's mysteries, the reader gets an education in Jewish culture plus researched knowledge about the subject of the mystery. In this case, it's the world of the diamond market. If you've ever walked through that area in New York City, you've sensed the grim tension and almost unbearable hustle which the author describes so well. Kellerman has done her research ably.

One is tempted to say that the mystery is a subplot with much of the almost 400 pages devoted to heartfelt family issues and relationships. The Jewish background and ambiance could be Italian, German, Macedonian, any old-world family values. Not that the mystery is not well-written but what we think of as "necessary padding" in a mystery novel is just as gripping as the puzzle. For me, this is Faye Kellerman's best.

—Maria Brolley

Tarnished Blue

by William Heffernan. New York: Onyx, 1995. \$5.99

A few sections of *Tarnished Blue* made me feel like a bystander to a highway accident: I knew I should avert my eyes, but I couldn't help watching. This book is definitely not for the squeamish!

But in the world of NYPD special detective Paul Devlin, violence and horror are daily occurrences, and while the brutal murder of a police captain is a bit more rare, Devlin's background (highlighted in three earlier books by Heffernan) has prepared him for the vicious investigation that follows. The murdered captain's father is a senator, and both the senator and the police want to hide any evidence that the victim might have been gay. Devlin's investigation soon leads to an exclusive sex club, organized and run by some heavy duty power brokers who will do anything to protect their secrets.

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This book has all the ingredients for a successful potboiler—sex, violence, crime and a sympathetic hero fighting a corrupt system. The exciting pace never lets up and readers will be unlikely to stop reading until the gripping conclusion. Devlin and his team of investigators are a wild group; I hope Heffernan brings them back in his next book.

—Liz Currie

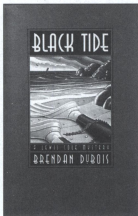
PRIVATE EYE

Black Tide

by Brendan DuBois. New York: Otto Penzler Books, 1995. \$22.00

As Lewis Cole sits on the porch of his New Hampshire home recovering from surgery and thinking about a recent oil spill, a headless, handless corpse washes ashore. Soon Cole finds himself embroiled in an unofficial investigation of the state's largest art theft and a whole lot of trouble with competing factions of the mob.

Black Tide is Brendan DuBois' second novel featuring Cole, a retired Defense Department intelligence officer now



working as a columnist for *Shoreline* magazine. His current job provides him with a steady income in return for his silence about the past. He lives, in his own words, the Great Lie, about both his past and his credentials as a reporter.

The plot has several strands, but centers on Cole's attempt to help Felix Tinois solve an old mystery. Felix, an old friend who stood by Cole when times were tough, has ambiguous ties

to the Boston mob. As Cole investigates the theft of three Winslow Homer paintings, he is drawn into a dangerous feud. Cole's past intelligence connections and his status as a member of the press help him follow the trail. Often violent, with its share of sudden deaths and mildly surprising twists, the plot keeps the reader's attention.

But the novel's strength lies in Cole's relationships with three supporting characters: Felix, of course, who commands the protagonist's loyalty as only a friend in need can; reporter Paula Quinn, Cole's former lover, who is put off by his secretiveness about both his recent medical problems and his past; and police officer Diane Woods. This last relationship provides the key metaphor. Just as Cole must hide his former life from everyone, including Paula, no matter how much it haunts him, Diane disguises her sexual preference, which could ruin her career as a small-town cop. They are both living the Great Lie. The friendship between Cole and Diane is genuine, convincing, and refreshingly free of both moral condemnation and politically correct celebration.

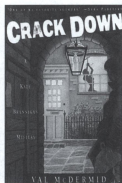
All the loose ends are finally tied up, although we could have hoped for just a touch more realistic foreboding about the still-threatening fate facing the troubled characters. The relationships certainly provide the basis for a third Lewis Cole novel.

