THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE®

SUMMER 1993 • VOLUME 26 • NUMBER 3 • $7.50

Ruth Rendell

GREAT EXPECTATIONS GENEROUSLY FULFILLED

Robert Penn Warren

CREATOR OF THE FORGOTTEN TOUGH GUY NOVEL

Murder Most Cozy

An Interview with Charlotte MacLeod
author of the Peter Shandy, Sarah Kelling, and Grub-and-Stakers Mysteries

FICTION BY: PACO TAIBO & SARA PARETSKY

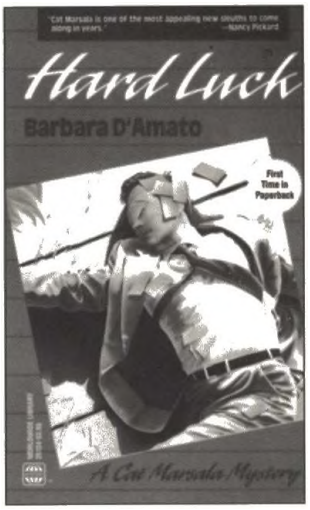
IF YOU LONG TO KEEP SOME TRULY BAD COMPANY, LET WORLDWIDE MYSTERY INTRODUCE YOU TO SOME WICKEDLY CRIMINAL CHARACTERS. . . .

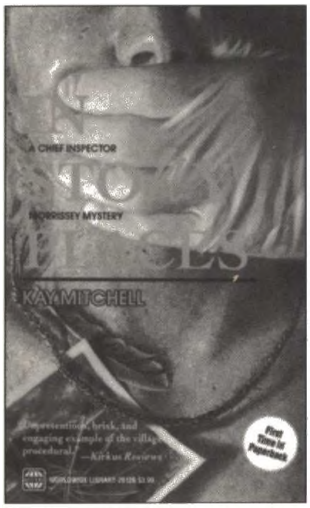
July 1993
HARD LUCK by Barbara D'Amato

When a state lottery official commits suicide just before spilling the beans, journalist Cat Marsala smells a rat. She knows she's onto a fantastic story — but so does a high-stakes killer in the numbers game who can't afford to let her spoil the odds....

"D'Amato introduces a welcome addition to the ranks of first-person female sleuths."
— *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*

"D'Amato appears to be just hitting her stride—a vigorous, stylish stride that's attracting widespread...admiration."
— *The Drood Review of Mystery*





August 1993
IN STONY PLACES by Kay Mitchell

In quiet Malminster, bad things don't happen to nice girls. Then the corpses of three young women are found. Chief Inspector Morrissey's only lead is one victim's diary—and a panic fueled by the killer's threat to stalk Morrissey's own lovely daughter....

"Solidly plotted and thoroughly entertaining.... A sure thing."
— *Booklist*

"Unpretentious...an engaging example of the village procedural."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

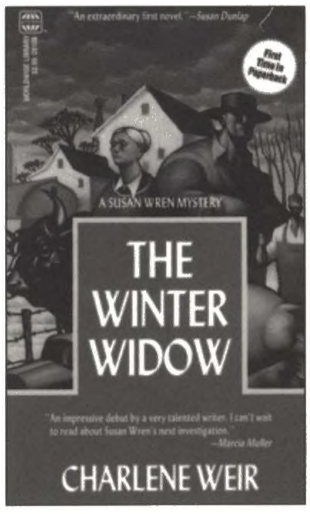
Not available in Canada.

September 1993
THE WINTER WIDOW by Charlene Weir

The only thing that could get city cop Susan Donovan to rural Kansas was Daniel Wren; his murder was the only thing keeping her there. Local hostility toward a female police chief was hard to take — but it sure beat becoming the killer's next victim....

"This first novel bursts with non-stop action and harrowing suspense."
— *Publishers Weekly*

"The woman-cop-as-hero theme is given an interesting twist..."
— *Chicago Tribune*



WORLDWIDE MYSTERY NOVELS—CRIMES WORTH INVESTIGATING.

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE®

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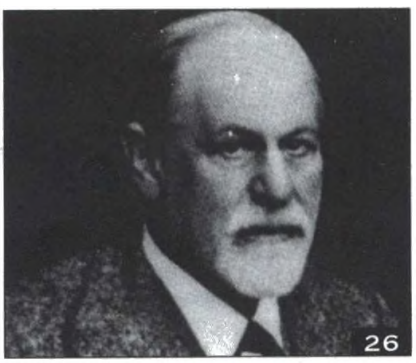

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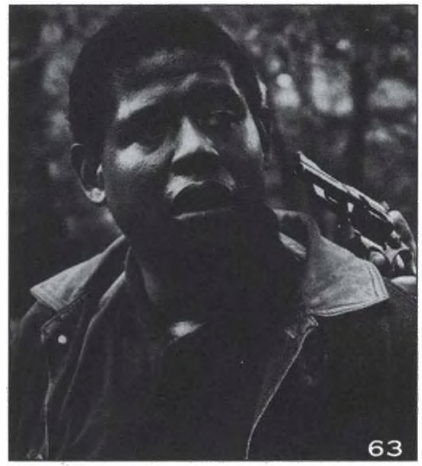

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Subscriptions to **The Armchair Detective:** $26.00/year in the U.S., $30.00 elsewhere. Subscriptions and all correspondence should be sent to TAD, 129 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019.Tel. (212) 765-0902 Fax:(212)265-5478.

Second class postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to: **THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE, 129 WEST 56TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10019.**

The Armchair Detective, Vol. 26, No.3 Summer 1993. Published quarterly by the Armchair Detective, Inc.
Printed in U.S.A.

ISSN: 004-217Z
ISBN: 1-56287-031-9

Uneasy Chair

Of making of many books there is no end.

—Ecclesiastes 12:12

Far be it from the American Booksellers Association to contradict an all time bestseller. The recent ABA Convention in Miami featured a stunning array of new titles from literally hundreds of publishers. And, of course, there were many offerings of particular interest to TAD readers.

Technically, since I was there as an exhibitor, I wasn't entitled to the many books piled up in tempting displays. But hey, I don't read all this crime fiction for nothing. Some of the upcoming titles I can now personally recommend include: *After All These Years* by Susan Isaacs, *Stripper* by Carl Hiaasen, *The Mexican Tree Duck* by James Crumley, *Wireless* by Jack O'Connell and *Maestro* by John Gardner.

While sidling up to yet another stack of books, I came across Jim Huang, owner of Deadly Passions bookstore in Kalamazoo and publisher of *The Drood Review*. Jim conducted a mystery roundtable discussion at the convention. He is also helping to organize the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association. By banding together this group hopes to be able to exchange bookselling expertise, promote themselves and exert more clout with publishers. There will be a general meeting at the Bouchercon Convention in Omaha this fall. For now, membership is restricted to independent booksellers with a significant interest in mystery. For more information, please contact:

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Scottsdale, AZ 85251
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Small independent booksellers are the backbone of the mystery field. Their knowledgeable advice and enthusiasm can make all the difference in launching an author's career and their extensive inventories are a requirement of any true mystery fan. Hopefully, this new organization will prosper to everyone's benefit.

In this issue we have an interview with the charming Charlotte MacLeod. In a departure from her cozy mysteries, Charlotte has been working on a biography of Mary Roberts Rinehart, the inventor of the "Had I But Known" school of mystery writing.

Robert Penn Warren's superb novel, *All The King's Men*, won a Pulitzer Prize. What it didn't win was general recognition as a classic tough guy novel—although, as Charles Chappell points out, Warren was heavily influenced by his hardboiled contemporaries.

Ruth Rendell, Barbara Vine. Under either name this gifted novelist has won a large and appreciative audience with her beautifully written novels. Jane Bakerman offers an appreciation of this prolific and critically esteemed writer.

Britain and the U.S. have been described as two countries separated by a common language. Jann Turner-Lord offers a guide to limey lingo for puzzled Yanks.

This issue also includes short stories by Sara Paretsky and Paco Taibo, an examination of the work of Maurice Procter, the original police procedural writer, and much more. Enjoy! ■

Kate Stine
Editor-in-Chief

Letters

Pseudonymous Success

Dear TAD:

I enjoyed the Barbara Mertz interview by T. Liam McDonald. However, while Mr. McDonald correctly asserts that it is difficult to create a successful pseudonym, he is mistaken when he lists me among writers who tried and failed to do it. (I also doubt that Gore Vidal stopped writing Edgar Box mysteries because they failed to catch on; I suspect he simply lost interest.)

My five "Leigh Nichols" books had a total of 3,200,000 in print in the U.S., and Leigh was receiving six-figure advances and earning them out when I terminated her with prejudice. (For those of you with an interest in technical details: I used a Korth .38, four rounds, at close range.) "Owen West's" debut, *The Funhouse*, was a *New York Times* best-seller, and his first two books had 1,750,000 in print when I whacked him. (Micro Uzi, welded double magazine, forty-round capacity, while he was meditating in his sculpture garden at the foot of a cast-bronze likeness of Pia Zadora.) "Richard Paige" wrote only one book for NAL, but it quickly went through five printings; he was showing real promise. (Ice pick.)

These three were eliminated not because they failed but because books under my own name sold so much better than theirs that it made no sense to let them live. Economics is a cruel judge, jury and executioner. For instance: the first Nichols to be republished under my byline, *The Servants of Twilight*, spend six weeks at number one on the *Times* list and went through 2,500,000 copies in the first year. I have since been looting the estates of all these writers, and the law can't touch me.

Dean Koontz
Newport Beach, CA

. . . . . .

"Oh, Just One More Thing..."

Dear TAD:

Thanks for David Martindale's delightful, informative piece on the Columbo TV series in TAD 26:1. I agree with

Martindale that much of the fun of the series results from its unusual inverted storyline, but it's interesting to note that two Columbo programs departed from the standard pattern. "Last Salute to the Commodore," first telecast in 1976, is a whodunit, and "No Time to Die" (1992) is a police procedural based on a story by Ed McBain. Of the two, the whodunit is the more successful experiment. It tricks the audience by beginning as would a typical inverted story–just what the viewers expect–and then developing into a conventional mystery. The police procedural, however, is little more than a routine cop show, and I doubt the producers of Columbo will use this approach again.

I'm sure future Columbo programs will continue to conform to the inverted pattern. No sense fooling with success.

JOHN APOSTOLOU
Los Angeles, CA

PBS—US; BBC—UK

Dear TAD:

Since Ric Meyers was in France when he chided PBS for the lousy job on its Mystery series (TAD 26:2), he should instead have hopped across the channel and taken his complaint to BBC; PBS merely buys the programs from the BBC and thus has no control over the content and casting.

DON SANDSTROM
Indianapolis, IN

Any Time!

Dear TAD:

I thought I would write and offer belated congratulations and compliments upon TAD's new look, both of which are well merited. It's also nice to see a few letters, and an editorial attitude that seems to encourage them. Though I recognize that the magazine's aims and audience have shifted over the years, I for one have mourned more than a little the apparent loss of reader and "fan" involvement.

To me, the strength of the magazine lies in its columnists. While the articles and interviews may or may not be of interest to me in a given issue, people like Lachman, Breen, Hubin and DeAndrea (sic 'em, Bill) never fail to engage me. Having said that, I thought the piece on David Goodis was outstanding–and I don't even like his books.

I do wish you well, and think you're doing an outstanding job.

BARRY W. GARDNER
New York, NY

How in the World, Bill?

Dear TAD:

Though my friend Bill DeAndrea and I will rarely be in accord on political issues, I found much to agree with in his remarks about censorship. But one of his points he'll have to explain. I understand that his reference to "telling people that their tax dollars must be used to support 'artists' whose ideas and talents are rejected in the marketplace, regardless of the taxpayer's protest" is a volley in opposition to government subsidy of the arts, a question well worth arguing. (I'd be inclined to argue the other side.) But how in the world can Bill advance this as an example of censorship? Whether you agree with their choices or not, the activities of the National Endowment for the Arts involve encouragement and dissemination, not suppression, of artistic expression.

In his valuable *Collecting Mystery Fiction* article on Ross Macdonald, Otto Penzler gives Mickey Spillane too much credit and Carroll John Daly too little. Far from having "no influence on subsequent generations of writers," Daly was possibly the strongest influence on the creator of Mike Hammer, one Spillane himself has acknowledged.

JON L. BREEN
Fountain Valley, CA

Further Perry Mason Travel Notes

Dear TAD,

After writing my article "Travelling with Perry Mason" for the Winter 1993 issue, I heard of and later visited the Erle Stanley Gardner (ESG) Archives in the University of Texas, at Austin. There the scholar and serious mystery buff can inspect loads of material, photographs, letters—many devoted to *The Court of Last Resort* (CLR). I had time for a cursory look only at letters relating to the CLR, and then only to cases I was involved with. The librarian is most helpful, she will xerox material for you and take you into the 'walk-in' Exhibit—a glass enclosed facsimile of ESG's Study, complete with the authentic huge desk, the leather armchairs and the two monstrous dictating machines that I remember *in situ* at his ranch, "The Fiction Factory," in Temecula, California. (For me it was an eerie feeling taking this step backwards in time—some 45 years.) The walls outside the Study are completely covered with plaques, awards, photographs—all testifying to the phenomenal success of this great American mystery writer. (I believe his sales still top those of Christie.)

The librarian was glad to have my article from TAD, because though they have literally tons of material relating to ESG's professional work, they possess little in the way of personal memoirs.

Those TAD readers who live in or near Austin (we drove from Houston) may enjoy visiting these ESG Archives. They are located on the NE Corner of Guadalupe and 21st Street. Hours are Mon.—Fri., 9am—5pm, Sat., 9am—12 noon. Take the elevator to the Fifth Floor Reading Room (Rare Books and Manuscripts). The receptionist will ask for an ID card with photo.

DORIS M. STONE
New York, N.Y

Where to Find MWA

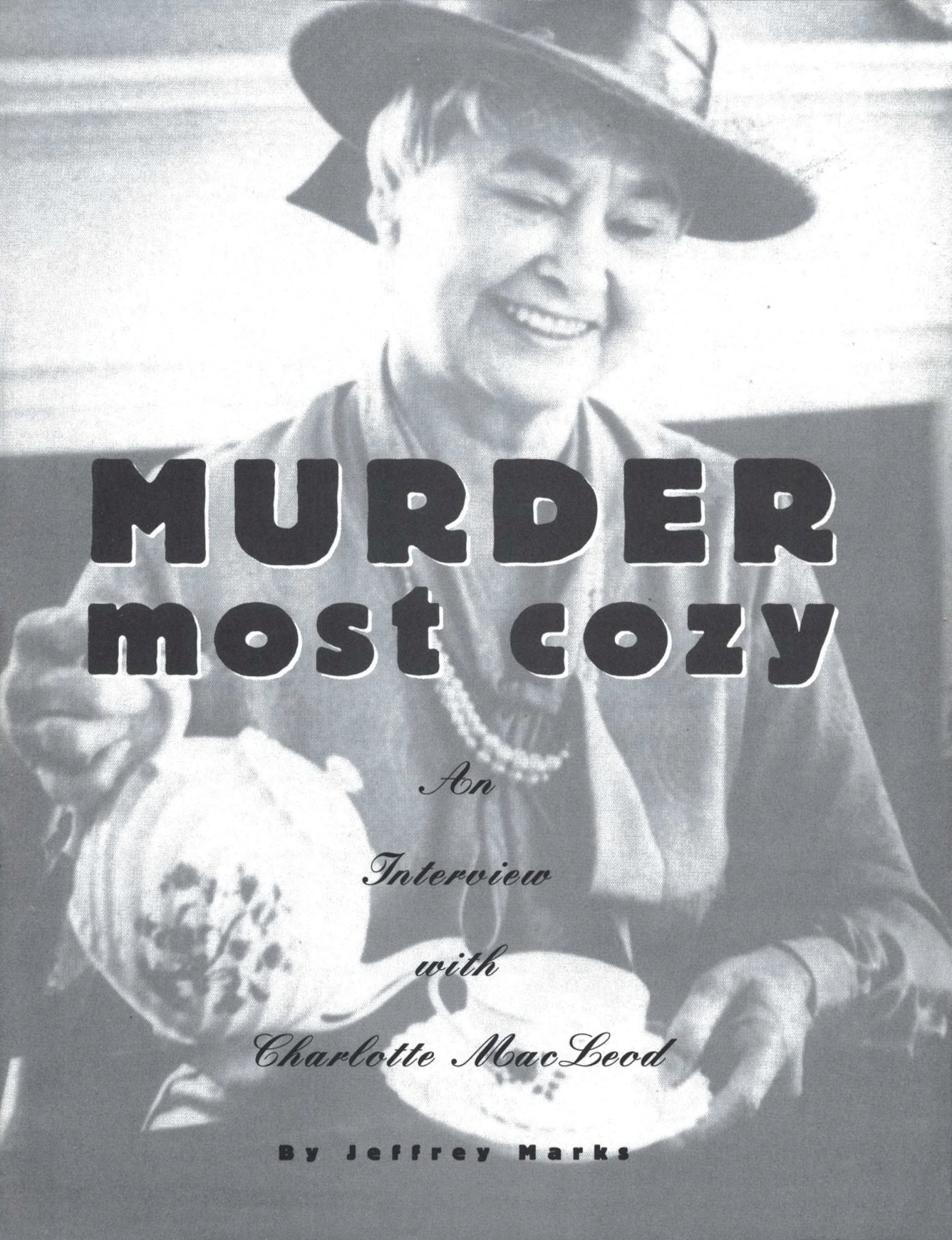
Dear TAD:

I enjoyed the Spring 1993 article: *Mystery Writers of America, Inc., An Abbreviated History*. The article indicated that Active, Associate, and Affiliate memberships were available.

As a reader and fan of mysteries, I would like to join the Mystery Writers of America as an Affiliate Member. I did not find any current address for the organization in the article. Where and how can one apply for membership to this organization?

DEAN R. GRAHAM
Canton, OH

For further information contact:
Priscilla Ridgway
Mystery Writers of America
17 E. 47th St., 6th Floor
New York, NY 10017



MURDER most cozy

An Interview with Charlotte MacLeod

By Jeffrey Marks

Charlotte MacLeod,

recipient of the 1992 Bouchercon Lifetime Achievement award, is now writing about someone else's lifetime of achievements. Her biography of Mary Roberts Rinehart, *Had We But Known*, is due from Mysterious Press in the spring of 1994. Interested to find out why a writer of so many mysteries would suddenly jump to another genre, I asked her about this when we met in Toronto.

Suddenly, I soon found out, was not the operative word. Charlotte had been wanting to do a biography for some time, and had settled on Mary Roberts Rinehart while other mystery lovers in the U.S. were celebrating Agatha Christie's Centennial. She was irked that they seemed to have forgotten the American woman who in 1904, when Dame Agatha was a teenager, had given the mystery novel a light new twist with *The Circular Staircase*, which is still in print. Rinehart became an instant best-seller, went on to become the highest-paid writer and playwright in America and an international celebrity honored for her wide-ranging achievements, most of which few people know anything about.

TAD: Why has it taken you so long to write this book?

MACLEOD: Partly because I already had contractual obligations that took priority. I'd had an anthology, *Christmas Stalkings*, to assemble for publication in October, 1991. Alisa Craig's *The Wrong Rite* came out in January and *The Resurrection Man* in April, 1992. *The Grub–and–Stakers House a Haunt*, another Craig novel, is finished and scheduled for release in May of 1993. Since I've regarded the biography as pure self-indulgence and editor Sara Ann Freed of Mysterious Press was able to let me set my own pace, I worked on it in whatever spare time presented itself until I hit a clear stretch and was able to put it together.

TAD: How had you heard of Mary Roberts Rinehart and some of her contributions to the mystery genre? I've noticed that many people have no knowledge of the history of mystery.

MACLEOD: Because I've been around longer, I expect. I can remember sitting on the floor at the branch library in North Weymouth, Massachusetts, where I grew up, reading Mary's autobiography, *My Story*, in 1936 when I was still too young to take out adult books. She also wrote for that wonderful old weekly magazine, the *Saturday Evening Post*, to which my parents subscribed. I always looked for her TISH stories, which I found riotously funny. You might say that I grew up with her books to a certain point. In

Jeffrey Marks, of Cincinnati, Ohio, is working on a mystery novel and a full-length biography of Craig Rice.

fact, I was asked to write an introduction to a special edition for *The Circular Staircase* by Carroll & Graf.