—John Benson

Crack Down

by Val McDermid. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1994. \$20.00

Manchester private investigator Kate Brannigan and her absent-minded, somewhat hapless rock-music-journalist boyfriend, Richard Barclay, are working undercover to investigate fraud among a network of car dealerships. The case, however, turns to drug trafficking and child pornography when Richard is caught in one of the car dealership's automobiles—with a cache of drugs and some sordid photographs. The police are ready to throw the book at Richard, and it's up to Kate to find out what is really going on. Things are further complicated by the visit of Richard's eight-year-old son, who has



to be kept entertained while Richard is languishing in jail.

This is the third adventure for Kate Brannigan, who is also featured in *Dead Beat* and *Kick Back*. There's nothing extraordinary about the plot or characters, but Kate is likable enough, being very independent and full of wisecracks. The action generally moves along at a good enough pace to keep your interest. However, Richard is a bit too dense, albeit well meaning, and there are probably too many supporting characters, many of whom are indistinguishable from each other. There are also a lot of British terms and references which make reading a bit difficult. Consider, for example, sentences like: "The mug punters had no chance" and "I found a Chinese chippy." These things aside, this is pretty much an enjoyable experience.

McDermid is an award-winning journalist and lives in England.

—Lorie K. Inagaki

Cruel April

by Neil Albert. New York: Dutton, 1995. \$19.95

Dave Garrett, now in his fourth appearance, used to be an attorney. Disbarred, he's now a private eye whose investigation in this novel is the disappearance of his own fiancée, Kate.

As in most series, the author has to struggle with the problem of supplying relevant parts of the hero's past. Dave's is basically unhappy. Case in point: his missing fiancée is still married. That's the least of his problems. Though Dave has a lot of contacts among law enforcement personnel, they are often less than helpful this time out, and things deteriorate so badly that Dave becomes the chief

suspect in a couple of murders. Kate's husband had foolishly become involved with a major drug ring known to be utterly ruthless to anyone who seems to pose a threat. Dave's search puts him into that category.

The author seems intent upon making him into the ultimate punching bag. He gets pounded with a baseball bat, knifed, shot, kicked and generally abused over the space of several days—during which he has no sleep. Then he singlehandedly settles the hash of all the baddies and masterfully arranges a new life for Kate and gets himself out of the clutches of the cop who hates him.

It's a bit much, but the writing is good enough to excuse the excesses. Just accept that a concussed, broken-ribbed, exhausted and wounded guy can outwit, outrun and outfight all and sundry, and you'll enjoy this book immensely.

—Donald H. Buck

A Drink Before the War

by Dennis Lehane. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994. \$22.95

Senators Sterling Mulken and Brian Paulson—Boston political clout personified—are distressed by the nine-day absence of Jenna Angeline, a mid-

dle-aged, black cleaning lady and a trusted employee at the State House. When she disappeared, certain underdescribed, but sensitive, "documentation" concerning the important Street Terrorist Bill also disappeared. The senators want young, tough private investigator Patrick Kenzie to recover the documents.

Kenzie and partner Angie Gennaro discover that Jenna's apartment has been ransacked, but they have little difficulty tracking Jenna down. "Ain't no documents," Jenna says. "There are things." But the 'things' are not for sale. Jenna wants justice. And people are going to be in pain. She should know. Marion Socia, former small-time pimp, strongarmed his way to the top of the crack-dealing "Saints," now on the verge of all-out gang warfare with the archrival "Angel Avengers," led by sixteen-year-old Roland, son of Jenna and Socia.

Patrick Kenzie, the son of a Boston Fire Department hero, is fighting his own personal demons. He runs his P.I. business from the bell tower (the bell has been 'misplaced') of St. Bartholomew's Church in Dorchester, a traditional working-class neighborhood about five miles from the center of Boston. His '79 Volare 'company car' is a beast that blends in anywhere Kenzie takes it, but his royal blue 1959 Porsche Roadster is safely garaged in a more genteel neighborhood.

Partner Angie Gennaro, Kenzie's best friend, packs a .38 and can slim-jim a car lock as fast as a ghetto gangbanger. But she hasn't figured out a way to convince husband Phil to stop using her for a punching bag.

Kenzie and Gennaro are assisted by a motley cadre of friends and acquaintances, including: Richie Colgan—the *Trib's* top columnist and the nemesis of Senator Mulken—who hates elitists, bigots, and hypocrites; Detective Devin Amronklin, who never saw a donut he didn't like; and Bubba Rogowski, a 235-pound angry sociopath who'd put his life on the line for a buddy and can supply anything from an untraceable handgun to a missile.

A Drink Before the War is a fast-paced tale of mystery and violence and retribution that takes the reader

from the gritty back alleys of Boston, to the watering holes of the rich and famous, and to the hallowed halls of the State House. Kenzie and Gennaro, the Tracy and Hepburn of the private eye novel, are a sassy pair who can crack wise with the best of them, including that other Boston private eye, Spenser. Dennis Lehane's maiden effort is a winner.

—Ronald C. Miller

Grave Secrets

by Louise Hendrickson. New York: Zebra Books, 1994. \$3.99

After a promising debut work, *With Deadly Intent*, Louise Hendrickson has a dynamite second novel on her hands. *Grave Secrets* has all the ingredients of a successful mystery: suspense, action, plot development, interesting setting, appealing characters, and passion. Dr. Amy Prescott, a Seattle-based forensic investigator, journeys to an Idaho mining town, Rock Springs, to investigate the disappearance of her journalist friend Simon Kittredge.

Rock Springs is a mountain town down on its luck, but with hopes of a revived economy with the forthcoming construction of a ski resort. It is a town where power is concentrated in few hands and where many of its residents have skeletons in their closets. It is where Kittredge had gone to investigate a silver stock swindle perpetrated upon his father. If this sounds a little like the traditional western, it certainly has many of those same elements.

Prescott is thwarted at every turn by local police, mining officials, and others wary of strangers. She is warned off by the sheriff, threatened by the town's most powerful man, beaten and nearly raped by his two sons, attacked by killer guard dogs, and nearly drowned in quicksand. She eventually finds a few allies, the most important of whom, Nathan Blackstock, not only protects and works with her, but also is irresistibly drawn to her. The climactic scenes of the novel are exciting and satisfying.

Amy Prescott is a very appealing heroine that Hendrickson has developed well in her two books. She has all the right qualities as an investigator

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and as a woman. Blackthorne, an Indian agent whose investigations merge with Prescott's, could well be a cover hero on an historical romance novel. As likeable as he is, Blackthorne seems too good to be true—agent, linguist, fighter, philosopher and lover.

Grave Secrets, despite the stereotypical western elements and the too exceptional Blackthorne, is an exciting novel that should please most readers.

—Douglas G. Simpson



The Seventh Enemy

by William G. Tapply. New York: Otto Penzler Books, 1995. \$19.95

This is the thirteenth of Tapply's tales about Brady Coyne, a Boston lawyer who caters to wealthy clients. If you're unfamiliar with the series, however, don't look for courtroom hijinks and legal chicanery *a la* Grisham and Turow; Coyne functions more as a private detective or white knight than he does as a lawyer.

Coyne receives a call from a boyhood friend one night asking him to pick him up at the airport and put him up for the night. The friend is now a nationally-known television hunter and fisher, in town to testify at a hearing for gun control legislation designed to outlaw automatic weapons. He's been called in by a Second Amendment organization known as SAFE—Second Amendment For Ever. Brady is ambivalent about the subject, and he and his friend discuss it at some length. The friend's testimony the next day is not precisely what his sponsors had anticipated, and he and Brady both end up on that organization's regularly published "enemy" list. Though neither is terribly concerned about their new sta-

tus, the situation changes drastically in a few days when someone on the list is shot—probably with an automatic weapon.

I've been a reader and fan of the Coyne books since the series began back in 1984 with *Death at Charity's Point*. I've felt that the series has fallen off badly in the last few years, however, and was delighted to see Tapply return to somewhat of his old form. Even in the later and in my opinion lesser books he never lost his knack for easy, unforced narration, and he still hasn't. Coyne is a very likable and human protagonist, not overly macho and certainly no superman. Tapply has struck a nice balance over the years in how much he has chosen to make Coyne's personal life a part of the stories. This isn't a polemic either for or against gun control—though it isn't difficult to ascertain where Tapply's allegiance lies—and indeed the treatment of the issue is relatively superficial. This isn't a major book and didn't intend to be, but it is a very readable entry in a series I enjoy.