TAD: Do you think her stories influenced you?

MACLEOD: I shouldn't be surprised. A pathfinder like her must have influenced many writers, both male and female, whether we realized it or not. We who are working today should never forget that mystery writers now dominate the fiction field not only because there are so many good ones around but also because we stand on a strong platform built by those who came before us. I wanted to do something to remind people of this very interesting and important person in our literary history.

TAD: Now that you've done both, how does fiction compare to writing a biography? In one, you are making up somebody's life; in the other, you have a real life to record.

MACLEOD: That is a very interesting question. Writing the biography was in many ways a vacation, because I didn't have to think up a plot. However, when you've had it all your own way for a long time, making up your facts as you went along and manipulating your characters as you please, it can become a bit irksome having to stick to the recorded facts. I hired a researcher to help me gather material relating to the Rineharts and managed to obtain just about all her published books, along with a few magazine articles. She was amazingly prolific, it's awesome to realize that after a couple of unsuccessful bouts with a Blickendorfer typewriter, she wrote every word by hand. The information I acquired was fascinating and there was a good deal of satisfaction to setting it out in what I sincerely hope is a coherent and readable form, but I don't think I'll be starting another biography any time soon. I found myself feeling that I really wanted to get back to my own work.

TAD: You're going to be starting a new Peter Shandy now. Will it be hard to go back to fiction?

MARY ROBERTS RINEHART (1876-1958) INVENTOR OF THE "HAD I BUT KNOWN" SCHOOL OF MYSTERY FICTION. IN ADDITION TO BEING A HUGELY SUCCESSFUL WRITER AND PLAYWRIGHT, RINEHART LED AN ADVENTUROUS LIFE (INCLUDING STINTS AS A NURSE, WAR CORRESPONDENT, AND INTREPID TRAVELER). CHARLOTTE MACLEOD'S *HAD WE BUT KNOWN: A BIOGRAPHY OF MARY ROBERTS RINEHART* WILL BE PUBLISHED IN 1994.

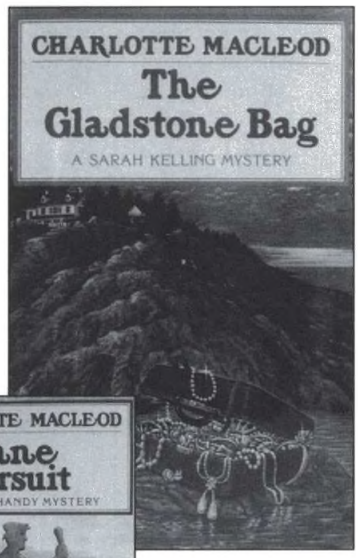
MACLEOD: Not at all. Peter and I are old buddies. In fact, it was Peter who got me started writing adult mysteries. I'd been doing young adult and wanting to make the transition to adults, but just couldn't seem to produce anything that worked. Finally, it occurred to me that what I was doing was writing what I thought the readers would want. So I decided the hell with it, I'd just do what I wanted, then there will be one satisfied customer.

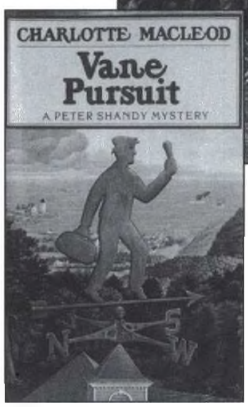
Some years previously, when I was doing some short pieces for *Yankee Magazine*, I'd done a little story about a college professor who'd tried to sabotage the college's Grand Illumination. It had been returned to me with the speed of light and I'd forgotten about it until suddenly it clicked that here was the plot I'd been waiting for. So, I wrote *Rest You Merry*, laughing all the way. It sold immediately and got excellent reviews and that was that. I'd

PHOTO: UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH LIBRARIES

found my voice and made a friend.

So much to my surprise and pleasure, I've learned that a great many people like what I write as long as I ignore the pundits and do it my way. One person I asked to do a critical reading of the biography said that it is about one-third Mary Roberts Rinehart and two-thirds Charlotte MacLeod. Once you've discovered who you are and how to use that knowledge in the way that works for you, then it seems that the mechanics take care of themselves.





TAD:: Speaking of mechanics, you have a wonderful vocabulary.

MACLEOD: Thank you. I love words, just for their own sake. Once when a violinist from the Boston Symphony Orchestra was visiting me and we were listening to music, he put out his hand, smiled rather apologetically, and said, "You can feel the notes." Well, you can, I don't know if anybody else goes around fondling words, but they're pleasant company when you get to know them. Anyway, anybody who's always been as avid a reader as I am and is interested in languages can't help acquiring an extensive vocabulary. I can even get sentimental about punctuation.

TAD: I had read that you started out as commercial art. How did you make the transition to writing?

MACLEOD: Actually, it was writing to art. I think I was seven or eight when I decided I was going to be an author. I found out very early that writing was fun–for me, anyway. Writing is something like breathing as far as I'm concerned. By the time I was ten, I'd read enough juvenile mysteries to know that these were what I wanted to write. In fact, I had my first mystery short story printed in a local newspaper and got a dollar for it, so I've considered myself a pro for quite a while now.

By the time I finished high school, I though I knew all I had to about writing, but had not yet addressed the problem of how to illustrate my books, so I used a scholarship to enroll in a Boston art school. This was during World War II when all of the men were joining the service and most of the women were working at defense jobs. Desperate for help, the art director of a large Boston-based grocery chain called his old school asking for any student willing to work as a staff artist. I didn't even know what a staff artist was, but they hired me anyway. I worked my nine-to-five then took night courses in the hope of finding out what the heck I had been doing all day.

"I don't know if anyone else goes around fondling words, but they're pleasant company when you get to know them."

Of course it was impossible to keep from writing. I began doing copy for the grocery ads and was also writing and illustrating store mail and bulletins on everything from how to spot a shoplifter to how to sell more kumquats. I developed my own cartoon style and a knack for perking up the ads with humorous rhymes. As time went on, I found myself writing speeches for executives to deliver at sales meetings, articles for trade magazines, and annual reports...anything that came up.

Then I went to work for an advertising agency as copy chief and learned that writing paid far better than art, at least for someone who wrote a lot better than she could draw. Gradually it occurred to me that I wasn't doing what I'd always meant to do and time was getting on, so I started messing around with short pieces and juvenile mystery. I collected a number of rejection slips, finally sold a few things, and gradually eased myself out of a steady job. I did illustrate one book and a few more short things, but now it's just for fun.

TAD: Since you have been talking about your early experiences, do you have any advice for new writers?

MACLEOD: I suppose it's whistling in the dark, but I do think that anybody who wants to write should first learn to spell, to use a dictionary, to form coherent sentences, and to punctuate properly. When I went to school, these things were taught as a matter of course, but judging from some of the stuff that gets published nowadays, this no longer seems to be the case. Since nobody can be expected to know what he's never been taught, it becomes even more important for an aspiring writer to teach himself by reading extensively among the more literate authors. All the writers whom I personally know and respect are voracious readers.

Robert Louis Stevenson described himself as having "played the sedulous ape," teaching himself to write by copying the styles of authors whom he admired, until he'd found his own voice and was able to discard his literary crutches. Apery is all very well for beginners, the important thing is to know when to chuck your role models and go it alone.

Mary Roberts Rinehart once wrote a little book called *Writing is Work*, and how right she was! She explained how

much harder it is to write the mystery stories that have until recently been scoffed at as mere entertainment than it is to write a straight novel in which the narrative just flows and the story evolves, or doesn't, with no fuss and bother about plots and subplots and having to untangle the knots and tie up all the loose ends. Humor in the mystery, which looks the easiest, is in fact the most difficult thing to bring off. Which is what makes it so much fun to write.

TAD: With several different protagonists, do you have a favorite?

MACLEOD: I love them all. That's like asking a mother which of her children is her favorite.

TAD: Using the same analogy, the mother sometimes sees a piece of herself in her children. Does that hold true with you and your characters?

MACLEOD: Well, I suppose it must. One can't help injecting a little bit of oneself into whatever comes out of one's head. I take them as they are, I don't want to reform them or make them nice if they're born rotten. So I guess I'm all these people. Sometimes I wonder where they've been keeping themselves, to have achieved a particular reality with so little help from me.

TAD: I think it's very obvious from your writing that you know these people quite well and you make the readers care as much as you do.

MACLEOD: Sometimes readers can care for them a little bit too much for my comfort. People will come rushing up to you and say "You must have known my Uncle George, who attended such and such agricultural college, he's just the image of Professor Stott." Naturally, I never knew Uncle George, I've never been inside an agricultural college, which gives me great scope to run Balaclava the way I want to.

Then there are the Bittersohns. Back when Sarah and Max were still courting, I happened to be buying apples at an orchard when a woman whom I then knew only slightly came along, very perturbed, and said without preamble, "I don't see how he's going to fit into her way of life!"

Once I sorted out what she was talking about, I replied, "Well, you know, she's been having a pretty rough time with all of these rotten relatives of hers, maybe she'd like to live in his world for a change!"

"Oh," the woman said, "Why, yes, I hadn't thought of that!"

Another reader was less easy to place. In the seventh book of the Kelling series, Sarah had a baby. By the ninth, I decided it was time for a change so I wrote *The Gladstone Bag*, in which Sarah's Aunt Emma is the protagonist. This prompted a letter from a fan, or maybe an ex-fan. She had a little boy just the same age of Sarah's Davy. She'd been eagerly awaiting a book in which Sarah Kelling would give her some tips on how to raise this kid of hers. So she'd squandered $17.50 on the hardcover edition and been cruelly disappointed by the absence of the information she'd craved. Had she but known, she would have waited and bought the paperback instead.

So, you can't please everybody all the time.

TAD: *The Resurrection Man* is your ninth Kelling novel. Do your ever get tired of using the same characters over and over?

MACLEOD: I thought of that

A Charlotte MacLeod Book List

The Sarah Kelling Mysteries
The Family Vault (1979)
The Withdrawing Room (1980)
The Palace Guard (1981)
The Bilbao Looking Glass (1983)
The Convivial Codfish (1984)
The Plain Old Man (1985)
The Recycled Citizen (1987)
The Silver Ghost (1987)
The Gladstone Bag (1989)
The Resurrection Man (1992)

The Peter Shandy Mysteries
Rest You Merry (1978)
The Luck Runs Out (1979)
Wrack and Rune (1982)
Something the Cat Dragged In (1983)
The Curse of the Giant Hogweed (1985)
The Corpse in Oozak's Pond (1986)
Vane Pursuit (1989)
An Owl Too Many (1991)

NOVELS WRITTEN AS ALISA CRAIG
The Grub-and-Stakers Mysteries
The Grub-and-Stakers Move a Mountain (1981)
The Grub-and-Stakers Quilt a Bee (1985)
The Grub-and-Stakers Pinch a Poke (1988)
The Grub-and-Stakers Spin a Yarn (1990)
The Grub-and-Stakers House a Haunt (1993)

The Madoc Rhys Mysteries
A Pint of Murder (1980)
Murder Goes Mumming (1981)
The Terrible Tide (1983)
A Dismal Thing to Do (1986)
Trouble in the Brasses (1989)

Editor
Mistletoe Mysteries (1989)
Christmas Stalkings (1991)

Short Stories
Grab Bag (1987)

FORTHCOMING:
Had We But Known: A Biography of Mary Roberts Rinehart

when I began to get serious about writing adult fiction. I've always preferred writing series because I get so involved with my characters, but I knew that I would get terribly bored with it if I had to write the same one over and over. That's the reason I started writing first two different series, following *Rest Your Merry* with *The Family Vault*, and later opened a Canadian branch as Alisa Craig, adding Madoc Rhys and an entire garden club. I usually do them in sequence so I don't get back to the starting set for two to three years, by which time I'm delighted to see them again. It's like having your grandchildren come to stay, I guess. You enjoy them and then they go away and that's the nice part.

TAD: I don't think this interview would be complete without asking where you get the names for your characters.

MACLEOD: It started with cowardice and became a game. In the beginning, I was so skittish about using names of real people who might want to sue me that I started making them up, or borrowing them from earlier fictional characters. I expect some readers other than myself must have got a small chuckle out of my naming Balaclava's police chief after that gruesome little classic, *The Hands of Mr. Ottermole*. I spend a good deal of time sorting out names that sound right for the character who will inherit them. Sometimes I've written a whole book before I come to realize that the man I've named Theophilus is really an Adolphus. So, I have to go back and change the whole thing. As to why it's important to me, I suppose it goes back to my love of words for their own sake. On the other hand, Daddy had an Aunt Ermina and my mother an Aunt Minerva, his mother's name was Matilda Leonora, my mother's name was Maybelle Maud, and I myself am Charlotte Matilda. I guess there weren't that many Johns and Marys, so maybe I just can't help it. ■

BASK IN THE SUN WITH A BLACK LIZARD THIS SUMMER

"As Roy Dillon stumbled out of the shop his face was a sickish green, and each breath he drew was an incredible agony. A hard blow in the guts can do that to a man, and Dillon had gotten a hard one. Not with a fist, which would have been bad enough, but from the butt-end of a heavy club."

— from *The Grifters* by **Jim Thompson**

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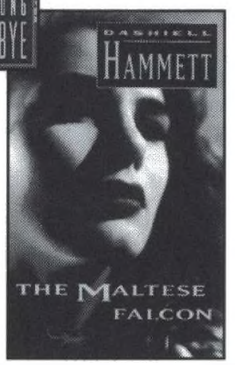

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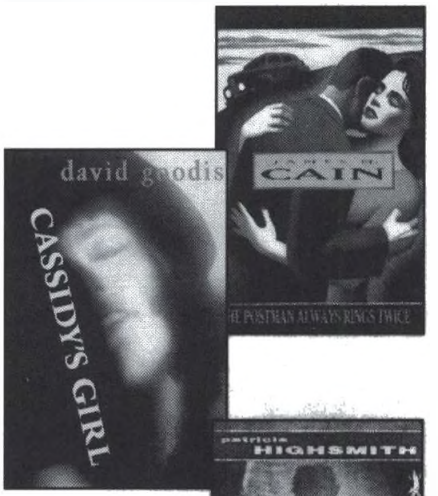

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VINTAGE CRIME
BLACK LIZARD

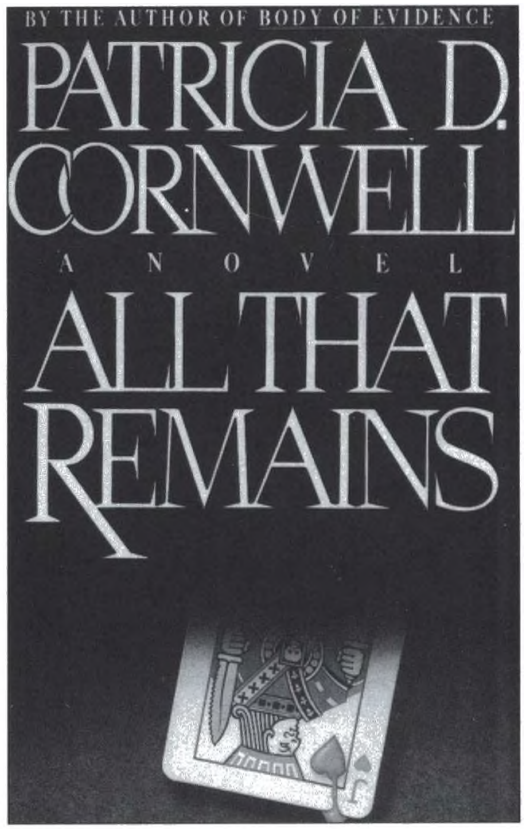
AJH REVIEWS

BY ALLEN J. HUBIN

Let's begin this time with a pair of bibliographic contributions to our field, very different in type and coverage.

The first is **Doubleday Crime Club Compendium** 1928-1991 by Ellen Nehr (Offspring Press, 75 Millthwait Dr., Martinez, CA 94553; $79 postpaid). This 682 compilation is a magnificent achievement, providing a wealth of information about the Crime Club's 2,485 books. Plot summaries and themes, settings, principal characters, dust jacket descriptions and blurbs—all are here, along with information on the founding and development of the club, with extensive quotes from its editors (starting with Ogden Nash). Nehr has had access to Doubleday's files, and brings us insights from records and correspondence found there. Moreover, she has hunted down a number of early Crime Club authors about whom essentially nothing was known, and here provides details of their lives and writings. Fascinating! Top row in the reference bookcase for this one!

Iwan Hedman-Morelius (retired Swedish Army officer now living in Spain) has been publishing **Dast**, his mystery fanzine, for decades—for slightly longer, I think, than TAD has been appearing. He has also compiled bibliographies of crime fiction published in Sweden, and although these (and **Dast**) are mostly in Swedish they provide useful information even for those not fluent in that language. The latest of Iwan's bibliographies is **Kriminallitteratur på Svenka** 1986-1990, which is a supplement to his earlier compilations and approaches the field at least as broadly as I do in my crime fiction bibliographies. It lists all Swedish book publications for the five year period, giving also original titles/publishers/dates for works translated into Swedish (all afflicted, alas, with overabundant typos). In addition, Hedman provides many illustrations (author pictures and dust jacket reproductions) and some evidences of his personal interactions with authors in the field. I suggest that those interested in a copy of **Kriminallitteratur,** or earlier versions, contact Iwan directly: Calle Acacia 801, Pinar de Campoverde, Pilar de in Horadada, 03190 Alicante, Spain.



Patricia D. Cornwell's third novel about Dr. Kay Scarpetta, Chief Medical Examiner of the state of Virginia, is **All That Remains** (Scribner, $20.00). Young couples are dying near Richmond, their bodies turning up months later in wooded areas. The latest pair includes the daughter of America's "drug czar", Pat Harvey, so these deaths explode onto the headlines, to the benefit of no one. Least of all Scarpetta or Harvey. Owing to the deterioration of the bodies Kay cannot determine the cause of death, but the obvious presumption is murder. Richmond police are involved, the FBI is involved, and the deaths have occurred near a hush-hush CIA training facility—a fine mix of conflicting interests. The investigation goes nowhere, with the FBI appearing to be playing with cards up their sleeves, and Harvey goes public and apoplectic with charges of cover-up. This is a spectacularly engrossing tale, the best of an excellent series.

The thesis of Michael Crichton's **Rising Sun** (Knopf, $20.00) is that the U.S. is losing—if it hasn't lost—the economic war with Japan, that we are to Japan a third world country to be plundered. And he litters the story with enough statistics to make a persuasive case, all wrapped around a baffling murder mystery. The scene: Los Angeles. A Japanese conglomerate is celebrating the opening of its shiny new skyscraper. Everyone is there. Including a killer and a most unwelcome and disruptive corpse. The Japanese want all the fuss to go away; the dead woman was nothing. They pull all their well-connected strings; they buy what money can buy. Lt. Peter Smith is a liaison officer in the LAPD Special Services Department. He handles stuff with political and diplomatic overtones. Like this murder. He's paired with John Connor, a legend in Special Services who knows Japanese wiles and ways exceedingly well. Well enough, perhaps, to follow a tortuous trail to the solution before Japanese influence torpedoes them both into disgrace and oblivion. A fascinating story in all dimensions.

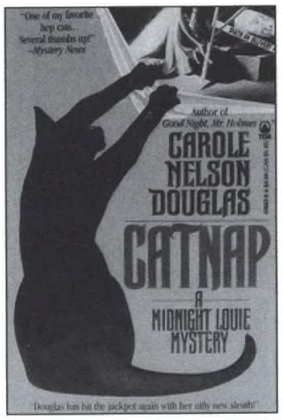
Truman Smith, Galveston private eye, returns for a second case in Bill Crider's

Gator Kill (Walker, $18.95), a tale notable more for its vivid setting than any depth of character or plot. A chap named Fred Denton owns some land and water out west of Houston and wants Smith to find a killer. It seems someone has murdered one of Denton's alligators, an unneighborly act to which Fred takes large exception. Alas, not many clues attend the rotting carcass. Just stench. Truman might have gone home and forgotten about the whole thing if someone hadn't taken a shot at him. And gradually bits and pieces of the story work their way out of Fred—strange things have been happening hereabouts. Multiple murder (of people, this time) is sure to follow, with Smith's discovery thereof not endearing him to the local law. More dirty work at the crossroads...

In **The Werewolf Murders** (Doubleday, $16.50), William L. DeAndrea brings back philosopher/detective Niccolo Benedetti from **The Hog Murders**, an Edgar winner in 1979. Thirteen years between cases doesn't make for much of a career, but Benedetti's reputation has apparently survived spare sleuthing, for he's wanted when murder most peculiar strikes in the French Alps. A year-long gathering of the world's greatest scientists has been convened by Pierre Benoc, French tycoon. All goes well at first, but then one of the distinguished visitors is found roasting over the town's eternal flame, another is attacked on the street, and a policeman is butchered in his office. The local inspector is politely welcoming when Benedetti (plus assistant Ron Gentry and the latter's luscious wife Janet) shows up, but the Surete's special contribution embodies snarling rejection and remarkable incompetence. Of course, Benedetti is always successful, despite all odds, though it may take a bloody while... Pleasant stuff in the classic vein.

The Jewel That Was Ours (Crown $20.00), the ninth of Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse novels, is a goodly tale, but has not quite the charm and style I seem to recall from my rather distant last reading of Dexter. A busload of touring Americans arrives in Oxford. One of them is bearing a jewel, found at an archaeological dig near Oxford years before and now to be donated to Oxford University. Except that death intervenes and the jewel disappears. Enter Morse, with Sgt. Lewis in tow. How could a random assortment of tourists on their first visit to Oxford generate so much turmoil, so many entanglements, so much dying?

Much of Peter Dickinson's work is extraordinarily inventive. **Play Dead** (Mysterious, $17.95), shows some of that uniquely creative hand, but for me it was mostly slow going. Poppy Trasker, grandmother, is at center stage.



She baby-sits her grandson at the neighborhood play center and listens in to the gossip that bubbles among the adults. But all is not harmless and pleasant: a man is observed staring at the children (impure motives immediately assumed), and someone follows Poppy and her young charge home one night. Then a body (same man?) is found on the play center premises. All of this winds in rather vague fashion around an array of characters, none of whom ever interested me much. A miss.

Midnight Louie, a black tomcat, has apparently played some role in earlier books by Carol Nelson Douglas, but moves closer to center stage in **Catnap** (Tor, $17.95). I am not of the cat-loving persuasion, so his appearance here (not at all significant to the plot, in fact, except for one critical clue) did not charm me. Nor did the corrupting of the novel with a few dabs of propaganda for the killing of the unborn. These complaints aside, the plot hangs together well enough, protagonist Temple Barr, a Las Vegas publicist, is agreeable, and the milieu (a convention of the American Booksellers Association) is intriguing and well wrought. The proceedings begin with a corpse (first discovered by Louie, who keeps mum, and then Temple). The local cop (a woman) serves mostly to express earnest bewilderment, so Temple, using her P.R. connections with a homicidally afflicted publishing house, begins to ask questions. Then another publicity disaster strikes: two fancy felines known as Baker and Taylor, mascots for the book wholesalers of that name, vanish. Catnapped, it is feared. More dirty work at the litter box...

After a bad misstep with her fourth novel (**A Suitable Vengeance**), Elizabeth George is very much back in form in her fifth, **For the Sake of Elena** (Bantam, $20.00). The setting here is academia, Cambridge University, where the beating and strangling of the deaf daughter of a professor brings the Yard's Insp. Thomas Lynley to town and gown. The answer to Elena Weaver's murder seems to lie in who and what she was, but who and what was she? What her mother, Professor Weaver's rage-filled ex-wife, thought? What her father thought? What her step-mother thought? Lynley has to sort through a web of tortured relationships and twisted ambitions. And all the while the inspector is distracted by his all-consuming longing for Lady Helen Clyde, who happens also to be in Cambridge. Elizabeth George here tells a magnificent story, with compelling insights into her characters on practically every page.

Ed Gorman's versatility is well demonstrated by the excellent and var-

ied fare in **Prisoners and Other Stories** (CD Publications, $20.95). Here is some crime, some horror, mostly poignant slices of the dark side of life, with here and there a strong autobiographical flavor. Dwyer, presumably Jack Dwyer, actor/private eye in a few

Gorman novels, turns up in two: "The Reason Why", about a class reunion and a death 25 years before, and "Failed Prayers," about dying marriages and murder. And the 20 further narratives resonate with images and feeling...

First novelist Vincent S. Green has been a criminal trial lawyer with the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General Corps. This background is well applied to the legal fireworks in **The Price of Victory** (Walker, $19.95). Capt. Jack Hayes is a defense attorney in Frankfurt with an overful plate of cases. Latest of these involves the drug-related charges against Sgt. Billy Frazier. The prosecution's witnesses are Lt. McCormick, psychopath, an admitted smuggler, thief and killer, plus his addict colleague, Sgt. Babcock. Easy witnesses to disbelieve, but the case is by no means so simple since the evidence against Frazier seems convincing and a hanging judge has been assigned. Frazier denies all charges, of course, but since when do defendants tell all the truth and nothing but the truth, even to their lawyers? And it doesn't help that Hayes' marriage seems to be separating at the seams. Good crisp narrative, with realistic ambiguities and only some regret on my part that certain side trails were not more fully followed.

In Camera (St. Martin's, $16.95) by Gerald Hammond, brings back Scots gunsmith Keith Calder for another adventure. Keith is here interviewing a candidate for employment, and learns, in passing, that a competitor seems to be fashioning a murder weapon. This lead is passed to rival police chiefs, who begin to scheme for personal advantage. One of them sends Sgt. Ian Fellowes, who is likely to become Calder's son-in-law if he survives, into deadly peril at sea. It's not just a simple killing they've stumbled into, but an assassination-for-hire at very high stakes. Craftily plotted, well-paced, intriguingly cast.

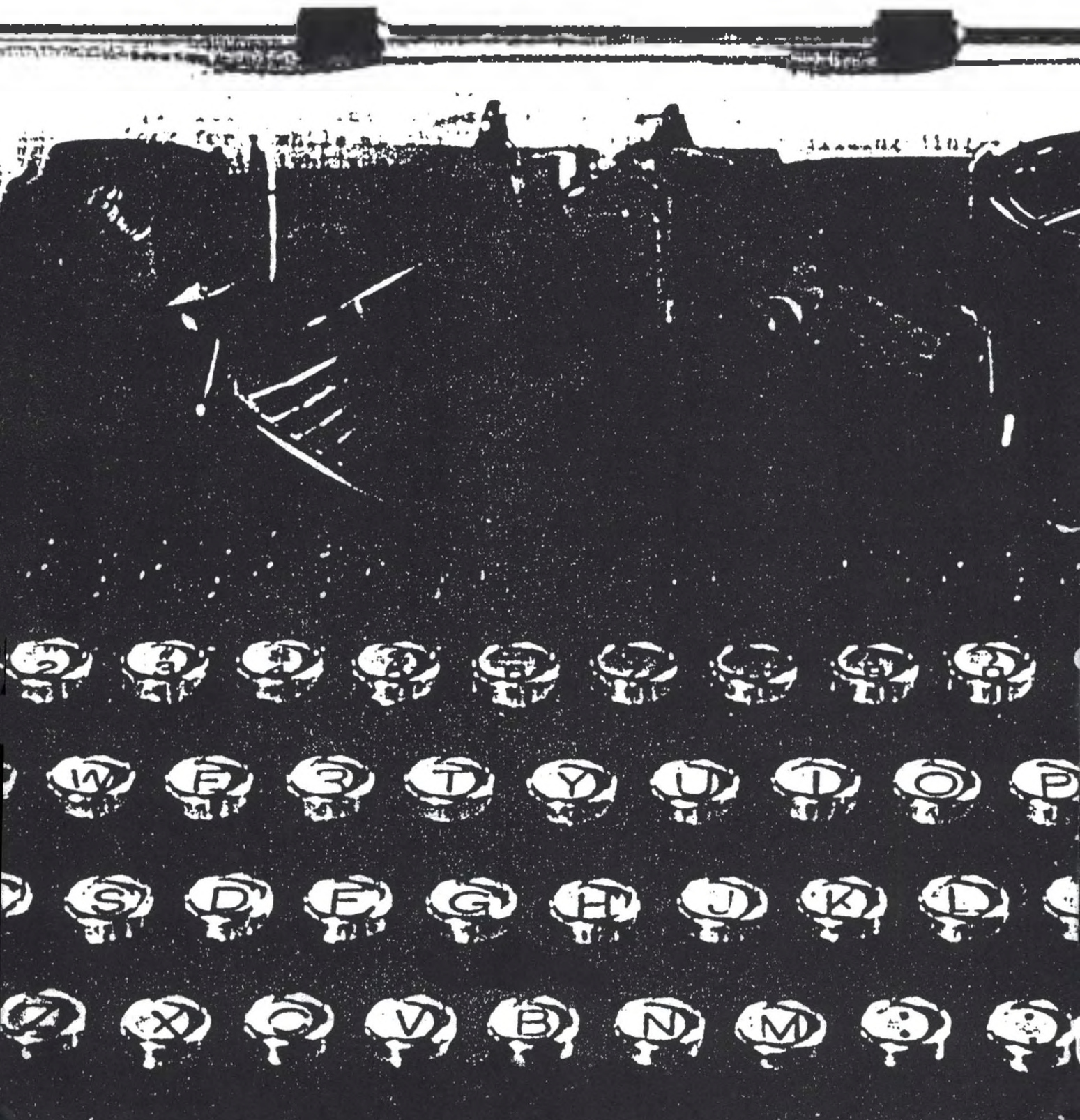
Shallow Graves (Pocket Books, $19.00) is the seventh of Jeremiah Healy's novels about Boston private

investigator John Francis Cuddy, and its an agreeable tale if less involving than the best of the series. An insurance company with a half million policy on a beautiful model asks Cuddy to have a look when the woman turns up murdered. Maybe the beneficiary, the model's agency, has cash flow problems. But it's not that simple, for it turns out that the model was connected—to Boston's leading crime family. A misstep here could get Cuddy killed...

John Katzenbach has another spellbinder in **Just Cause** (Putnam, $22.95). Matthew Cowart, journalist, writes for the Miami "Journal." A letter arrives from Robert Earl Ferguson, a black on Florida's death row for the rape-murder of a white schoolgirl. Ferguson claims innocence, of course. A racist jury had made up its mind in advance. Confession was beaten out of him by the cops. Sure. Normally Cowart might have ignored the letter, but for some reason he follows up. And confirms Ferguson's story. A powerful reporter might be able to prevent a tragic miscarriage of justice. So Cowart thinks. And unleashes a terror almost beyond imagining in the process. Magnificent storytelling!

The Day the Rabbi Resigned (Columbine, $20.00), was for me quite a pleasant renewing of acquaintance with Harry Kemelman's David Small, whom I hadn't encountered for some years. Rabbi Small has now served the Barnard's Crossing Temple for 25 years, and yearns for new experiences—he wants, in fact, to teach. Perhaps his cousin, the genial atheist Prof. Cotton, can help. Meanwhile the Temple Board of Directors, having no notions of Small's wanderlust, conspires to reward his quarter century in some spectacular fashion. And this is counterpoint to the affairs of the wealthy Merton family, and the tragic car accident death of one Victor Joyce, the Merton son-in-law. But there's a curious aspect to this death: not long before the corpse was discovered, a doctor passed the wreck, examined Joyce, and pronounced him very much alive. Good stuff for the Rabbi to munch on. ■

The Forgotten Tough Guy Novel



An acknowledged 20th century classic, ALL THE KING'S MEN is also a superb example of the hardboiled detective novel.

*** by Charles Chappell

In past issues of *The Armchair Detective*, William L. DeAndrea has vigorously defended mystery fiction as serious literature and has strenuously denounced the "literary Goliaths" of the modern age who snub the works of such writers as Elmore Leonard, Ed McBain, or Tony Hillerman while they themselves write about "spoiled, worthless, adolescent snots," call this fiction "Art," and create "prose without plot and character without hope."[1] DeAndrea also praises Edward Cline's thoughtful essay "The Great Debate," published in the Summer 1989 issue of TAD, for Cline's provocative assertion that "the detective-mystery-espionage-thriller genre...is virtually the only *serious* fiction being written today."[2] Both DeAndrea and Cline justifiably resent the persistent unwillingness (or inability) of some members of America's entrenched literary elite to recognize the obvious fact that the best mystery novels and stories are truly worthy of serious critical scrutiny and acclaim.

ROBERT PENN WARREN (1905 - 1989) WON THE PULITZER PRIZE FOR *ALL THE KING'S MEN* IN 1946.

Perhaps DeAndrea, Cline, and other likeminded devotees of mystery fiction would gain a measure of ironic satisfaction from knowing that their current struggle to gain appropriate recognition and respect for their favorite genre actually gained valuable credibility as long ago as 1946. A literary highlight of that year was the publication by Robert Penn Warren of *All the King's Men*, a book that eventually would become one of the most widely read and critically celebrated American novels of the past half-century, the winner of the 1947 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and the basis for a film that won three Academy Awards in 1949.[3] Writing in the recently published *The Armchair Detective Book of Lists*, prominent author Michael Malone discloses his favorite mystery authors and books and then adds this teasing sentence: "I might have mentioned Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* or Warren's *All the King's Men*; they're murder mysteries, too."[4] The reference to *An American Tragedy* is not surprising, since at the time of the novel's publication in 1925, Theodore Dreiser openly avowed his extensive use of an actual murder case (Chester Gillette's 1906 drowning of Grace Brown in Moose Lake, New York) as the nucleus for this massive exemplar of literary Naturalism. But Malone's inclusion of Warren's novel might raise a few eyebrows, since the book is best known to the general reading public as the premier Southern political novel–the engrossing depiction of the rise and subsequent tragic fall of Willie Stark, a character who in some ways resembles the legendary Louisiana Governor and Senator, Huey Long (1893 - 1935). Two Purdue University scholars, Maurice Beebe and Leslie Field, summarize the lofty status that *All the King's Men* has achieved among mainstream American literary critics:

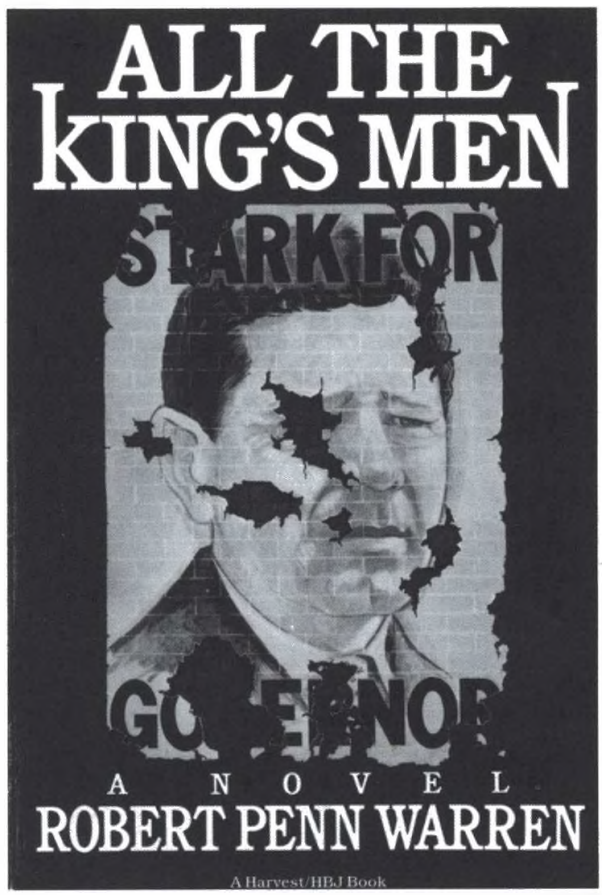
> To say of any single novel that it could provide a liberal education itself would be to exaggerate, but when one considers the numerous subjects touched on by Warren in this novel–history, philosophy, sociology, political science, religion, law, medicine, psychology, literature,

Charles Chappell is an English professor at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. His many articles on literature have appeared in such journals as *The Alabama Review*, *Essays in Literature*, and *Studies in American Fiction*.

even football and brain surgery!—is probably closer to providing materials for a liberal education in any American novel published in the twentieth century. *All the King's Men* has been read as a social document, a tragedy, a novel of ideas, a melodrama, a manifesto of the New Criticism, and so on. A novel seen as variously may well be called a modern epic.[5]

A novel that includes such a diverse range of subject matter resists ready summary, but in essence *All the King's Men* tells the individual and intertwined life stories of two characters, Willie Stark and Jack Burden. The novel is set in a "deep South" state that in geography, climate, and culture closely resembles Huey Long's native Louisiana, and the book's principal events occur between 1922 and 1937. During this span of time, Willie uses a combination of intelligence, courage, luck, guile, and aggression to elevate himself from the status of lowly bureaucrat in backwards Mason City to the governorship of his state and ultimately to a position of unprecedented political power. In his rapid ascension to the statehouse, his public performance and private perfidies combine to demonstrate vividly the validity of Lord Acton's maxim: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Jack Burden, a descendant of one of the state's most aristocratic and politically influential families, meets Willie when Jack is writing articles on politics for a major newspaper. An introspective and reserved man by nature, Jack gravitates toward the orbit of the dynamic Willie, at first chronicling Stark's rise to prominence and eventually accepting employment as the Governor's press officer, chief researcher, and general assistant in charge of investigations and (sometimes) chicanery. Serving as the novel's narrator, Jack interweaves colorful descriptions of Willie's personal and political exploits with lengthy and sometimes convoluted meditations concerning the frustrations and doubts that persistently plague his own life. The novel's complicated and absorbing plot supports several themes involving honor, idealism, sacrifice, time, and death.



Warren's rich and evocative novel fully deserves its enshrinement as one of the supreme works of modern world fiction. But Michael Malone is right on target in including *All the King's Men* in his list of favorite mysteries. Although the book assuredly ranks as "the best American political novel of this century,"[6] as a highly learned treatise suffused with allusions to Dante, Machiavelli, and William James, and as a paragon of a modern Southern narrative firmly rooted in an authentic and revelatory place and time, it also most definitely exists as a superior work of mystery fiction. More specifically, *All the King's Men* is a first-rate tough-guy detective novel. Like *The Maltese Falcon* or *The Big Sleep*, both of which preceded it in publication by relatively few years, *All the King's Men* blends vividly depicted characters, an ingeniously intricate plot, and subtle and multiform revelations of profound themes into an absorbing narrative of crime, intrigue, and riveting suspense. Curiously enough, Warren's masterpiece has not been claimed by mystery aficionados as a significant representative of the hardboiled school of private eye fiction or of detective literature in general. An examination of some of the novel's traditional tough guy characteristics should demonstrate just how completely *All the King's Men* represents mid-century detective fiction at its finest. The book's point of view provides the initial case in point.

Throughout *All the King's Men*, a tough-guy first person narrator, Jack Burden himself, tenaciously investigates a series of complicated power struggles and crimes while simultaneously filling his commentary with sardonic statements (like Philip Marlowe), taking advantage of numerous opportunities to stir matters up (like the Continental Op or Sam Spade), and uncovering dark secrets of infidelity and of family origin (like Lew Archer). Jack Burden emulates his private eye peers by regularly recording the activities of a daily schedule, sometimes even including where he dines and what he eats, as in the episode when he first visits Willie Stark's home town:

> I got to Mason City early in the afternoon and went to the Mason City Cafe, Home Cooked Meals for Ladies and Gents, facing the square, and sampled the mashed potatoes and fried ham and greens with pot-likker with one hand while with the other I competed with seven or eight flies for the possession of a piece of custard pie.[7]

As do all experienced detectives, Jack instinctively knows when to be forceful and when to be subtle in his conversations with people as he searches for an advantage. For example, he senses the precise moment that he can begin to change the mind of his good friend Adam Stanton and convince him to do Willie's bidding. Jack describes his realization in tough-guy rhetoric:

> It is not the left to the jaw and it does not rock them on their heels. It does not make the breath come sharp. It is just the tap on the nose, the scrape across with the rough heel of the glove. Nothing lethal, just a moment's pause. But it is an advantage. Push it.[8]

Jack Burden speaks like Humphrey Bogart or Philip Marlowe out of one side of his mouth and like Faulkner out of the other, noted one critic.