—Barry W. Gardner

The Sinners' League

by L.L. Enger. New York: Otto Penzler Books, 1994. \$21.00

Screenwriter Diane Apple, in town to do research for a script, was last seen with three men in a taxi. Then her body is found in a wooded Minneapolis park, apparently another victim of random violence. If Gun Pedersen had kept his promise to meet Diane, she would still be alive. He vows to find the animals who killed her, but first he must find the taxi and its missing driver, Albert Iron Sky.

Thirteen-year-old Doty, a.k.a. Laurie Fordrick, a child prostitute, befriended by Gun's wife, journalist Carol Long, while working on a story, has been invited into their home in hopes of reforming her. Within days, Doty's body is found in Stony Lake, where Gun normally finds tranquility and a few fish. He vows to investigate the rumors of a prostitution ring connected to the year-old Chippewa-owned Hawk Lake Casino that has brought money and crime into a region not used to either.

Personal tragedies, some of his own

making, seem to have plagued Gun Pedersen most of his life. He quit professional baseball in the middle of the season after the sudden death of his first wife Amanda and sought refuge in Northern Minnesota to escape from his past and find inner peace. But the seemingly bucolic town of Stony has more than its share of murder and mayhem. Now the amateur private investigator must try to find the answers behind a pair of deaths, one virtually at his back door, and the other down in the Cities. Wife Carol has been receiving threatening telephone calls and doesn't want Gun running off to the Rez or to the Cities, but he must go. And he must find a way to placate his suspicious bride of three months, who suspects that Gun's relationship with Diane Apple was something more than casual and platonic.

The Sinners' League has it all: engaging characters, a convoluted plot, a fast pace, surprises galore, and more than a few sinners. Be sure to read this one.

L.L. Enger, the pen name of brothers Lin and Leif Enger, has authored four other Gun Pedersen mysteries, including the Edgar-nominated *Comeback*.

—Ronald C. Miller

SHERLOCKIAN

Baker Street By-Ways

by James Edward Holroyd. New York: Otto Penzler Books, 1994. \$8.00

Christopher Morley once said, "Never has so much been written by so many for so few!" Morley was referring, of course, to the writings about The Writings—the Canon of Sherlock Holmes tales that include four novels and 56 short stories penned by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It all started in 1887 with the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, and the rest is history. Some of the best writings about Sherlock Holmes are included in James Edward Holroyd's classic *Baker Street By-Ways*, first published in England in 1959 and long out of print.

The fourteen essays in *Baker Street By-Ways* discuss the characters in the Sherlockian Canon (Holmes, Watson, brother Mycroft, Irene Adler, Inspector Lestrade, Colonel Sebastian Moran,

Mrs. Hudson, and others); explain the popularity of Sherlock Holmes; examine the artistic contributions of Sidney Paget, Frederic Dorr Steele, and other Sherlockian illustrators; identify the true location of 221B Baker Street; describe the furnishings of the famous rooms shared by Holmes and Watson; and much more.

James Edward Holroyd, an early and meticulous commentator on all things Sherlockian, was a chairman and founding member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and an honorary member of similar societies in the United States and around the world. Neophytes and aficionados alike will find much of interest in *Baker Street By-Ways*, a recent volume in Otto Penzler's welcome series of Sherlock Holmes books for those who want to read more of Sherlock Holmes and his mystical world where it is always 1895.

—Ronald C. Miller

Nevermore

by William Hjortsberg. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994. \$21.00

New York City, 1923, an exciting place and time to be alive. Prohibition is the law of the land; Vaudeville is dying; jazz and marathon dancing are in vogue; silent movies are gaining in



popularity; and gangsters, bathtub gin, and blind pigs are everywhere. Then it begins. A brutal double murder in a Hell's Kitchen tenement. A one-eyed cat sits atop a decomposing corpse. The body of a bottle blonde floats down the Hudson River. Grisly scenes from the pages of Edgar Allan Poe, the master of the macabre, are being recreated in living death on the streets of New York City. Not surprisingly, the police are baffled.

They were an odd couple in New York City—the British historical novelist who lectured and promoted Spiritualism and the former assistant necktie cutter who took great personal and professional pleasure in debunking mediums. The burly former boxer who enjoyed cricket

always appreciated hearing a kind word about *Brigadier Gerard* and the other historical novels that he considered his life's work, but most who met him seemed only to want more of those foolish Sherlock Holmes stories that he wrote from time to time. The short, surprisingly muscular Erich Weiss had worked twelve hours a day for two and a half years cutting necktie linings for H. Richter's Sons in New York City. Then he made his great escape, turning his passion for card sleights and other tricks into his new trade. As Harry Houdini, he mesmerized audiences around the world with his daring escapes and stunning illusions. Yet, surprisingly, this Mutt-and-Jeff pair had something in common—each had an almost fanatical desire to contact the spirit of his beloved, deceased mother. Now, each man feels irresistibly drawn to Opal Crosby Fletcher, a seductive high-society clairvoyant, and to the string of unusual murders in the city. Conan Doyle was tackled true crimes before, solving the Oscar Slater and George Edalji cases. And it appears that Houdini himself may be the murderer's next target.

William Hjortsberg's *Nevermore* synthesizes fact and fiction in a wonderful historical mystery replete with fascinating characters, including Damon Runyon and the ghost of Edgar Allan Poe, in addition to Houdini and Conan Doyle. Magic and mystery and a wildly inventive plot make *Nevermore* an unforgettable masterpiece.

—Ronald C. Miller

CROSSWORD SOLUTION FROM PG. 155

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THRILLER SUSPENSE

Black Cross

by Greg Iles. New York: Dutton, 1995. \$19.95

This long thriller was written by Greg Iles whose first novel, *Spandau Phoenix*, appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller list for several weeks. In a long flashback, the novel concentrates on World War II and specifically on a small Nazi concentration camp,

Camp Totenhause, near Rostock, in Mecklenberg, Germany, with 200 prisoners. In Camp Totenhause, two kinds of experiments are being carried out. One is designed to develop new and more powerful poison gases, and the other carries out certain medical experiments designed to improve treatment of common German diseases. This historical novel provides an intimate look at several (mostly unpleasant) aspects of Nazi Germany during World War II.

The two leading characters are Jonas Stern, a German-Israeli Jewish military leader whose commando skills are considerable, and Mark McConnell, an American physician and conscientious objector from Georgia who is a poison gas specialist. Several other characters also play major roles, such as Brigadier Duff Smith and Sergeant Ian McShane of the British military forces, and Major Wolfgang Schoerner and Sergeant Gunther Sturm of the German SS troops. Other characters worth noting are Avram Stern, a cobbler who is Jonas' father; Anna Kaas, a German civilian nurse; and Rachel Jansen, a beautiful Dutch Jewess with two small children. In addition, historical figures such as Winston Churchill, Dwight Eisenhower, and Heinrich Himmler appear in the book.

The plot is more complex than those of most thrillers. We are in February 1944 just before the invasion of France led by General Eisenhower. It is apparent that Germany is not yet winning the war though there is still time for her to do so. Will the Nazi armies take the initiative by using sophisticated poison gas? They have a large stock of such gas available, while Britain has only a limited supply.

In order to discourage Germany from using its poison gas on Allied troops Britain decides to send two commandos to Camp Totenhause to demonstrate the use of British poison gas on the camp occupants. Also they are asked to bring back to Britain samples of the new and improved German gases, Sarin 4 and Soman 4, and to photograph the gas manufacturing equipment being used there. The two commandos are Mark McConnell and Jonas Stern, and this book is their exciting story.

We see concentration camp horrors

of several kinds and squeamish readers will be put off by these passages. While many of the camp occupants die in the gas attack, a few of them survive and live in Britain, the USA or elsewhere. The novel is brought up to date with a brief recital of the later lives of the surviving characters.