Like all worthy sleuths, Burden feels inwardly compelled to seek the truth, even if the process promises to be dangerous to his physical or mental well-being. As he nears the discovery of the answer to a mystery he has long been investigating for Willie, Jack initially draws back but then forces himself to continue:

> But I had to know. Even as the thought of going away without knowing came through my head, I knew that I had to know the truth. For truth is a terrible thing. You dabble your foot in it and it is nothing. But you walk a little farther and you feel it pull you like an undertow or a whirlpool. First there is the slow pull so steady and gradual you scarcely notice it, then the acceleration, then the dizzy whirl and plunge to blackness. For there is a blackness of truth, too.[9]

As is so often true with Marlowe, Spade, or Archer, Burden's intelligence, patience, diligence, and intuition eventually lead him to the solution to a crime. In this case one that has been hidden for decades:

> So I had it after all the months. For nothing is ever lost, nothing is ever lost. There is always the clue, the canceled check, the smear of lipstick, the footprint in the canna bed, the condom on the park path, the twitch in the old wound, the baby shoes dipped in bronze, the taint in the blood stream. And all times are one time, and all those dead in the past never lived before our definition gives them life, and out of the shadow their eyes implore us.[10]

ROBERT PENN WARREN ONCE SAID, "I KNEW MORE ABOUT DETECTIVE STORIES THAN ANYBODY ELSE IN THE WORLD, I THINK, FOR ABOUT TWENTY YEARS. I READ THEM ALL."

Jack even slyly reveals that he is familiar with the works of at least two of the most popular American mystery authors of the time period (the late 1930s) during which he narrates the events of the novel. In strategic places, he furnishes recurrent allusions, complete with capital letters, to the works of Raymond Chandler (Jack engages in three extended episodes of what he terms "The Great Sleep") and to those of Erle Stanley Gardner (Jack describes his own role in "The Case of the Upright Judge").

In his various investigations and misadventures, Jack encounters a diverse and colorful assortment of characters who inhabit the seedy hotels, musty corridors, and bolted backrooms of the novel's world of alternate light and shadows. Sugar-Boy O'Sheean, Willie Stark's devoted bodyguard and driver, is dumpy, inarticulate, and slovenly, but he is an expert behind the wheel:

> "...[H]e whipped around a hay wagon in the face of an ongoing truck and went through the rapidly diminishing aperture close enough to give the truck driver heart failure with one rear fender and wipe the snot off a mule's nose with the other."[11]

Sugar-Boy's persistent stuttering presents no obstacles to communication, since he does his necessary talking with a pistol:

> "He wouldn't win any debating contests in high school, but then nobody would ever want to debate with Sugar-Boy. Not anybody who knew him and had seen him do tricks with the .38 Special which rode under his left armpit like a mother."[12]

Willie Stark is ably assisted, in maneuvers both political and adulterous, by the redoubtable Sadie Burke, a "very smart cooky" who "wouldn't have been called good looking, certainly not by the juries who pick out girls to be Miss Oregon or Miss New Jersey" but who more than holds her own in her romantic spats with Willie or in her brutal treatment of the Boss's enemies.[13] Slade (last name only) is a prototypical Depression-era speakeasy owner who benefits from his political connections with Stark and presides over his own place, where "[he] keeps one eye on the black boys in white jackets who tote the poison and the other on the blonde at the cash register who knows that her duties are not concluded when the lights are turned off at 2:00 A.M."[14] Gummy Larson, formerly a gambling-house operator, becomes a rich contractor who possesses

the best "instincts of a businessman"; he readily sells out one longtime political associate in order to get the contract to build Willie's grandiose hospital.

Jack Burden, this crew of shady miscreants, and many of the other *dramatis personae* in the novel often find themselves inhabiting or passing through traditional detective novel settings such as squalid cold-water flats in decaying neighborhoods, sleazy boarding houses or tourist courts, saloons frequented by various denizens of the night, waterfront dives, remote roadhouses, smoky inner sanctums where power brokers dispense favors and swill cheap booze, sidewalks littered in equal measure by surly pedestrians and overflowing containers of refuse, and shabby offices or rooms where a fly may provide the only company on any given day. The novel's complex plot features a plethora of actions that are staples of the tough-guy genre: stakeouts, tacit and explicit physical threats, blackmail, extortion, election fraud, rigged construction bids, fornication, adultery, heavy petting, and three deaths by gunfire (one of them a grisly suicide). Jack eventually investigates three interrelated and highly complicated cases, and in the process he suffers the deaths of his mentor, his lifelong best friend, and a close family member, while he continually undergoes a painful education into new and shocking levels of self-awareness. Whether he travels the dusty back roads of the rural South or walks the mean streets of his state's capital city, Jack inevitably is confronted with crimes both ancient and current that he is compelled to attempt to solve. Despite his thwarted ambitions to become a history teacher or a lawyer and his many years of employment as a reporter or as Willie's political henchman, Jack's true calling in life–his destiny–is that of a tough-guy detective.

Robert Penn Warren himself was an unabashed fan of mystery fiction. As he related to Dick Cavett in a 1978 interview: "I knew more about detective stories than anybody else in the world, I think, for twenty years. I read them all."[15] A few reviewers in 1946 and 1947 noticed Warren's debt to other tough-guy writers of the era, referring to Warren's evocations of Chandler or James M. Cain.[16] Later, the noted author and critic David Madden also briefly remarked on the linkage between Jack Burden's voice and those of some significant contemporary personages:

> "...[I]t is curious that Jack Burden...speaks like Humphrey Bogart or Philip Marlowe out of one side of his mouth and like Faulkner out of the other."[17]

But, in recent years, fans of detective fiction seem to have forgotten that Warren has provided them with a superior novel of the genre. Michael Malone's mention of *All the King's Men*, for example, is the only one that appears in *The Armchair Detective Book of Lists*. The time has come for *All the King's Men* to join the best fiction of Chandler, Cain, Dashiell Hammett, and Ross Macdonald at the recognized head of the mid-century tough-guy class. DeAndrea, Cline, and other advocates of elevating the reputation of mystery fiction should now unite in grasping firmly their copies of *All the King's Men*, waving them in the faces of unenlightened critics, and asserting that beyond any reasonable doubt the imagined gap between serious literature and the best of mystery fiction has not truly existed since at least 1946.

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[1]William L. DeAndrea, "J'Accuse!" *TAD* 22:4 (Fall 1989), p.371; and DeAndrea, "J'Accuse!" TAD 23:1 (Winter 1990), p. 30.

[2] Edward Cline, "The Great Debate," *TAD* 22:3 (Summer 1989), pp. 317, 320.

[3] The film, which was written for the screen, produced and directed by Robert Rossen and was distributed by Columbia Pictures, won the Academy Award for best motion picture of 1949; Broderick Crawford took the Oscar for best actor, and Mercedes McCambridge won for best supporting actress.

[4] Michael Malone, "Some Famous Mystery Writers Pick Their Ten Favorite Mystery Books," in *The Armchair Detective Book of Lists* (New York: The Armchair Detective, Inc., 1989), p. 226.

[5] Maurice Beebe and Leslie A. Field, "Preface" to *Robert Penn Warren's "All the King's Men": A Critical Handbook* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1969). p.v.

[6] Joseph Blotner, *The Modern American Political Novel 1900 - 1960* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), p. 226.

[7] Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), p. 46.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 251.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 363–64.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 242.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 78–79.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[15] Floyd C. Watkins and John T. Hiers, eds. *Robert Penn Warren Talking: Interviews 1950 - 1978* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 287.

[16] See Elizabeth Hardwick's review of the novel in *Partisan Review*, 13 (November - December 1946), p. 583; Fred Marsh, "Demogogue's Progress," *New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review* (August 18, 1946), p. 2; and Earle F. Walbridge's review in *Library Journal*, 7 (August 1947), p. 1051.

[17] David Madden, "Introduction" to *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. XXXV. ■

J'Accuse!

By

William L. DeAndrea

When I set out to do my mystery encyclopedia (now formally titled *Encyclopedia Mysteriosa*, and due out in early 1994–there are now three people on record who actually like that title, though I don't), I resolved to ask the best people around, even if I didn't know them personally, and even if they'd laugh in my ear when they heard the piddling money I had available to offer them.

Well, nobody laughed. Busy people fell all over themselves to help, and I got some great stuff. This mystery stuff really is a great business.

When it came time to recruit someone to sum up mysteries in the pulps, the person I wanted was Robert D. Sampson, whose works on The Shadow (*The Night Master*), the Spider (*Spider*), and his six volume study of pulp series characters, *Yesterday's Faces,* is not only crammed with information, but superbly written, have taught me most of what I know about the form. A little nervously, I called him at home in Huntsville, Alabama.

I needn't have worried. He was the kindest of men. And we discovered we had two things in common–a love of mystery stories and a passion for space exploration. I was truly blown away to be talking to a retired NASA engineer, a man whose handiwork had helped men land on the moon. He kindly pretended to be impressed that I could get people to publish stories I made up. He agreed to do the section for the encyclopedia.

That was in mid-September. On September 30, according to his son, he was diagnosed as having pancreatic cancer, and was put into the hospital. He spent his last few weeks finishing the last of the *Yesterday's Faces* volumes, and doing his entry for my encyclopedia, constantly working, revising, and sending his son home to make the corrections on the computer.

I received the article in mid-October. There was nothing about the man's condition, there was only a superb piece of writing about the form he loved. By the end of the month, Sampson was dead. The article for me was his last work on earth.

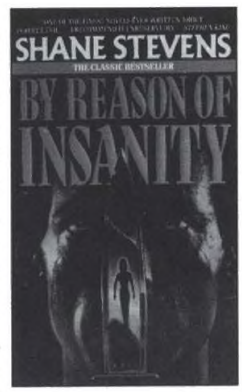
I have been lucky in this field–won a couple of awards, been honored in my hometown, things like that. But the fact that this man, with whom I shared just one telephone call, spent most of the last of his time on earth doing me and my book a favor is an honor that can't be topped.

Let's be Juvenile

My son Matt and I have recently became acquainted with the work of Eric Wilson. Wilson is a former schoolteacher, who now lives in British Columbia. He writes mysteries for young people, most of which are about brother and sister Tom and Liz Austen, either separately or together. Tom and Liz are the children of a Winnipeg detective, but their adventures take them all over Canada, to exhaustively researched locations. Tom and Liz have solved crimes in places as disparate as the Winter Festival in Quebec, to the world's largest shopping mall in Edmonton.

This is great stuff. Wilson writes in the Hardy Boys tradition in that his characters don't just track down missing bunny rabbits, they fight serious, professional bad guys, risking their lives in the process. The plotting and writing, however, are at a much more professional level than those that marked the Hardy Boys series.

Of course, writing mysteries for kids in a market of just twenty-two million or so requires all sorts of extras to keep the wolves from the door. Wilson lectures extensively at schools, and produces a popular series of videos in which in a kind of combination travelogue and writing lesson, he takes kids on a tour of locations for his new book, and talks about how the locations inspired ideas.



Wilson runs a free fan club for his readers, as well, and his annual polls of favorite short stories turn up some interesting results. Year after year, stories about Liz top the lists for both boys and girls. An unscientific survey of one little American boy reveals Liz and Tom to be equally popular in this house, too. Maybe, at long last, the old wisdom that girls will read about boys but boys won't read about girls is about to go by the wayside.

Unfortunately, Wilson's books aren't available in the United States except in the Spanish translation (he's a big seller in the Spanish-speaking world). Even the America branch of his Canadian publisher, HarperCollins, won't put his books out here. They think they won't sell because they're "too Canadian."

This, of course, is a crock. Kids love good mysteries, and kids love good adventure, and if they happen to learn something about another country while they're at it, they don't mind. They even kind of like it.

An English publisher told me she was turning down my books because they were "too American." I wondered how I

got to be more American than Mickey Spillane or Rex Stout, both of whom are enormously successful in England, but I didn't say that. I did say that I'd been published in Turkey, and if the Turks could get behind Matt Cobb and his adventures in the world of American TV, the British shouldn't have *too* much trouble puzzling it out.

Same thing here. If kids on the Argentine pampas are able to enjoy Wilson's stories of eerie doings in a fishing village in Nova Scotia, American kids ought to be able to handle it just fine. Some American publisher is going to make a lot of money when they discover Eric Wilson. It will be deserved.

Hail to the Chief

I'm not going to say anything nasty about President Clinton in this column.

I'm not. Really. No kidding. Not even–

Nope. Nope. Nope. I promise.

In fact (brace yourself), I'm actually going to say something nice. The President's having Walter Mosley read from his works at an inaugural function showed real taste, both in having a mystery writer, and in having one as good as Walter.

This would be place for a snotty punchline, if I hadn't promised not to do anything like that. I'll stop now, because all this being nice is making drops of blood appear on my forehead.

Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah

I just want to interrupt this column to go on record as saying I'm a happy guy. That is, I'm very pleased with my lot in life, my career and my family.

I say this for two reasons.

One is that regular readers of this column might get the impression that I'm somewhat of a grouch. *Au contraire.* In fact, this column is part of what makes me so happy, in that it gives me an opportunity to fight for Truth and Justice and Free Expression and Fair Play and everything else worth fighting for, as it pertains to the world of mystery, which is the world in which I live and toil.

The other reason I bring it up is that there has been a spate of serious gloomitude in print recently from some of the best and most successful writers in the genre.

One writer admits to getting involved in controversies like those engendered by this column not out of conviction but simply to vent the meaness and frustration that the loneliness of the writing life keeps this person from getting rid of in person. Another, who is rarely photographed or seen at a mystery function out of costume, rails at the demands of publicity. A third laments

ROBERT SAMPSON, NOTED EXPERT ON PULP MYSTERY FICTION, AND KIND FRIEND TO OTHERS IN THE FIELD.

bad reviews from twenty years ago.

Come on, gang. Let's look at the bright side. We could be trying to write these things in Sarajevo, you know? As it is, we get to stay clean and well fed, and the electricity works almost all the time. People pay us money for the contents of our imaginations. Writing may not be a complete bed of roses, but it is considerably better than slopping hogs for a living. And you get to set your own hours.

Thomas Wolfe Was a Dope

Earlier this week, I spent a few days in my hometown, talking to the kids at the various elementary schools there. I did it at the behest of my childhood downstairs neighbor, who is a school librarian in town these days, and of my former fourth grade teacher, who, God bless her, is still at it.

I expected the thing to be a fiasco. I didn't write children's books; I couldn't draw pictures. I wasn't, say, Stephen King, somebody so famous that they might have heard of me whether they'd read my stuff or not. At best, I hoped for some quiet yawns, earned on the basis that if they weren't listening to me, they might be doing arithmetic.

What I got was a bunch of enthusiastic, curious kids. I wound up talking about how reading is the key to anything they want to do in life–and, though I didn't say it in front of anybody in authority, the main thing you want to do when you live in a poor town is get the hell out of it.

The kids latched onto that. They asked me what I read. They asked me what the town was like when I was their age, and I told them, truthfully, it was worse than it is now. I kept stressing reading and writing. I hope I did some good. The most vivid memory I took away with me was the delighted disbelief one kid had when he found out that my family used to live on the same ghetto street his family now lives on. I could almost see the wheels clicking–if he could make it, why can't I? I hope his musing leads him to the right answer: There's no reason he can't. No reason at all.

The Serial Bowl

In TAD 26:1, in the course of a terrific interview by Catherine M. Nelson, Jonathan Kellerman talks about serial killer books, or as I like to call them, psycho killer books–a serial killer can have a rational motive. He says his three favorites of this type are *Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris, his own *The Butcher's Theatre*, and *The Black Dahlia* by James Ellroy. "After that," Kellerman says, "what's the point?"

And I agree with him. Those are three terrific books, and *after* them, there hasn't been much to equal them. But *before*

them, there were several psycho killer books of an excellence and historic interest that might be worth his while to look up.

Just for balance, we'll consider three others. The first is *Murder Gone Mad* by Philip MacDonald. Published in 1931, this was the forerunner of the whole subgenre, with inhabitants of a small English town being wiped out at their happiest moments. It's a great book, and it hides a secret most practitioners of this subgenre (including me, by the way) have ignored in the meantime. With all due respect to Dr. Kellerman and the profession of psychology, the reader does not actually give a moldy banana peel *why* the psycho is a psycho. Thomas Harris reminded everyone of that with his creation of Hannibal Lecter, who is evil just because he *is*. But MacDonald got there first.

Second is *Cat of Many Tails* (1949) by Ellery Queen. This remarkable book melds a mad strangler, complete with detailed psychological backgrounds, with a fair-play detective plot *and* one of the finest portraits of New York City ever done in fiction.

Most recent is an under-appreciated little gem entitled *By Reason of Insanity* (1979) by Shane Stevens. This one is so much like a true crime report, you keep checking the spine to make sure its a novel. It also has, less than halfway through the book, a little explosion of a surprise that will shoot you back in your chair and make you take a deep breath.

There are more, but these will do for a start.

All the Law That Money Can Buy

Do you have lawyer commercials where you live? Here in Connecticut, the airwaves are lousy with them, maybe because the economy is so bad lately the only way to get ahead is to be in a good car accident.

In any case, these things are so understated. "If you or a member of your family has been injured, you may be entitled to compensation. Here at the law firm of Bleadon & Torn, we do our best to protect your legal rights."

What the hell good is that?

When you're desperate enough or mad enough to let the law get hold of you, you don't want fair. You want commercials like this: "Sure, I smashed the old lady's head with a brick and took her seventeen dollars and forty-three cents. But Dewey Cheatham & Howe got her so twisted up on the witness stand, she paid me damages because I pinched my finger between the brick and her hard head. I give all my business to Dewey, Cheatham & Howe." Then, the announcer comes on and says, "Dewey, Cheatham & Howe. If we can get a guilty scumbag like *him* off, imagine what we can do for *you*."

That's the kind of copywriting the industry needs. Of course, if any law firm uses my idea, I'll sue their butts off.

Yeah, What About Murder, Anyhow?

My mail recently brought me a review copy of *What About Murder? (1981-1991)* by Jon L. Breen. This book is a supplement to the Edgar-winning first volume of ten years ago, and is an annotated bibliography of published works of mystery scholarship during the ten-year period covered. A lot of what appears here ran first in Jon's column of the same title for this very magazine, and of course, this is the sort of book he would ordinarily review, but that would be a little M.C. Escher-esque, wouldn't it?

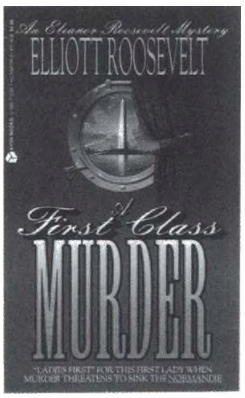
In any case, this is a typical Jon Breen work, and that is high praise. This is a reference book not only for reference, but for *reading*, filled with learned asides and good-natured humor without sacrificing an ounce of scholarship.

This second volume of *What About Murder?* documents the incredible leap in recent years in the importance of the mystery story, and the amount of mystery scholarship. The first volume, which covered scholarship from the beginning of time to 1981, was only half the size of the current volume.

More than once during the course of the book, Jon talks about the "glee" with which he pounces on mistakes in mystery reference books. I pray nightly that my forthcoming reference work on the genre will not be an occasion of hysterics to the man. In the spirit of brotherhood, I will simply point out that there is a small (teeny, really) error in *What About Murder? (1981-1991)* concerning my humble self. I will not, however, reveal what it is–at least not until I see what happens to my book.

Kidding aside, this is a book you need if you are a serious fan of the genre. It's $39.50 from Scarecrow Press. ■

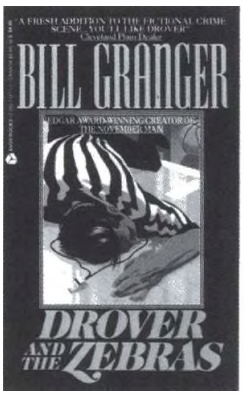
THE SIGN OF THE CRIMES



A FIRST CLASS MURDER
Elliott Roosevelt

It's 1938 and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt is bound for New York aboard the luxury liner *Normandie*. Her fellow passengers include Charles Lindbergh, young JFK and a beautiful ballerina accused of murdering her distinguished companion, the Russian ambassador. Shipboard sleuthing produces yet another triumph for the "White House Sherlock Holmes." —*The Washington Post*

$4.99



DROVER AND THE ZEBRAS
Bill Granger

The Edgar Award-winning creator of The November Man scores with this slam dunk of a mystery! "March madness" leads to murder when Jimmy Drover returns to Chicago to cheer on his alma mater into college basketball's Final Four. Instead, big-time local gamblers, a crooked ref's "suicide" and a set-up coach force Drover into playing a very dangerous game off-court—for his life.