The publisher's blurb claims that this novel "shatters the boundary between thriller and novel," or presumably between short and superficial fiction and longer and more significant fiction. The reviewer agrees with this generalization that the novel makes the reader feel that he/she has been through a significant, emotionally rending and bitterly educational experience about a fictional 1944 war incident in Germany. The work poses several life vs. death philosophical questions and discusses them in the heat of extreme wartime conditions. The book can be recommended for a disquieting weekend of involvement with an unpleasant but enlightening war episode.

—John F. Harvey

Double Jeopardy

by William Bernhardt. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995. \$21.95

From the title, and the fact that the author is a lawyer, plus his previous titles (*Primary Justice*, *Blind Justice*, *Deadly Justice*, and *Perfect Justice*), you'd expect this latest work to be largely played out in the courtroom. Indeed it starts out that way but quickly becomes a thriller with non-stop action far from the haunts of judge and jury.

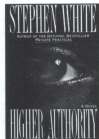
Travis Byrne, a former cop, is an attorney who ironically often finds himself defending criminal lowlifes. Still he is aghast when the judge makes him take the case of Al Moroconi, who is about as disgusting as possible and still qualify as *Homo sapien*. Moroconi has ties to the Mob, and Travis becomes a target of everybody who ever had a link with Moroconi. A whole assortment of crooks and corrupt cops seem to have a single purpose in life: rub out Travis Byrne.

He left police work when his fiancée was the accidental victim in a shoot-out for which Travis blames himself. The incident made him so loathe guns that

he now cannot bring himself to fire a weapon even when, as happens on virtually every page, his life is in peril.

Double Jeopardy involves an insecure Godfather, his feckless nephew, bad cops, a sociopathic sadist, car chases, high-tech surveillance, a rather charming romance, and the classic least-likely villain at the end. That's a pretty definitive list—something for everyone.

—Donald H. Buck



Higher Authority

by Stephen White. New York: Viking, 1994. \$22.95

Higher Authority is a riveting story with an exciting plot, interesting characters, great locale, and most important of all—at least to this reader—a fascinating look at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Moving away from Alan Gregory, the character featured in his two previous bestsellers, *Privileged Information* and *Private Practices*, White here focuses on Alan's fiancée, attorney Lauren Crowder. Lauren comes to the aid of her sister, Teresa, who decides to file sexual harassment charges against a former female boss who is now chief law clerk to the newest—and first Mormon—justice on the Supreme Court. Before Teresa's case goes very far, however, the woman she is accusing is brutally murdered and the stakes quickly rise for Teresa and the people supporting her case. Another murder follows, and Lauren and her old law-school buddy, Robin Torr (who has agreed to represent Teresa), soon realize that the Mormon Church is a formidable adversary whose members will go to any lengths to protect those in its family.

White does a wonderful job of portraying life in Utah for both Mormons and non-Mormons, a difficult task for any author. He skillfully weaves a complex plot from what first appears to be a

simple, straightforward idea, and (for fans of his previous novels) brings in Alan Gregory and his friend, detective Sam Purdy, to help solve the mystery.

White becomes a better writer with each book, and *Higher Authority* moves him into a brand-new league. And while Mormon readers might take exception to his descriptions of the LDS Church, other readers will no doubt share my fascination at White's peering behind the nearly-impenetrable wall separating Mormons from non-Mormons.

—Liz Currie

There Was a Little Girl

by Ed McBain. New York: Warner Books, 1994. \$21.95

The first bullet hit Matthew Hope in the left shoulder. The second one hit him in the chest. Then, everything went black.

Florida lawyer Matthew Hope now lies helpless in a postsurgical semicomma with a severely ruptured major blood vessel and potential brain damage. Switching the focus of his practice from criminal law to real estate law was supposed to bring a calming influence to his life. But now this. None of Hope's friends and colleagues can understand who would want him dead. Neither can

Patricia Demming, the assistant state's attorney who is the current love of his life, nor ex-wife Susan, for whom Hope still has great feelings.