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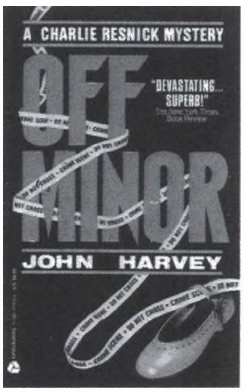


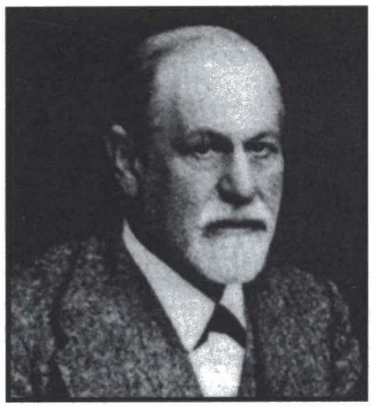
OFF MINOR
John Harvey

The audience—and the acclaim—keep growing for John Harvey and his rumpled, tough-but-sensitive police inspector Charlie Resnick. This time, however, Charlie realizes compassion can be fatal as he pursues a maniac who's praying on a city's children. "A stunning, textured novel whose weight, character and complexity set it apart from the pack." —*San Francisco Chronicle*

$4.99

AVON BOOKS

Freud at Thirty Paces



by Sara Paretsky

Academic squabbles are so vicious, goes the old adage, precisely because the stakes are so small. When two psychoanalysts propose radically differing conclusions on the private life of an obscure medieval saint, a bitter quarrel ensues—with results that would appall the Father of Psychoanalysis himself.

Dr. Ulrich von Hutten saw patients in the back drawing-room of his Fifth Avenue house. Minor reconstruction of the ground floor had created a private hallway through which patients bypassed the front drawing-room and the stairway to the upper floors. In the back, a door led from the consulting room to a sidewalk connecting the house to 74th Street. A hedge separated this walk from the minuscule garden where Mrs. von Hutten raised begonias and herbs.

This engineering separated the von Hutten family from his patients. Indeed, some were never sure if the doctor was married. Others suspected the presence of a child (children?) from the faint sounds of piano practice seeping into the private hallway, or the rising smell of *sauce madere* on afternoons when the doctor was entertaining for dinner.

If they were punctual, patients never met one another, either–they left through a different door than the one they entered by. Von Hutten saw no need for a waiting room. He provided a small armchair outside the consulting room where the over-anxious could sit, waiting for the soft yellow light that showed the doctor was ready.

The meter began running precisely at the start of one analytical session and stopped exactly forty-five minutes later. Dr. von Hutten pressed a floor button which simultaneously unlocked the entrance, turned on the yellow light, and started the meter. The unpunctual patient, racing from a hairdresser at 60th and Madison, or a meeting in Wall Street, would find the doctor sitting expressionlessly in a leather armchair behind the shabby couch inherited from the great Dr. L–in Berlin.

The flustered patient dropped the parcels, coat, briefcase on a side table and scrambled on to the couch. Dr. von Hutten remained ostentatiously silent. The only noise was the faint humming of the meter against the far wall. After forty-five minutes, the meter shut off, the street door automatically unlocked, and Dr. von Hutten uttered his first words of the session: "Our time is up. I will see you tomorrow at two." Or Friday at nine-thirty, or whenever.

Dr. von Hutten belonged to that strict class of analysts who believe they must say as little as possible to the patient. The patient should know nothing about the doctor–all transference should operate in one direction only. The doctor felt strongly about this. In addition to articles for the professional journals, he had written several impassioned columns for the *New York Times*, deploring the tendency of modern analysts to talk, to tell their patients of their love for Mozart, their hatred of begonias.

Dr. von Hutten would not attack a fellow analyst in the popular press. Still, most of the New York psychoanalytic world knew that his remarks were not general. The specific object of his rage had an office across Central Park from him.

At 62nd and Central Park West, Dr. Jacob Pfefferkorn saw patients in an untidy room whose curtained windows overlooked the park. A small room across the hall had been turned into a waiting area, where novels and magazines were jumbled in a stack on a side table.

The Pfefferkorn family correctly never went into the waiting room nor spoke to any patients. Still, the latter would often see Mrs. Pfefferkorn sweep by with one or more of her noisy children *en route* to the ballet lessons, riding lessons, music lessons, or private school whose fees were covered by the massive bills generated by the meter ticking away on the analyst's wall.

In addition to these signs of life, the patients learned some things about Dr. Pfefferkorn himself. For example, he loved Mozart and hated begonias. Whether this knowledge helped or hindered their therapies, no one could judge–except, perhaps Dr. von Hutten. Other analysts wondered whether Pfefferkorn's well-known prejudices had inspired Mrs. von Hutten to raise begonias at the Fifth Avenue house.

Besides their disagreement over silence in the consulting room, the doctors had a second rivalry. Both enjoyed doing literary psychoanalysis—analyzing the personalities of writers based on their work. Dr. Freud set the example. His brilliant deduction that Moses was an Egyptian, rather than a Hebrew, was based chiefly on biblical texts, with little corroborative historical evidence.

His disciples were inspired to undertake similar researches. Some studied figures like Virginia Woolf or Henry James, who left a large body of letters explaining their work. Others preferred to look at writers like Augustine, who left no external evidence other than his writings. With very little historical research, these literary analysts were able to perform astounding analytical *tours de force*, uncovering Oedipal relations

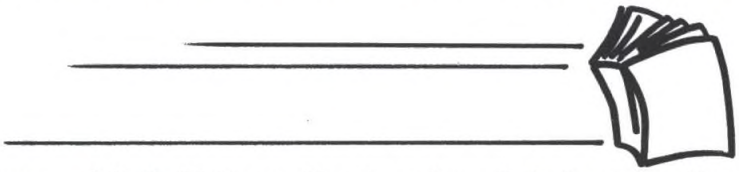
PHOTO: DAVID CARTER

SARA PARETSKY, AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING SERIES FEATURING PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR V.I. WARSHAWSKI, IS ALSO A FOUNDING MEMBER OF SISTERS IN CRIME, AN ORGANIZATION CREATED FOR THE BENEFIT OF WOMEN MYSTERY WRITERS. HER SEVENTH V.I.WARSHAWSKI NOVEL, ***Guardian***, WAS PUBLISHED IN FEBRUARY 1992 AND SHE HAS RECENTLY EDITIED ***A Woman's Eye:*** *21 New Stories Featuring the Finest Female Sleuths by the Best Women Crime Writers Ever*, PUBLISHED BY DELACORTE IN SEPTEMBER 1992. SARA LIVES IN CHICAGO.

ILLUSTRATIONS: MICHAEL DAVIDSON

impotence, and other previously unknown traits of the fifth-century saint.

Dr. Pfefferkorn had previously analyzed Thomas a Kempis, Cardinal Newman and Emily Dickinson. Von Hutten's greatest prior efforts were devoted to the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The two pointedly ignored each other's researches. Unfortunately, in 1980 both settled on the same writer as the passionate object of their research.



Saint Juliet of Cardiff (?1149-1203) had written numerous mystical works in a crabbed combination of Latin and Welsh. Little enough is known of the saint's life. She was canonized in 1560, in the great rash of pork-barrel canonizations following the Council of Trent, for miracles performed in connection with women hemorrhaging after childbirth.

Juliet's work in modern translation runs to some three volumes of meditations, ecstasies and prayers. From this effusion, the doctors were able to glean much about her life.

Dr. Pfefferkorn recognized from her writings that Juliet had been a mistress of Henry II, taking the veil only after Eleanor of Aquitaine intervened in one of her rare wifely moods. Juliet's mother had died in the saint's infancy. Her doting father, a man of substance, had her educated in a way open to few twelfth-century men and almost no women. He introduced her to court life. Dr. Pfefferkorn speculated on an incestuous love between father and daughter, but felt the texts were ambiguous there. Juliet joined the Convent of St. Anne of Cardiff late in life. Her ecstasies were primarily eulogies of her liaison with Henry, disguised in theological language.

To Dr. von Hutten, Juliet's work proved incontrovertibly that she had died a virgin. Dedicated to the Convent of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Cardiff at birth, she came from an impoverished family which could not provide a dowry. Juliet therefore performed manual labor for the convent, learning writing from cleaning the heavy Bible chained to the altar in the convent chapel. Since she spoke no Latin, her own writing combined her native Welsh with what Latin she picked up from her secretive reading. Her ecstatic outpourings came from her sublimated, unrecognized sexuality. The fact that Welsh women believed she could stop postpartum bleeding was a folk testimony to her virginal state.

The bimonthly *Psychoanalytical Review of Literature* published Dr. Pfefferkorn and Dr. von Hutten's articles side by side in their winter issue, and battle was fairly joined.

A mutual friend had warned Dr. von Hutten that Dr. Pfefferkorn had picked St. Juliet as the subject of his research, but Dr. von Hutten was staggered at the level of Pfefferkorn's stupidity. How could the man not recognize such a clear case of frigidity? How could he frivolously write of liaisons between a king and a commoner of demonstrably menial state?

Von Hutten fumed. With difficulty he listened to fears of impotence, fears of rejection, fears of frigidity from his own patients. He counted the minutes until the meter shut off for the day and he could settle down to attack Dr. Pfefferkorn as he deserved. A man who told his patients he hated begonias was capable of anything, but this time he had *gone too far*. His letter to the editor covered the major defects in both Pfefferkorn's research and his medical practice.

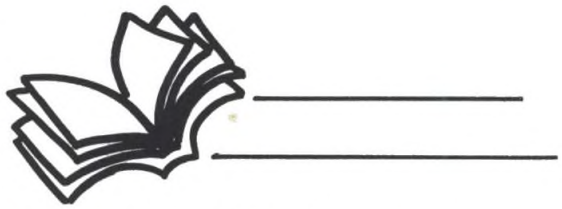
Across the park on 62nd Street, Dr. Pfefferkorn was equally outraged. Von Hutten's rigid attitudes—stemming doubtless from too early toilet-training and his morbid fears of castration—had led him into an utterly imbecilic account of Juliet's life. No man who had worked through his own neuroses could doubt that this was a woman whose physical life had been superbly fulfilled.

At the end of the workday, Pfefferkorn turned off the meter, told his wife to bring him sauerbraten and potatoes in his study, and settled down to a scathing attack on von Hutten. His letter encompassed the doctor's inadequate analysis, his inability to separate his own fantasies from what he read, and then a line-by-line textual refutation of von Hutten's major points.

Both letters appeared in the February issue of the *Psychoanalytical Review of Literature*. If von Hutten was pleased at the accusations of impotence and projection, he gave no sign of it to his wife, who had also read the criticism.

As for Pfefferkorn, the charge that his analytical methods were as slovenly as his appearance provoked him to widen the circle of argument. He called on Walter Lederhosen, Professor of Middle English History at Columbia, and on Mark Antwerp at New York University.

As it turned out, neither was familiar with St. Juliet. Neither could read the medieval Welsh-Latin in which she wrote. They both composed long treatises on twelfth-century England. Antwerp sidestepped the Juliet virginity issue. However, he proved that Henry was in Cardiff several times during what could be thought of as the relevant period. He also had a lot to say on Henry's love life and the strained relations between him and Eleanor.



Lederhosen concentrated on twelfth-century politics, especially Henry II's infrequent appearances in his English possessions, which did not please Pfefferkorn at all—how could he have inflamed the passions of the saint if he wasn't around to meet her? So he discarded the Columbia professor's remarks and produced a small pamphlet which contained the original articles, the rebutting letters, and

ProfessorAntwerp's lengthy essay.

Pfefferkorn concluded the pamphlet with a summary in which he tied Antwerp's arguments back to his own. The whole thing was published in a little booklet entitled *The Mirror of the Eye*, and distributed at the summer meetings of the International Convention of Psychoanalysts. In the introduction, Pfefferkorn explained how in their writings psychoanalysts mirrored the distortions with which their own eyes presented the world to them. He then detailed his own diagnosis of Von Hutten's various psychosexual maladies and how Von Hutten had projected these on to the writings of St. Juliet of Cardiff.

Von Hutten was speechless when he saw the pamphlet. He left the meeting a day early and flew back to Manhattan, where he consulted an old colleague now teaching history at Yale. Like Lederhosen and Antwerp, Rudolph Narr had not read Juliet's works. However, he discoursed most learnedly for forty pages on analytical techniques applied to history, with a major subsection on frigidity and sublimation in the Middle Ages.

The essay delighted Von Hutten. He published it in a booklet called *The Mirror of the Hand*, along with his original essay from the *Psychoanalytical Review of Literature*. In a pithy introduction, he exposed Pfefferkorn's fraudulent analytical methods. Because Pfefferkorn's own internal neurotic problems were unresolved, he was unable to withdraw himself from center stage in interacting with his patients. His needy ego took over from his patients; he projected his own desires and uncertainties on to what went on in the consulting room. Pfefferkorn's literary researches mirrored his intrusion into the patient's landscape—his hand, so to speak, covered the canvas.

The publication of *The Mirror of the Hand* coincided with the December meetings of the New York Psychoanalytical Association. While Pfefferkorn was furious—and made no secret of it—the other analysts were delighted. What a welcome change from the usual round of "Undifferentiated Narcissism in Post-Adolescence Transference Neuroses" and other learned talks.

Partisans for both men sprang up among the New York analysts. Pfefferkorn's most vocal supporter was Everard Dirigible. Carlos McGillicutty soon led the Von Hutten group.

Dirigible scored a great coup early in the battle: he found a scholar at the University of Chicago who actually could read St. Juliet's work in the original. Bernard Maledict leapt happily into the fray. Unacquainted with both the techniques and the language of psychoanalysis, he nonetheless had a great deal to say about Juliet's sexuality.

Maledict rejected Von Hutten's work. Juliet's writings could not possibly support a charge of frigidity. He was less clear in discussing an affair with Henry II—or any affairs with anyone. Instead, he described sexuality in the Middle Ages, explaining that the reasons for going into conventual life were often economic and had nothing to do with sexuality at all. In addition, virginity was not valued as highly in that era as it is today and while celibacy was expected in convents, no one

was too shocked at lapses.

After Maledict's work appeared simultaneously in the *Psychoanalytical Review of Literature* and the *Journal of Medieval History*, Von Hutten and McGillicutty were almost foaming with rage. McGillicutty saw his duty clear: he unearthed a second St. Juliet scholar at University College, Oxford. Robert Pferdlieber had devoted his live to translating and analyzing *The Veil before the Temple*, Juliet's major opus. He welcomed a chance to present his views to a wider audience. Without commenting precisely on the original Pfefferkorn-Von Hutten debate, he roundly condemned all of Maledict's research. Von Hutten saw to it that his article—with an appropriate commentary—appeared in all the important European psychoanalytic publications, as well as those in America.

By now Pfefferkorn's energies were so consumed with this debate that he refused all new patients: he needed every hour he could grab to fight Von Hutten. He spent long evenings in the Freud archives, seeking evidence from the Master that his analytical techniques were correct.

Mrs. Pfefferkorn became concerned: the eldest Pfefferkorn offspring was in his first year of Harvard Medical School; the youngest had embarked on some costly orthodonture; and in between lay three others with expensive needs. What did Pfefferkorn propose—that Ermine give up her horse? That Jodhpur sell his Ferrari? For those were the sacrifices she foresaw if the doctor's practice shrank. The rivalry with Von Hutten she dismissed with a contemptuous wave of the hand—could he not be adult enough to take a little criticism in stride?

Across the park, Von Hutten had better self-control, at least on the surface. He continued his usual sixty analytical sessions a week. But his attention in the examining room began to wander. When you are not speaking yourself, it is hard to feel engaged in dialogue: he found himself listening to Mrs. J——'s sexual fantasies when he thought he was hearing about Mr. P——'s hatred of his mother.

For years Von Hutten had prided himself on his perfect control and involvement in the consulting room. He could only blame Pfefferkorn for his failure to maintain his own rigid standards. His fury with Pfefferkorn turned into a hatred which absorbed most of his waking moments and quite a few of his sleeping ones as well. He was analyst enough to know that a dream of his father lunging at him with a baseball bat was a long-forgotten memory stirred to life by Pfefferkorn's abuse, but the knowledge did not ease his rage.

By lunch Von Hutten realized thatthe fantasy of murdering Pfefferkorn which had absorbed all his morning sessions was only a fantasy and would not solve his problems. But his rage at the other analyst increased: Pfefferkorn had caused him to contemplate his murder all morning, instead of the more important needs of his patients. Usually a self-contained man who asked no one for help, Von Hutten poured his anguish out to his wife.

Mrs. von Hutten raised perfectly manicured eyebrows as she served him a piece of poached salmon and some green salad. "I don't think his murder would help matters, Ulrich," she pronounced majestically. "You would still feel that he had defeated you."

"I know it!" Von Hutten almost screamed, pounding the table with his fist. "And root out all those damned begonias after lunch. I never want to see another one of them."

Mrs. von Hutten ignored this with the same authority that she had ignored all her husband's greater and lesser pleas over the years. After lunch, however, she turned her own considerable intellect to the Von Hutten–Pfefferkorn debate. She pulled his Pfefferkorn files from the file cabinets in his study. By now, correspondence and articles filled a drawer and a half.

At five o'clock, she called down to the maid on the house phone that she would not be in for dinner: would Birgitta please inform the doctor. She took the remaining files to her dressing-room, locked the door, and continued reading until close to the following dawn.

Mrs. von Hutten was one of those rigidly self-controlled people who set mental clocks for themselves and get up accordingly. She lay down for six hours sleep and rose again at ten. Despite a heavy downpour, she walked across the park to 62nd Street, her pace brisk but not hurried. By noon she was back at the Fifth Avenue house, calmly serving her husband a small slice of chicken breast and some steamed vegetables.

II

When the meter shut off for the day, Dr. von Hutten dictated a few case notes. He stood frowning at the back window, staring at the drenched begonias with unseeing eyes for long minutes, until a firm knock roused him. Doubtless some patient had forgotten an umbrella, although he saw nothing on the side table. He went slowly to the door.

"You!" he hissed.

Dr. Pfefferkorn shook his umbrella out on the mat and shed his bulky trench coat. "Yes, Von Hutten. My wife persuaded me I ought to see you in person. Get this matter cleared up. We've become the laughing-stock of the New York analytical profession."

"You may have," Von Hutten said coldly. "Your ideas are ridiculous and insupportable. I, however, notice no one laughing at me."

"That, my dear Von Hutten, is

because you are so self-centered that you notice nothing anyone else says." Seeing that his host made no motion to invite him in, Pfefferkorn pushed past him and sat in an armchair facing the analyst's chair. "So this is where it all takes place. Sterile atmosphere suitable for the sterile, outmoded ideas you profess."

Von Hutten nearly ground his teeth. "I have no need to see your consulting room–I am sure it is as sloppy as your thinking. As sloppy as your alleged research into Juliet of Cardiff."

Pfefferkorn frowned. Mrs. Pfefferkorn had persuaded him to make this trek, persuaded him against his better judgement, and now see what came of it: nothing but insults.

"Look, Von Hutten. Everyone knows your ideas on Juliet of Cardiff are as out of date as your so-called analytical methods. But let's agree to disagree. We can't keep escalating this scholarly battle. It takes too much time from my—our—practices."

Von Hutten almost choked. "That you dare call yourself an analyst is an insult to the memory of Freud. Agree to disagree! With you! I will not so demean the analytical profession."

"Demean," roared Pfefferkorn, springing to his feet. "You should be decertified by the New York State Medical Society. Decertified? What am I saying! You should be certified as a lunatic and locked up where you can no longer hurt the innocent and vulnerable."

Von Hutten jumped at him, grabbing his shoulders. "You will eat those words, you miserable scum."

Dr. Pfefferkorn, equally enraged and seventy-five pounds heavier, wrenched Von Hutten's hands away and shoved him to the floor. "You're welcome to try to make me do it, *Doctor* von Hutten. When and where you please, with the weapon of your choosing. You'll live to regret this moment."

He picked up his dripping trench coat and strode from the room, slamming the door behind him.

III

The morning of the duel was clear and sunny. At five-thirty, Dr. von Hutten slid out of the Fifth Avenue house. A note to his wife lay on his study table, explaining everything in case he did not return home. He did not really expect to lose: he had practised all weekend and felt totally confident.

His second, McGillicutty, was waiting for him at the 72nd Street entrance to Central Park, carrying the weapons.

"Feeling fit, Doctor?" McGillicutty asked respectfully.

"Never better. We'll make short work of this charlatan."

"Good. I've ordered breakfast at thePierre for seven-thirty: we'll have a little champagne to celebrate."

When they got to the trees behind the zoo, they found Pfefferkorn and Dirigible already waiting. Pfefferkorn was eating a ham sandwich and drinking from a thermos of coffee, arguing points with his mouth full. Disgusting, Von Hutten thought. It really was time to end the man's career.

The weapons were so heavy that the seconds violated the code of honour by each bringing the opponent's to the site. As soon as Dirigible saw McGillicutty, he excused himself to the wildly gesticulating Pfefferkorn and beckoned the other second to join him a little way away.

"You have brought all twenty-four volumes of the Standard Edition?"

McGillicutty nodded. He was as aware as Dirigible of the solemnity of the moment. They solemnly laid out two sets of the *Complete Works of Sigmund Freud* on the grass in front of them and counted each volume, fanning the pages to see if any were missing. This task completed, they returned again to the principals and called them together.

"Gentlemen–Doctors," Dirigible cleared his throat nervously. "The code of honour demands that we try one last time to reconcile you without a mortal blow being struck. Will you consider—for the sake of your wives, your patients, the honour of the entire psychoanalytical profession—will you bury your differences?"

Von Hutten said coldly, "I came to see that this charlatan, this imposter, is unfrocked as he deserves."

Pfefferkorn snorted, "I would as soon touch an embalmed halibut as shake this man's hand. Sooner—the halibut would have more life to it."

McGillicutty, too, tried a plea, with equally poor results. At last he said, "Gentlemen: if it must be, let us begin. You understand the rules. Each of you may fire one shot. If the other does not fall, you may fire again."

Dirigible and McGillicutty stood back to back. Each stepped forward fifteen paces. Von Hutten and Pfefferkorn came to stand beside their seconds, who then moved to the center of the field.

Dr. Dirigible held up a white handkerchief. As it fluttered to the ground, Dr. Pfefferkorn bellowed, "You have a castration complex, Von Hutten, which interferes with your establishing any meaningful counter-transference!"

Von Hutten flinched but did not fall. "You suffer from undifferentiated narcissism which leads to regression complexes and inability to distinguish between patients and your external speaking object."

Without waiting for a nod from the seconds, Pfefferkorn shouted furiously, "You are impotent both physically and psychologically. Your criticisms stem from your own inadequacies. They would be laughable if they didn't harm so many patients!"

A policeman patrolling the park strolled over, attracted by the shouting. He stood puzzled, not knowing whether to interfere.

"What's going on?" he finally asked the seconds.

"A duel," McGillicutty said briefly. "Freud at thirty paces."

The policeman frowned uncertainly, not sure whether he was being laughed at. "Who are these guys, anyway?"

"Psychoanalysts," Dirigible replied,

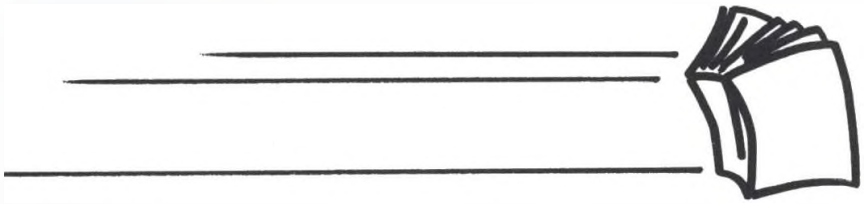
keeping his eyes on the action on the field. "They're trying to resolve some underlying theoretical differences."

"Oh, analysts," the policeman nodded. "You gotta expect strange behavior from them." He nodded again to himself several times to confirm this diagnosis and wandered off towards the reservoir to see if anyone had fallen in during the night.

Meanwhile, on the field of battle, argument was becoming more personal and less analytical. Dirigible and McGillicutty both tried to interrupt.

"Gentlemen, please. You're straying far from Freud." Each went to reason with his own principal, but neither was willing to listen. Pfefferkorn, in fact, knocked Dirigible to the ground in his fury at being interrupted.

"And your mother! Oedipal fantasies about her? No wonder you're such a cold bastard. Imagine being in bed with that woman—enough to traumatize any child."



"And you!" screamed Von Hutten. "You never broke the tie with Mummy. You keep trying to recreate that experience with your patients—be Mummy for me—support me—love me!"

At this taunting, Pfefferkorn picked up *The Interpretation of Dreams* from the stack next to him and charged across the open space to Von Hutten. He flung the volume at his opponent. The book caught Von Hutten underneath the left eye. Blood poured down his face on to his immaculate shirt front. He ignored it. Snatching *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* from the ground, he smashed it into Pfefferkorn's nose.

Pfefferkorn, too, began to bleed. *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* lay close at hand. It landed on his opponent's left shoulder. Von Hutten was more successful with *Moses and Monotheism*—the book glanced off Pfefferkorn's ear.

In vain McGillicutty and Dirigible tried to separate the men. This failing, they quickly snatched all copies of Freud's work out of the way. The analysts promptly went for each other's throats.

"Blackguard! Imposter!" Von Hutten panted, trying to bite Pfefferkorn's ear.

"Charlatan! Imbecile!" hissed Pfefferkorn, sticking his knee in Von Hutten's stomach.

Pfefferkorn was by far the larger man, but Von Hutten's rage gave him superhuman strength. Neither could get close enough to the other to make a telling blow.

McGillicutty and Dirigible wrung their hands, anguished. How could they stop these giants of the New York Psychoanalytical Association from making fools of themselves? Worse, what if one of them really got in a solid blow and injured the other seriously? What if Pfefferkorn, already overheated and sweating, had a heart attack?

They debated nervously about whether to try to find the policeman again and get him to break up the fight. But what if he arrested the doctors? What harm would that publicity do the analytical world? As they talked agitatedly, Mrs. von Hutten swept into the park. She quickly located her husband and walked up to the seconds, her golden hair shining magnificently in the morning sunlight.

"Why have you allowed this farce to continue so long?"

"Mrs. von Hutten!" McGillicutty gasped. "I—this is no sight for you. What are you doing here?"

"My husband left a note for me in his study. When he failed to show up for breakfast I naturally looked for him there and found this message. A duel in Central Park! I can't believe four adult men—so-called adults—could carry on in such a fashion."

She moved to the heaving contes-

tants. "Ulrich! Dr. Pfefferkorn! Please stop this at once. You are making a ridiculous spectacle."

Her voice was low-pitched but penetrating. The two analysts pulled apart at once. Dr. von Hutten tried to straighten his tie.

"Vera! What are you doing here?"

"More to the point, Ulrich, what are you doing here? What is the purpose of this duel with Dr. Pfefferkorn? When Mrs. Pfefferkorn and I spoke three weeks ago, it was in the hope that you two would resolve your problems, not that you would carry on like beasts in a side-show."

"This—this man calls himself an analyst," Von Hutten hissed through clenched teeth, "but he makes a mockery of the teachings of Freud. There is no talking to him."

Dr. Pfefferkorn had moved to one side to clean off the blood caked around his nose and mouth. At that, he turned back. "Your husband is a menace to the population of New York with his undifferentiated castration complex and fears of impotency."

Mrs. von Hutten raised a gloved hand. "Please do not repeat your arguments: I have read the Juliet of Cardiff file and I am well aware of the names you have been calling each other for the past two years. I should point out—and Mrs. Pfefferkorn is in total agreement with me—that you are jeopardizing your practices by your obsession with this Juliet of Cardiff. Do no more literary criticism. For neither of you is skilled at it."

Both men gasped. Dr. Pfefferkorn saw his wife walking towards them through the park. He waited for her to come up, then exclaimed, "Not understand literary criticism! Cordelia—don't tell me you have been discussing this serious intellectual matter with Mrs. von Hutten here. Really, you should have better things to do with your time."

"I do," Mrs. Pfefferkorn said drily. "It was most annoying to have to spend that time looking at Juliet of Cardiff. But Vera and I have examined both your files on the subject. We have also looked at the saint's writings. And we discovered that neither of you—nor your learned colleagues in Chicago and Oxford—know what you're talking about. Please go back to analysis—about which you both know something, even if it is something different—and leave St. Juliet to the experts."

Von Hutten found his voice first. "You don't know what you're talking about. My analysis conclusively proves—"

"Yes, dear," Mrs. von Hutten cut him off indulgently. "You had some preconceptions, and you found answers to those in your analysis of *The Veil Before the Temple*. Dr. Pfefferkorn, you did the same thing."

"Yes, Jacob." Mrs. Pfefferkorn said. "Vera and I have discovered that St. Juliet never existed. The writings which are imputed to her are the composite literature of the Convent of the Blessed Virgin in Cardiff for a period of about a hundred years, beginning in 1203, long after Henry II died."

The duellists were momentarily silent. Then Dr. von Hutten said aloofly, "Are you certain?"

"Positive," his wife answered briskly. "There are significant textual indicators for this, not just stylistic ones. You may have noted that the latter sections of the books are written entirely in Latin, the earlier in Welsh-Latin. The last parts were written in peacetime by women who had the leisure to learn scholarly Latin—the first were composed during the great upheaval surrounding John and the barons. There are numerous other pointers, of course—we can go over them when we get home if you'd like."

"No, thank you," Von Hutten responded coldly. "I don't imagine I'll have the time."

He and Pfefferkorn glowered at their wives. "Improperly sublimated integration," Von Hutten muttered.

"Separation from fathers never fully established; no proper internal integration," Pfefferkorn added sullenly.

They looked at each other. Von Hutten said, "How truly Freud spoke: women will never understand themselves, for they themselves are the problem." Ignoring his swollen left eye, bloody shirt and torn jacket, he flicked back his cuff to look at his watch. "Vera, will you please call my morning patients and reschedule their appointments? I'm going to breakfast at the Pierre. Coming, Pfefferkorn?"

The women watched their husbands stride from the park together, the seconds trailing behind them carrying Freud's works.

Mrs.. Pfefferkorn relaxed. "An impressive performance, Vera. But what if—?"

"What if they ask for a point-by-point critique of St. Juliet's writings to see how we know they were composed by a group? They won't: they're too embarrassed...speaking of breakfast, I haven't had any. Champagne at the Plaza?" ■

The butler has hidden
the knife
With which Lord Renault
stabbed his wife;
People frequently say
That crime doesn't pay,
But the butler is now
fixed for life

–DIXIE WHITTED

Detour: The Column

By

Michele Slung

Tax season, which as I write is settling in on the landscape along with the last snows of winter, means different things to different folks. Usually, none of these things are pleasant.

But, in fact, I have one rather sweet memory of an April somewhere back in the early 80s—a day when I was being picked up by Pat McGerr to head off into the Maryland countryside on one of the irregular regular ladies' lunches she and I and Barbara Mertz were in the habit of enjoying whenever the impulse moved us.

For those of you unfamiliar with her work, Pat's best known book is probably her debut effort, the twisty *Pick Your Victim*. (She went on to write twelve more novels and dozens of short stories.) Though its pub date, 1947, happens to have been the year of my birth, Pat herself had been a mere thirty-year-old at the time and was quite willing, decades later, in the true spirit of mysterious friendship, to treat me as an equal. However, this actually was less simple a matter than it sounds: for if the spirit was willing, the flesh did pose something more of a problem. Which is to say, that while I am a shortish person, Pat was a very, very tall one, and walking along the sidewalk together, we really did have a hard time getting the rhythm of it right.

Sitting down, thankfully, was much easier. And this we did that morning in Pat's car, a vintage Detroit-made vehicle that, pointing its massive fins to heaven, was even longer than she was and that, once I was inside it, made me feel just a bit as if I'd swallowed a shrinking potion. Still, we were sitting down, and it was Pat who was serenely navigating that amazing dreadnought as we chatted, wending her own secret path through the suburbs to avoid annoying traffic lights—a superbly useful route that to this day, I might add, I've never been able exactly to duplicate.

Anyway, as it was nearly April, the subject of The Horror of Income Tax quickly came up, with me complaining about the injustice and incomprehensibility and sheer frustration of it all. I'm sure this was because I'd spent the morning staring at and shuffling around those scraps of paper which collect in that belly of the beast of the self-employed writer, the accordion file. But to my surprise, rather than commiserate, Pat expressed instead the utter and complete glee she experienced on the occasion of each annual personal tussle with the IRS, seeing it as an uneven match of wits in which the minions of the government and their computers stood little chance against her. The intellect that gave the genre puzzles in which the mystery addressed itself to a group of potential murderees (the "whodunin" and not the "whodunit") was hardly daunted by federal posturings designed to fake her out of her cash [illegible].

So, although it's been eight years since Pat died, there hasn't been an early springtime when I haven't seen in my mind's eye that ocean liner of an automobile gliding silently (and always at the precise speed limit) down the back streets of Washington and when I haven't longed for her ghost to pause just for a moment to instill in me the proper sense of gamesmanship, the brimming-with-confidence attitude that would make me look forward to April 15th as she herself, fired up and ready to go into battle, always did.

But so far, no such luck...and I still file for extensions.

Now, as for Pat's and my lunch companion, "The Mertz" (as she's referred to on the cover of the February *New York Noose*): well, past and present come together in an interview with "E. Peters/B. Michaels" conducted by Marlys Millhiser originally for the Rocky Mountain MWA's newsletter,

Mystery novelist Marlys Millhiser (left) interviewed Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels (above) in a rollicking piece for the Mystery Writers of America newsletter.

Deadlines. Since Barbara is an old friend and Marlys a new one, I'd like to applaud the latter for capturing the other's intelligence, vitality and outspokenness with such affectionate appreciation. (For those of you who haven't read it, the lead of the piece goes like this: " 'I feel like a pimp,' Barbara Michaels/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Mertz says." That's better, I think, than even the famous opener," 'Hell,' said the Dutchess" for getting a reader's attention, don't you?)

What Marlys' subject is conveying, through phrases so well-sharpened that they nearly cut flesh, is her contempt for the self-promotional activities that are now so much a part of the publishing process. "I resent pandering my books. I write the damned things, which is work enough," Barbara explains and goes on to note that, at least as far as she's concerned, the money paid to writers doesn't go up for all the extra time and energy spent. But while I agree with her that a life hanging out in green rooms and avoiding drinking radio station coffee is worth taking a stand against on the one hand, on the other, the truth is that an awful lot of writers are either frustrated hams or terminally gregarious and like escaping the garret for a little bit of attention from anyone who'll pay it. This, I admit, is not taking into account all those bookstore events where no one shows up unless your Agatha Christie, but there is also the point that we do live in an era of intense overstimulation with entertainment as product and products (think of those dancing raisins) as entertainment. Books are just a part of the mix, which was less the case even a decade or so ago, and thus are authors compelled to get out there and compete with sun-dried grapes.

Basically, part of me is cheering on The Mertz for her contempt for publishers' formulaic precepts, for her defense of midlist writers, her fondness for Reginald Hill (I'm on record already in this space as sharing it) and for those other opinions she voices which reveal her not only as a highly intelligent writer but also as a highly intelligent reader. Yet, from my own perspective, even if I'd like authors to feel less crushed in the ever-grinding wheels of the publicity and marketing machinery, I do believe that for some, especially those who actually enjoy the process, there often can be increased "pay" in both royalties and in the greater familiarity that leads to greater royalties.

This, of course, should be news to no one. Why else would any of the current system have come into being? And since Barbara at the same time praises the accomplishments of mystery bookshops—helping as they do so many midlist writers find their readers—she should see that the rise of these speciality stores is simply part of the same developmental pattern at the end of the 20th century that has given rise to the self-promotion phenomenon she detests. In a world of sensory overload and continual "Choose me!" bombardment, the "niche" has become one of the answers, and mystery writers lucky enough to be on morning television, hoping the impression they leave will last the distance between the TV set and the nearest bookstore, are only doing what they can to be noticed at all. They're entitled.

Hammett may not have done "Donahue" ("Will you agree that you and Lillian are a dysfunctional couple?"), but histories of 18th and 19th-century publishing reveal that, even with egregious refinements such as the talk show still in the distant future, book hucksterism is a time-honored practice. Dickens and Twain, two of the best-known of the indefatigable self-promoters of their day, didn't consider it beneath them—and I even think Barbara would look forward to green rooms a bit more were you to promise her such company.

But I also respect her preference for staying at home and letting the books sell themselves. ■

The work of *Ruth Rendell*

Barbara Vine

Great expectations generously fulfilled

by Jane S. Bakerman

The appearance of *A Dark-Adapted Eye* by Ruth Rendell writing as Barbara Vine evoked great excitement among fans of crime fiction. Readers and fellow writers alike were freshly struck by Rendell's productivity, for she had already established two other "sets" of novels and had published numerous short stories, reviews, and occasional pieces which earned her great respect and popularity. Working in several types of fiction—novel, short story, novelette—as well as in several subgenres—the police procedural, the psychological suspense tale, the inverted mystery—Rendell had amply demonstrated her skill, and because of her excellent reputation, expectations ran high.

Everyone assumed that Barbara Vine would be a fine writer. And she is; *A Dark-Adapted Eye* and subsequent Barbara Vine novels enhance Rendell's reputation for extending established literary patterns, for extraordinary achievements of characterization, and for creating different authorial voices for separate types of work. These important qualities contribute heavily to the keen suspense which intensifies her fiction.

Initially, Rendell became known for her series, procedurals which, in the good old English tradition, are fairly short on procedure and richly long on characterization, setting, and plot. Many fans cite the series as Rendell's most appealing work. These novels recount the cases and the personal development of Chief Inspector Reginald Wexford, of his associate, Mike Burden, and of both men's families. Among the Kingsmarkham series are *The Best Man to Die, No More Dying Then, Murder Being Once Done, Some Lie and Some Die, Shake Hands Forever, The Veiled One*. and, most recently, *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter.*

The Kingsmarkham novels certainly benefit from established crime fiction traditions. That is, they depict a cast of interesting, continuing characters whose personal histories and private-life adventures augment and offset the criminal cases central to their plots. By providing subplots, offering opportunities for the author to compare and/or contrast characters and situations, and even sometimes by lending comic relief, well-developed (or better yet, well-developing) series characters can deepen a novel's structure as effectively as they can broaden its scope.

Complications in the lives of continuing characters frequently generate subplots in private-eye and amateur detective series as well as in procedurals. Readers always knew a bit about Sam Spade's love life and about Lew Archer's failed marriage, but these characters talked much less frankly and openly about their private affairs than do such current fictional private eyes as Sue Grafton's Kinsey Milhone, Sara Paretsky's V.I. Warshawski, Linda Barnes' Carlotta Carlyle, or even Liza Cody's Anna Lee, all of whom share many biographical details in first-person accounts of their adventures. The effect is almost intimate, certainly confidential, and thus, the characters seem markedly different from Spade's or Archer's powerful but remote presences.