Black P.I. Warren Chambers, voluptuous private eye Toots Kiley, and Detective Morris Bloom of the Calusa P.D. band together to track down the assassin. They try to reconstruct Hope's actions during the 24 hours preceding the shooting—looking for clues outside the rundown bar in the black Newtown section of Calusa where the shooting took place; checking Hope's schedule to find out where he went, who he saw, and who he talked to; and digging into the facts surrounding Hope's current real estate deal.

The investigators find themselves in the midst of a circus—the Steadman & Roeger Circus, to be precise—where co-owners George Steadman and Maria Torrence are at odds over the pending \$3 million real estate deal. On the other side of the transaction are a pair of feuding millionaires in love with the same woman, who once worked for the circus. Wild-animal trainers, high-wire artists, and the three-year-old burglary and suicide of a three-foot-tall circus star provide the investigators with insights into the inner workings and daily life of a modern-day traveling circus. It can be a deadly business.

There Was a Little Girl is the eleventh Matthew Hope novel from Ed McBain, best known for his monumental 87th Precinct novels. The reigning Grand Master of the police procedural shows another facet of his many talents in delineating the drama of the courtroom in his Matthew Hope books. But don't expect any courtroom scenes in *There Was a Little Girl*. Fighting for his life in the hospital, this is a Matthew Hope novel without Matthew Hope. Deception and dark secrets, together with a cliffhanger ending, make *There Was a Little Girl* a real page-turner.

—Ronald C. Miller

With an Extreme Burning

by Bill Pronzini. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1994. \$19.95

Bill Pronzini has published more than 40 novels, 21 of them in his "Nameless Detective" series. He's also an anthologist, editor, and writer about crime

fiction of note, and to my mind one of the most versatile and under-appreciated of modern crime writers. He has won two Shamus Awards from the Private Eye Writers of America, and been the recipient of their Lifetime Achievement Award.

You'd think that things were just about as bad as they could get, wouldn't you, if you were 41 years old and had just lost your wife of 17 years in a fiery automobile crash? You'd be wrong, though, if you were Dixon Mallory, bereaved widower and small-college professor in a quiet Northern California town. You'd start to realize this when an anonymous caller who had breathed into your phone on several previous calls broke his silence with the assertion that your dead wife had been having a love affair—with him. It would be further driven home to you as further calls and incidents made the accusation all too credible, and one of your close friends also began to be harassed by the same caller. And neither of you knows why, let alone by whom. You'd begin to suspect that your wife's death wasn't an accident after all, but murder; and that your tormentor (and her killer?) knew too much to be anyone but a member of the circle of you and your wife's very closest friends. And now, as you scuffle around in the debris of your own and your dead wife's past looking for answers, you finally start to understand just how bad things can get.

I'm usually not a huge fan of "novels of psychological suspense," but that's what this is, and a damned good one. Pronzini can always be depended upon for smooth, readable prose, whatever the kind of book he chooses to write, and this is no exception. He's also done a fine job of depicting ordinary people trying to cope with a threatening situation they don't understand, and the inevitable paranoia that accompanies it. These are human beings as you and I, and they react in ways not always rational or admirable, but all too understandable. It's not a happy book, and there aren't too many characters in it you'd want to take home to dinner, but it's one you can sink into and believe. Pronzini continues to do what he does just about as well as anyone, and better than most.

—Barry W. Gardner

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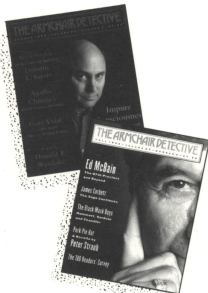
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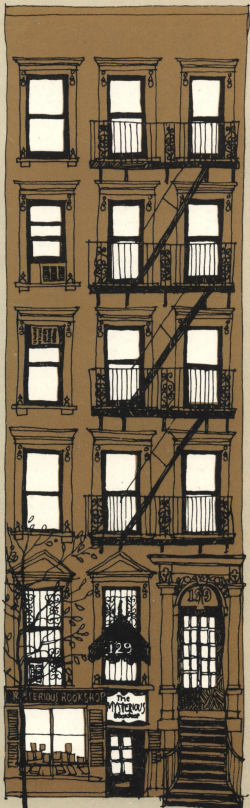


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