Similarly, though readers knew a good bit about Miss Marple's and Hercule Poirot's social comings and goings, about the Gallic logic which energized Poirot's little gray cells, and about Miss Marple's ability to compare the life and people of St. Mary Meade with events and people anywhere and thus solve intricate puzzles, these beloved characters didn't do much soul-searching on stage, as it were. Currently, however, Nancy Pickard's

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The Novels of *Ruth Rendell*/Barbara Vine

Writing as Ruth Rendell

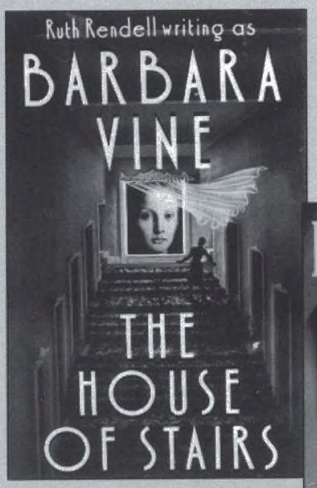
To Fear a Painted Devil
Vanity Dies Hard
The Secret House of Death
One Across, Two Down
The Face of Trespass
A Demon in My View
A Judgement in Stone
Make Death Love Me
The Lake of Darkness
Master of the Moor
The Killing Doll
The Tree of Hands
Live Flesh
Talking to Strange Men
The Bridesmaid
Going Wrong

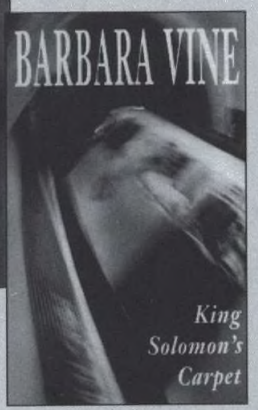
The Chief Inspector Wexford Novels:

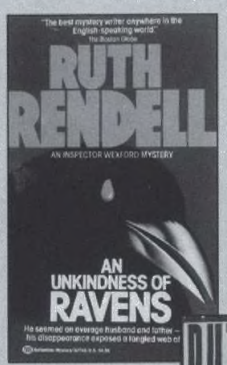
From Doon with Death
Sins of the Fathers
Wolf to the Slaughter
The Best Man to Die
A Guilty Thing Surprised
No More Dying Then
Murder Being Once Done
Some Lie and Some Die
Shake Hands for Ever
A Sleeping Life
Put on by Cunning
The Speaker of Mandarin
An Unkindness of Ravens
The Veiled One
Kissing the Gunner's Daughter

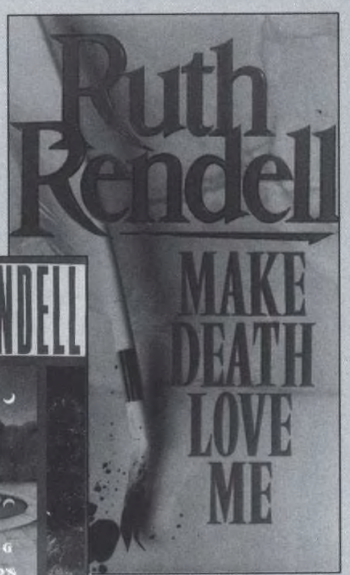
Writing as Barbara Vine

The Dark-Adapted Eye
A Fatal Inversion
The House of Stairs
Gallowglass
King Solomon's Carpet









clever amateur Jenny Cain reports her adventures in the more intimate, personal mode so identified with modern protagonists.

Many police procedurals commonly employ a fairly distanced third person point of view although Nicolas Freeling's Piet Van der Valk and Henri Castang novels, like Marilyn Wallace's California series featuring Carlos Cruz and Jay Goldstein, are more intimate. Freeling uses a very limited third-person perspective in his procedurals so that readers really share his protagonists' perspectives. Wallace functions in a similar fashion, shifting between Goldstein's and Cruz's viewpoints. In all three series, then, there is a feeling of closeness between protagonist and reader.

True to police procedural tradition, Ruth Rendell uses third person narrative in the Kingsmarkham novels and stories; yet she also capitalizes on the trend toward readers' intimacy with contemporary protagonists. Not surprisingly, she does it in a manner particularly her own. The secret lies within the personality of Inspector Wexford. Like Castang and Van der Valk, Wexford is introspective, and many of his thoughts about his cases, his colleagues, his suspects, and his family are wholly accessible to the reader. Yet, his privacy is well-guarded. In *Shake Hands Forever*, for instance, Nancy Lake, a charming secondary character, sets her cap for the Inspector, and clearly, Wexford finds her alluring. However, each reader individually must determine the outcome of this attraction. Even Ruth Rendell says that she is not privy to the Chief Inspector's secrets!

In large part, Wexford's flashes of temper—or temperament—protect his "privacy," just as they help to keep him interesting. The Inspector tends to lash out at others—usually at Burden, occasionally at a witness or a suspect. He is at his most brusque, perhaps, when dealing with Ginge Matthews, smalltime criminal, sometime informant, briefly Wexford's wholly unofficial assistant.

Several elements contribute to this attitude. First of all, of course, Wexford has enough status within the law-enforcement system to allow him to lash out—so long as he chooses his target carefully (his superior is both prickly and pompous, one of the few characters to whom Wexford seems vulnerable, and hence he is safe from open Wexfordian attack). Secondly, characters like Ginge clearly rank below

Wexford in the class structure, a fact which increases their vulnerability. Moreover, the Inspector is sharply intelligent and very well-read, qualities which give him an advantage over his targets and even, in a curious sense, legitimatize his brusqueness. Finally, readers rarely fault Wexford because Rendell carefully lays the groundwork for his irritability.

Ginge, for instance, is an unsavory fellow; he whines almost uninterruptedly and remains perpetually dissatisfied. Thus, he irritates as well as amuses readers so that they tend to understand and to excuse the Inspector's impatience. Even Burden, beloved as he is to the series' fans, brings some of Wexford's sharpness upon himself.

Burden fusses; he worries, frets, and disapproves—until, eventually, Wexford pounces. In this relationship, Wexford's quickness with the apt quotation as well as his intuitive leaps of understanding also contribute to occasional tension. The Inspector delights in confounding his aide with well-chosen quotes, and his chief's flights of fancy sometimes irritate Burden. Given these considerations, it's understandable that this essentially supportive association also breeds conflict.

Another facet of Wexford's personality helps to mitigate his crustiness even as it deepens his characterization. Reg Wexford is often as empathetic as he is acerbic and clever. In *No More Dying Then*, when grief pushes Burden to the edge of breakdown, Wexford supports him steadily, and readers are allowed a rare moment; they hear the older man openly express affection and concern:

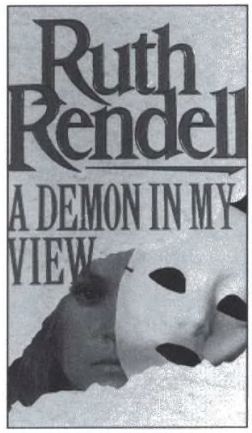
> The room was very still. Soon I must lift my head, Burden thought, and take away my hands and see his devotion. He didn't move except to press his fingers harder against his eyes. Then he felt Wexford's heavy hand on his shoulder.
>
> 'Mike, my dear old friend..

Suspects and witnesses also respond to Inspector Wexford's empathy, as shown in the response by the murderer in *From Doon with Death* who ignored all others present and:

> ...came around Wexford...to the only one who had ever understood....Neither laughing nor flinching, a country policeman had understood...She fell against Wexford and gasped into his shoulder. He put his arm around her hard, forgetting the rules...

The public values a soft heart hidden beneath a tough hide, and Wexford and his creator capitalize handily on that fact.

By grounding Wexford's character upon his intelligence, his extensive reading, his fierce tongue, and his empathy,



Rendell keeps readers (and perhaps herself and her protagonist) alert. One cannot be sure *exactly* which way the Inspector will react. He is equally capable of shrugging off or lashing out at an opponent, of intimidating or encouraging a subject, of telling off or sustaining a subordinate. One knows his repertoire of responses, but Wexford's choice of response remains tantalizingly uncertain. Watching for clues to this puzzle is one of the minor delights of this major series. Watching Rendell reshape the current trend toward full intimacy with crime novel protagonists to suit her own style is fascinating.

Intermingled with the Kingsmarkham series is a group of highly individual novels. Often plots deal with a seriously disturbed personality: *A Demon in My View*, *A Judgement in Stone*, *The Face of Trespass*, or *The Lake of Darkness*, for example. Others tell of relatively innocent people caught up in someone else's schemes, such as *Vanity Dies Hard*, *The Secret House of Death*, *Make Death Love Me*, *A Tree of Hands*, or *Talking to Strange Men*. Some readers find these novels to be darker, less hopeful than the series, yet almost everyone acknowledges that they include some of Rendell's finest work, even, according to some fans, her highest achievements. The debate over Rendell's "best" will probably never be resolved, and it is not terribly important.

What is of great import and of great value, however, is the fact that in this group of novels, Rendell maintains her trademark skills, most notably, perhaps, those exciting feats of characterization. Just as Ruth Rendell's flair for characterization facilitated her participation in the movement toward fuller character development, so does her focus on character help her to refine another literary development important to the evolution of the mystery novel—a growing emphasis on social criticism.

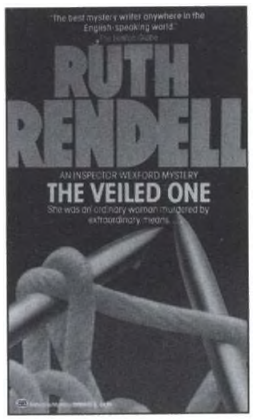
Ross Macdonald's ecological concerns as well as his sense that American culture had come to a critical turning point are well-known and have been widely analyzed. Contemporary writers such as James McClure, Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, Sharyn McCrumb, P.M. Carlson, and Annette Roome openly and effectively address a variety of social

ills, including such topics as racism, mounting divorce rates, post-traumatic-stress syndrome, spouse abuse, and financial fraud perpetrated on the elderly. Lawrence Sanders goes so far as to sermonize, organizing entire novels around such issues as the early corruption of today's children.

Very occasionally, Ruth Rendell focuses on social issues in her work. *An Unkindness of Ravens*, for example, depicts feminism gone destructively sour, and *A Guilty Thing Surprised* features a talented but plain woman who takes extraordinary, and ultimately self-destructive, steps to gain her place in the sun. Not usually cited among Rendell's most gripping works, both these novels belong to the Kingsmarkham series.

Generally, Ruth Rendell is much more successful when she abjures overt social criticism, relying instead upon acute social observation. Here again, extraordinarily skillful characterization serves her well. She rivets readers' attention on a small group of people and depicts their interactions, allowing each reader to draw her own conclusions about the social issues involved. Two good examples of this method depict the disastrous adulthoods of emotionally abused children: the enormously successful *A Demon in My View*, and the less well-received but haunting *Master of the Moor*.

Centering action upon an unsavory character poses special authorial problems. Ruth Rendell has addressed these challenges, noting that one can keep an unlovable character bearable (or at least at the reader's center of interest) by allowing him one good trait. In *The Lake of Darkness*, such a character, Finn, cherishes his mother, Lena, a poor, very unstable woman. Finn's patience and loving-kindness toward her contrast sharply with his



complete callousness toward others. All these facts emerge through character development and setting.

Another major character in *The Lake of Darkness*, Martin Urban, is a fairly privileged young man. Certainly, his prim, traditional, careful parents believe that they've given him only the best. Yet there is almost no genuine feeling between parents and son. Martin's inability to communicate with his parents extends to an inability to communicate effectively with anyone. He is curiously innocent even as he is rather cynical. Furthermore, he can function only in the narrowest, most conventional milieu; he is as unequipped to handle unusually good fortune as he is uncomprehending of others' personalities. Like Finn, he is deaf toward the needs of almost everyone else. Like Finn, he is the dangerous product of his upbringing.

A third young man also figures importantly in *The Lake of Darkness*, and through him, Rendell depicts the difficulty of finding affordable, livable housing in London. This theme, like the flawed-family motif, also surfaces elsewhere in her canon. Despite ongoing interest in both themes, however, she keeps them fully under control.

To her great credit, Ruth Rendell does absolutely no preaching in *The Lake of Darkness*; instead, she shows us how her characters behave, thus dramatizing their backgrounds as well as their interrelationships. By concentrating upon characterization and plot, Rendell not only keeps her story vigorous and exciting but also grants readers the added pleasure of discovery: they feel that they see beneath the surface of the narrative to genuine insights into human nature. It's a heady sensation, and readers love it.

The sense of discovery, which also surfaces in most of the Kingsmarkham series, is a major element in some of Rendell's studies of people enmeshed in others' schemes. *Make Death Love Me*, one of her most interesting novels, extends the process of discovery beyond the end of the story. By bringing the adventures detailed in the novel to full closure but at the same time creating an open ending—almost a parallel ending—Rendell makes one of her habitually astute but unobtrusive comments.

In real life, episodes end, but people go on to the next adventure, to the next boring task, to the next love affair, to the next mistake, to the next achievement. Even death doesn't wholly end anyone's story, for each person's life resonates in the lives of others for good or for ill. It is this tantalizing concept which informs the conclusion of *Make Death Love Me* wherein readers are invited to speculate about the future of several characters whose lives are forever changed by the death of another. Readers are afforded the satisfaction of closure—this account is fairly and fully resolved—but they are also expected to contemplate the consequences of this resolution.

Only Rendell's skillful characterization allows such endings to work. Here, Alan Groombridge and his assistant

CONTINUED ON PAGE 87

Collecting Mystery Fiction

BY

OTTO PENZLER

Ross Macdonald

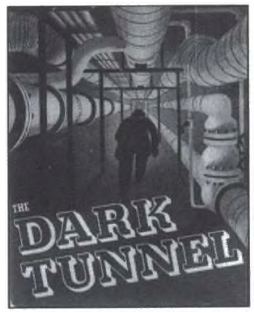
Part II

THE PREVIOUS COLUMN DESCRIBED ROSS MACDONALD'S LEW ARCHER NOVELS AND STORY COLLECTIONS. THIS COLUMN IS DEVOTED TO HIS NON-LEW ARCHER MYSTERY FICTION AND MYSTERY RELATED NON-FICTION.

The Dark Tunnel

FIRST EDITION: New York, Dodd, Mead, 1944. Red cloth; front cover printed with black publisher's logo; spine printed with black lettering; rear cover blank. Issued in a blue/gray, black and white pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: Published September 12, 1944.



Copyright page on the first printing has no indication of printing history; the second printing states: "Published September 1944/Second printing September 1944."

This title is one of the legendary rarities of modern American literature.

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	with d/w	without d/w
Good:	$1,000.00	$35.00
Fine:	$4,000.00	$150.00
Very fine:	$5,000.00	$200.00

Trouble Follows Me

FIRST EDITION: New York, Dodd, Mead, 1946. Light greenish/gray cloth; front cover printed with black publisher's logo; spine printed with black lettering; rear cover blank. Issued in gray, yellow, black and white pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: Published August 20, 1946.

Copyright page of the first printing has no indication of printing history.

This title is at least as rare as *The Dark Tunnel* and is listed as nominally less expensive only because it is the author's second book.

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	with d/w	without d/w
Good:	$1,000.00	$35.00
Fine:	$3,750.00	$150.00
Very fine:	$4,500.00	$200.00

Blue City

FIRST EDITION: New York, Knopf, 1947. Red cloth; front and rear covers and spine printed with blue lettering and ornamental devices. Issued in red, blue and white pictorial dust wrapper.

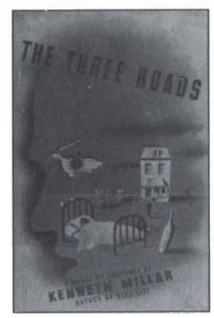
Note: Published August 18, 1947.

Copyright page states: "First Edition."

This book and the next were well-produced and are, therefore, more likely to turn up in collector's condition than the early titles in the Lew Archer series.

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	with d/w	without d/w
Good:	$100.00	$20.00
Fine:	$600.00	$40.00
Very fine:	$750.00	$50.00



The Three Roads

FIRST EDITION: New York, Knopf, 1948. Brown boards; front and rear covers and spine printed with blue lettering and ornamental devices. Issued in a blue, pink, black and white pictorial dust wrapper.

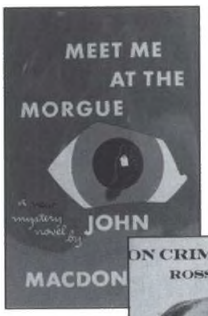
Note: Published June 7, 1948.

Copyright page states: "First Edition."

Even though the paper-covered boards used in the binding for this volume do not hold up as well as the cloth used in the previous title, it is likely that the print run was slightly larger, as copies in collector's condition are no noticeably less available.

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	with d/w	without d/w
Good:	$100.00	$20.00
Fine:	$600.00	$40.00
Very fine:	$750.00	$50.00



Meet Me At The Morgue

FIRST EDITION: New York, Knopf, 1953. Paper-covered boards printed with orange and yellow pattern; spine printed with black lettering on white rectangular backgrounds; front cover blank; rear cover has publisher's logo printed in black. Issued in a mainly gray with red, white and black pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: Published May 18, 1953.

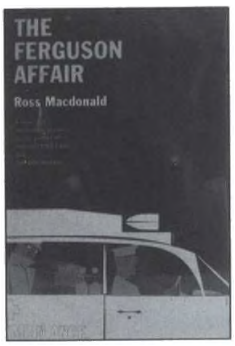
Copyright page states: "First Edition."

Published in England in 1954 under the title *Experience With Evil*.

Previously published in an abridged version in *Cosmopolitan* magazine, March 1953.

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	with d/w	without d/w
Good:	$100.00	$15.00
Fine:	$500.00	$25.00
Very fine:	$650.00	$30.00



The Ferguson Affair

FIRST EDITION: New York, Knopf, 1960. Blue boards; red cloth spine; front and rear covers blind stamped with decorative device and publisher's logo, respectively; spine stamped with gold lettering and decorative rules. Issued in a mainly black with yellow, purple, gray and white pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: Published July 18, 1960.

Copyright page states: "First Edition."

An abridged version was syndicated by King Features in March and April 1963.

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	with d/w	without d/w
Good:	$35.00	$10.00
Fine:	$150.00	$20.00
Very fine:	$200.00	$25.00

On Crime Writing

FIRST EDITION: Santa Barbara (California), Capra Press, 1973. Black and white wrappers (or boards).

Note: Published July 1973.

Simultaneous publication of the trade issue in wrappers, in an edition of 2,500 copies, and the limited edition, in boards, in an edition of 250 copies, signed by author.

Contains two original essays: "The Writer as Detective Hero" and "Writing the Galton Case."

The title page of the first printing is red and black; the second printing is all black. There are no other differences between the two printings.

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	Limited	Trade
Good:	$15.00	$5.00
Fine:	$65.00	$8.50
Very fine:	$80.00	$10.00

A Collection of Reviews

FIRST EDITION: Northridge, California, Lord John Press, 1979. Trade edition: gray boards; red cloth spine; front cover printed with red lettering; decorative device and border; rear cover blank; spine stamped with gold lettering. Limited edition: blue marbled boards; blue cloth spine; front and rear covers blank; spine stamped with gold lettering.

Note: Published October 25, 1979.

Simultaneous publication of the limited edition and the deluxe edition. The limited edition had 300 copies, each numbered and signed by the author. The deluxe edition had 50 copies, each numbered and signed by the author. In addition, there was a small, unspecified number of deluxe copies marked "presentation" copy on the limitation leaf.

Contents are a foreword and 14 reviews, only three of which are about crime fiction. All appear in book form for the first time. The three essays about mystery fiction are "The Detective in Fiction," "A Catalog of Crime" and "The Durable Art of James M. Cain."

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	Limited	Deluxe
Good:	$20.00	$35.00
Fine:	$125.00	$175.00
Very fine:	$150.00	$200.00

A "presentation" copy would be worth just slightly more than a numbered copy of the deluxe edition.

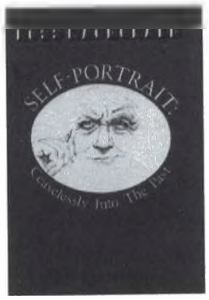
Self-Portrait: Ceaselessly Into The Past

FIRST EDITION: Santa Barbara (California), Capra Press, 1981. Trade edition: red cloth; front and rear covers blank; spine printed with black. Issued in a mainly red, black and white illustrated dust wrapper. Limited edition: black simulated leather boards; front and rear covers blank; spine stamped with gold. Issued without a dust wrapper.

Note: Published September 30, 1981.

Trade and limited editions issued simultaneously. The limited edition had 250 copies, numbered and signed by the author and by Eudora Welty, who wrote the foreword. In addition, there were 26 deluxe lettered copies, issued in a slipcase of marbled paper over boards. These copies also had a photograph of Macdonald and Welty inserted in a pocket on the inside front cover. There was also a small number of copies, unspecified, for presentation. Of the trade issue, 2,841 copies were printed.

Contents include first publication of two pieces of the 21 collected here, "In the First Person" and "Homage to



Dashiell Hammett."

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	Trade	Limited
Good:	$10.00	$35.00
Fine:	$20.00	$125.00
Very fine:	$25.00	$150.00

A lettered copy (all are presumably in very fine condition) would be worth about $250.00.

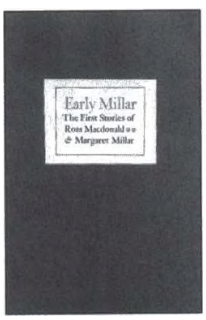
Early Millar

The First Stories of Ross Macdonald and Margaret Millar

FIRST EDITION: Santa Barbara, California, Cordelia Editions, 1982. Paper edition: blue wrappers; white label printed in red and black pasted to the front cover; rear cover blank. Leather edition: full blue leather, stamped in gold on front cover; rear cover blank.

Note: Published May 1982.

The wrappered edition and the leather edition were published simultaneously. Of the paper edition, there were 150 copies produced with Arabic numerals. Of the leather edition, there were 15 copies produced with Roman numerals, each signed by both authors. In addition, there were five copies in full leather for presentation, each personalized, numbered and signed by both authors.



Contents are the first published story of Kenneth and Margaret Millar, originally issued in their high school yearbook, *The Grumbler*, in 1931. His story, a parody of Sherlock Holmes, is "The South Sea Soup Company," and hers is a psychological tragedy, "Impromptu."

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	Paper	Leather
Good:	$15.00	$50.00
Fine:	$40.00	$200.00
Very fine:	$50.00	$250.00

In the unlikely event that one of the presentation copies came onto the market, it would be in very fine condition and would retail for about $400.00.

Inward Journey

FIRST EDITION: Santa Barbara (California), Cordelia Editions, 1984. Blue-green cloth; spine lettered in black; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a mainly blue, red and yellow pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: Published in an edition of 1,000 copies on September 15, 1984.

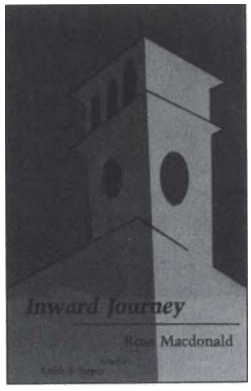
An advance proof copy was issued in plain yellow wrappers. Another state of the uncorrected proof was issued in green wrappers, printed in black.

Contents include two long essays on detective fiction by Macdonald, first published here, and 25 essays by friends and admirers of his work, including Robert B. Parker, Thomas Berger, William Goldman, Michael Z. Lewin, John D. MacDonald, Margaret Millar, Reynolds Price and Eudora Welty.

ESTIMATED RETAIL VALUE:

	with d/w	without d/w
Good:	$12.50	$7.50
Fine:	$25.00	$10.00
Very fine:	$35.00	$12.50

Debts on this column are owed to Matthew Bruccoli, who wrote the excellent descriptive bibliography of Kenneth Millar/Ross Macdonald for the University of Pittsburgh in 1983, which helped with the publication dates and other items, and Ralph Sipper of Joseph the Provider Books, a friend of the Millars and the country's leading dealer in their works. ■



So when was it that this guy Medardo Rivera Killed this guy Lupe Barcenas?

By

Paco Ignacio Taibo II

Translated by

William I. Neuman

The fact that the victim is alive and well doesn't deter the Mexican legal system from prosecuting an accused murderer. After all, there's all that evidence...

"Never," said Marisa Calderón Galván, twenty-six, a lawyer by trade, born on the Mexican coast of Guerrero, graduate of the academically questionable law school of the University of Chilpancingo, the near-recipient of a PhD in law from the Sorbonne (*sans* thesis), and the proud owner of a degree in labor law from the Metropolitan University in Mexico City. A small, scrappy woman, liberator of political prisoners, defender of squatters and prematurely unionized former Olympic boxers.

"Never, dammit, Medardo Rivera never killed Lupe Barcenas, how could he if the sonofabitch, pardon the expression, isn't dead?"

She brushed back a rebellious wisp of hair and went on: "He never killed him because the bastard, pardon the expression, is still alive. He's as alive as he ever was and...But wait a minute, let's start at the beginning. Medardo was in San Andres drinking a few *sotoles* at La Chata's place—a whorehouse that doubles as a bar and bakery during the day—talking with some *campesinos* from the Mixteca. It was a Saturday morning, pretty early, and the *sotoles* weren't because he was drunk or hung over, it's just that around there it gets colder than a witches tit, if you'll pardon the expression, and a few *sotoles* are just the kind of thing you need to get you going in the morning. It was about six-thirty, and he had to go teach a class of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. He left La Chata's and went and bought three loaves of bread in Gerardo's store—he always used to bring something special for the kids, out of his own pocket—and then he went off toward the school, with that walk he has, sort of skipping and jumping a little. He wanted to get his class over by eleven, because he had a meeting at one o'clock in Vicente Guerrero, about fifteen kilometers from there, with a group of bilingual teachers who were helping out in this one town that was in the middle of a big fight with the charcoal companies, which had been cutting down all the trees around there, you know how that goes. But as he's walking to the school, three *judiciales* jump him, guns drawn, and toss him into a jeep. The three loaves of bread lying out in the middle of the road, sons-of-bitches. By the time they get him to the capital, he's got a two inch gash over one eye, from resisting arrest, they say, and bruises all up and down his rib cage. They charge him with the murder of one Lupe Barcenas, also of San Andres. But that's where they made their mistake. Now I don't doubt for a minute that Medardo would be capable of killing a fellow Christian, as they say, if he was angry enough, but that's not how it went. I mean, this Barcenas guy is a Christian and all. But he's not dead. So they tell him: 'You're charged with the murder of Lupe Barcenas.' So Medardo asks them: 'And when was it exactly that I killed him?' And they tell him: 'On the third, no, scratch that, the sixth of December, at approximately eleven a.m. the aforementioned Medardo Rivera was discovered in the presence of the recently deceased Guadalupe Barcenas Arroyo in the village of San Andres, in the main plaza of said village, in front of a ferris wheel set up for the local carnival, where, having exchanged heated words, he shot him twice with a .38 caliber pistol concealed under his vest, causing death instantaneously and at that moment.' Medardo, who has a good head for dates, answered back: 'December sixth, is that right?' And when they answered in the affirmative, he said: 'Number one, I wasn't in San Andres on December sixth, I was at my godson's baptism, the teacher Salvador Cabestran's son, up in the mountains about 80 kilometers from there, and as a matter of fact here's a Polaroid from the baptism, that's me there on the right and that's my godson I'm carry-

Paco Ignacio Taibo II, for many years a professor of history at the Metropolitan University of Mexico City, is the current president of the International Association of Crime Writers. He lives in Mexico City.

ing, Aniceto Cabestran, and there's probably about 250 witnesses besides. Number two, on the day you're talking about there wasn't even a ferris wheel in San Andres anymore because the carnival was there for the village festival and didn't stay past the fourth, so you can forget the part about the ferris wheel. Number three, I didn't kill Lupe Barcenas, the son-of-an-ever-lovin'-bitch, and neither did anybody else, because he was alive yesterday. And number four, if you need anymore, I've never worn a vest in my life, assholes!"

Marisela grinned, brushed back the hair that kept wanting to drop down over her turned up nose, flicked away a nonexistent speck of dust from the sleeve of her grungy denim jacket, the plaster cast showing below the cuff, and went on with her story:

"It all checks out, of course. Medardo was at the baptism, there was no ferris wheel, he doesn't own a vest, and no one ever saw the dead man dead, just the opposite. But it's impossible to get Medardo out of jail. The judge is fat and deaf, he only hears what they yell at him from above. The walls of that jail are made out of piles of paper stacked fifty feet high. They've got reports from the public prosecutor certifying the removal of the corpse, eye-witness testimony, pictures of the bullets. What bullets? Who knows, but there they are, and since a trial isn't a trial without a mountain of papers, we commission another expert study to show that the bullets were actually used to hunt wild pigs in Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl. There's even a damn, pardon the expression, a damn photograph of the ferris wheel which we'd already demonstrated wasn't even there, but they've got the picture in the file, as if that proved anything.

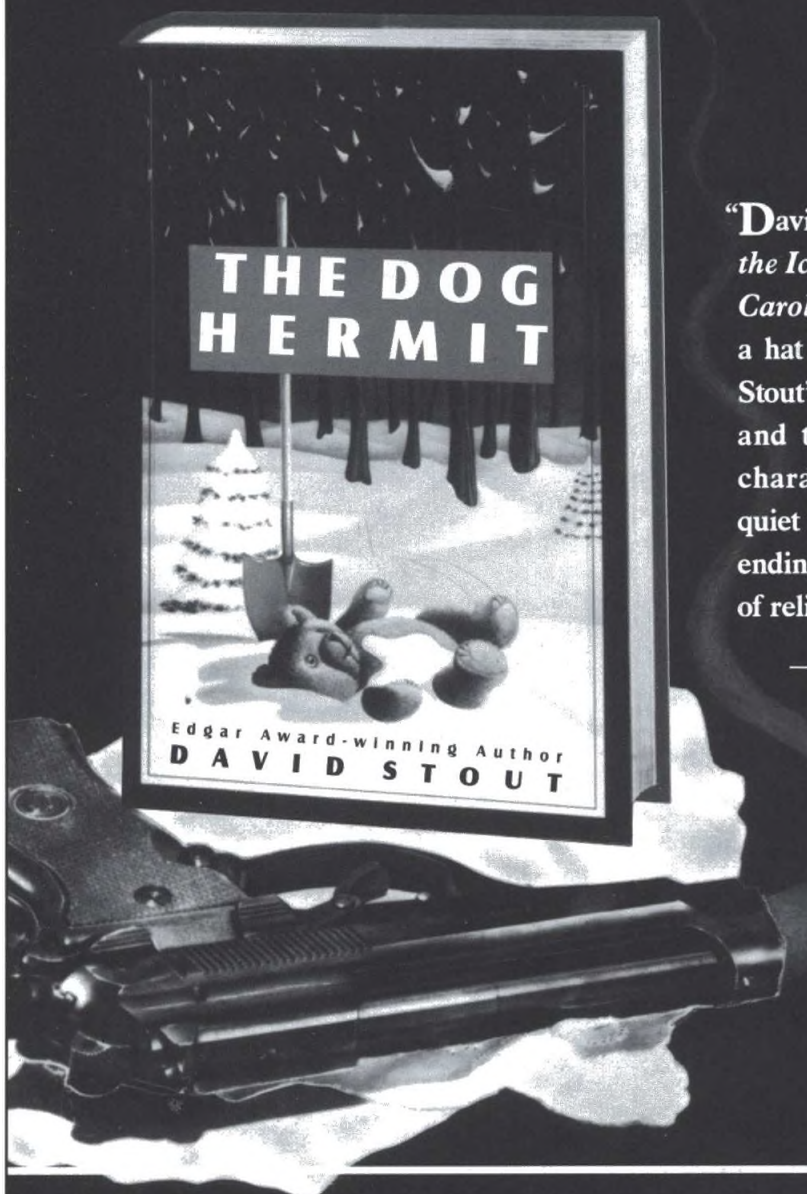
"And then some stupid ass French anthropologist shows up and exclaims: '*C'est maravilleux, le magique mexicain*.' My ovaries! What's so marvelous about Kafka being the patron saint of the Mexican judicial system? It's all too absurd. I put in a request to have the body exhumed and they give me a certificate of cremation and then come up with an urn full of ashes. I request an analysis of the ashes to find out if they're even human, and that's where I'm falling into their trap, because the burden of proof is on them in the first place to prove that there was even a dead body to begin with and then that it was Medardo who killed the guy, and here I am stuck trying to prove that the ashes are actually just the leftovers from some barbecue, or maybe the bones of Eulalia Guzman mixed with the ashes of Cuauhtemoc. And if the ashes turn out to be human after all, whoever they belong to, then the evidence goes against us anyway. But chances are they're barbecue leftovers, because the D.A. refuses to allow the test, citing some crap about respect for the family... Then I show them a photograph of Barcenas taken two days after he's supposed to be dead, tying one on in San Andres with none other than the mayor and the chief of police. Another teacher took the picture, and so they tell me that it was taken before the murder, and if I want to, I'm perfectly welcome to get affidavits from the mayor and the chief. Of course, I'm screwed if I do and I'm screwed if I don't. I ask them to produce the murder weapon and they come up with a pistol and I tell them to prove that it belonged to Medardo and they say that it was stolen and add illegal possession of a firearm to the rest of the charges. Medardo wants to go on a hunger strike, and the teachers in the sierra are threatening a general strike. At this point, I'm just about ready to commit suicide. Now I know what eight years of studying law are good for in this country. Good for nothing, that's what. A big motherfucking, pissant zero. So, on January sixth, *el dia de los reyes*, when the good and honorable governor is passing out toys to the neediest children, as they say, long live populism, I elbow my way through his entourage and get right up in front of him and say: 'Mr. Governor, is it true that Medardo Rivera has been framed?' And he pulls up short and says to me, 'I don't know what you're talking about, Miss.' And I say to him, breaking free from one of his bodyguards who's trying to pull me away: 'Medardo Rivera, the leader of the teachers union, is accused of a murder he didn't commit. The man they say he killed is still alive. It's a scandal.' And I bite another bodyguard on the hand who's pulling at my purse strap, and I get away from another cop who's got me by the arm. And he says: 'Miss Calderon, if you can bring this supposed dead man to me, Mr. Rivera will go free in five minutes. You've got my word. As long as I'm governor of this state, the law is the law.' And by this time, I'm falling over because of this other cop who's pulling at my arm and I sort of half get out to him: 'It's a deal, Governor.'

"And that's why I've spent the last three months looking for a dead man who isn't even dead, until one day some jerk comes along and tells me the dead man's gone up to Los Angeles to look for work, *bracero* style. Look, dammit, I'm just a poor, simple lawyer who wants to see a little justice done, I don't want a job waiting tables on Sunset Boulevard. So why don't you just do me a favor and print this guy's damn picture in your newspaper here?" ■

...there was no ferris wheel, he doesn't own a vest, and no one ever saw the dead man dead, just the opposite.

TAUT and STOUT.

The *New York Daily News* called his debut novel, *Carolina Skeletons*, "gripping." The *New York Times Book Review* called his second novel, *Night of the Ice Storm*, "coolly terrifying" and "killingly suspenseful." Now, Edgar Award-winning author David Stout expands his territory in a brilliantly written tale of kidnapping and murder that turns on a cruel injustice and its solitary survivor.



"David Stout, the author of *Night of the Ice Storm* and the Edgar-winning *Carolina Skeletons*, here completes a hat trick of crack crime fiction.... Stout's forte is gentle understatement and the ability to merge site and characters in seamless scenes of quiet terror....The canny, breathless ending...elicits the reader's deep sigh of relief."

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

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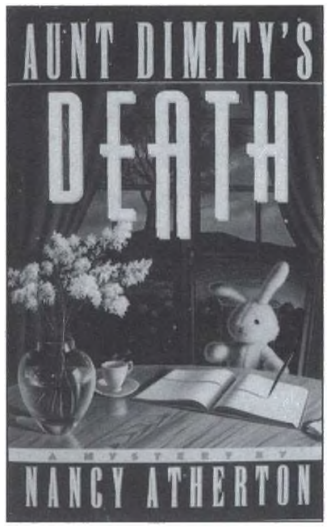
ORIGINAL SINS

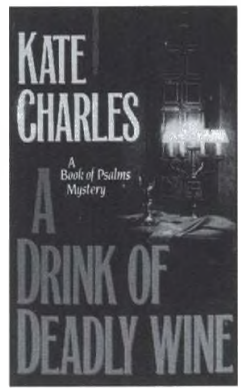
BY MARVIN LACHMAN

During the 1950s and 1960s, the "Big Caper" novel, as written by Donald E. Westlake (under his own name and as Richard Stark), Dan J. Marlowe, Lionel White and others was very popular. Though some writers continued to write it, they were rare. Perhaps it was Watergate and all the other "gate" scandals which made fiction writers despair of concocting anything as outrageous as what our government was doing. Craig Smith's **Ladyslinger** (1992; Crown, $20.00), an enormously readable book, may revive this sub-genre.



Maggie (not quite Stephen Crane's girl of the streets) is a gorgeous woman who preys upon dumb, male convention-goers in New Orleans, which the author likens to "a huge carny theme park." She becomes enmeshed in one of the wildest schemes I can recall in recent fiction, one I shan't spoil by describing. Yet, in its own way, it makes sense if the reader provides at least some of the necessary suspension of disbelief. The action is almost nonstop, and there are many double crosses and twists, including, ultimately, the author twirling this willing reader around his little finger.

Attending Bouchercon, the annual mystery fan and writer's convention in Toronto in October of 1992, encouraged me finally to read Eric Wright's first, **The Night the Gods Smiled** (1983; Scribner's; reprinted by Signet), which started his series about Toronto police inspector Charlie Salter. It did not provide as much description of Toronto as I hoped but is good on the divisions in Canada life: Toronto vs. Montreal; French vs. English speaking; wealthy vs. middle class.



Salter's police career is in limbo, for reasons that are not spelled out in detail. He gets the opportunity to help the Montreal police investigate the murder of a Toronto English professor who was murdered in his hotel while attending a conference. Salter's investigation centers on the Toronto academic community. The book consists mostly of dialogue, perhaps more talking, albeit far less sophisticated, than in any mystery writer since Ngaio Marsh. Mixed with Salter's investigation is his own mid-life crisis, which adds some depth to his character but ultimately consumes too much of the meager plot. Still, Salter proves to be a dogged investigator, one who makes use of an interesting clue and motive to solve the case.

Nancy Atherton's **Aunt Dimity's Death** (1992; Viking, $19.00) comes accompanied (burdened?) by some of the most enthusiastic advance praise I can recall for a first mystery. It also has a positive grabber of an opening as Lori Shepherd learns that "Aunt Dimity," the fictional character in childhood stories her late mother told her, was not only real but died recently, remembering Lori in her unusual will. It's the kind of beginning which made Margaret Millar's *A Stranger in My Grave* (1960) memorable. Millar wisely used a third person voice to tell her story; Atherton's Shepherd is a first person narrator and, as such, is an uneasy blend of wisecracking comedienne and Gothic heroine.

Even more disturbing is Atherton's use of the supernatural, which does not appear to have fazed the novelists quoted on the back cover. While I'll admit to finding a good deal of charm in this modern Cinderella tale, I still prefer my mysteries governed (and solved) by rational means. We have not seen the last of Aunt Dimity and her automatic writing; she is scheduled to return in Atherton's second book, **Aunt Dimity and Duke**, late in 1993.

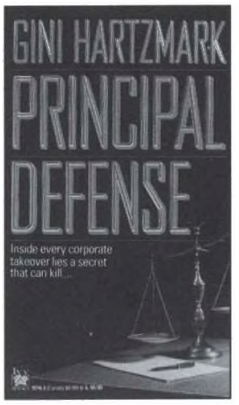
Kate Charles doesn't have a very complicated plot for **A Drink of Deadly Wine** (1992; Mysterious Press, $17.95), perhaps enough to support a short novel, but she incorporates a great deal of information about Church of England rituals and architecture and ends up with a 320 page book. A seemingly unlimited number of cups of tea (and other refreshment) for her characters helps pad the book–as well as their waistlines, presumably. Still, Ms. Charles has created so many interesting, believable characters that one can be forgiving, even if she does dwell more on their emotional crises than on clues. The vicar of St. Anne's, a wealthy London church, is being blackmailed because of his past sexual history, and he calls upon an attorney friend, David Middleton-Brown, for help. Murder at a church fete complicates matters. David is a diffident detective, but his low key methods prove surprisingly effective.

New writers sometimes base their first books on true crimes. To my knowledge, no one has used the case of Winnie Ruth Judd. She was convicted of having, in 1931, murdered two friends, stuffed their bodies (after some dismemberment) in

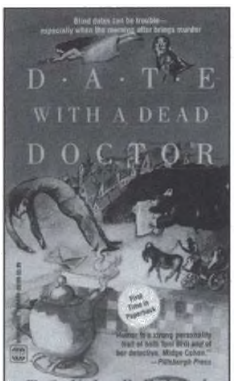
trunks, which she then shipped from Phoenix to Los Angeles. She unwisely accompanied the luggage which, leaking blood, led to her arrest. Possibly considered too bizarre for fiction, the Judd case is a good subject for a true crime book, Jana Bommersbach's first: **The Trunk Murderess** (1992; Simon & Schuster, $20).

People in Phoenix say that this book is very popular in that city because many of the most prominent people in town were involved at the time in a cover-up, so that only Judd was convicted. There is almost unanimous agreement that she could not physically have placed the bodies in the trunks alone. The names of some of those connected with the case are still familiar in Phoenix more than sixty years later. Bommersbach is a leading investigative reporter, but her strong point is not objectivity. Following interviews with Judd (still alive) and others, she pleads, not too convincingly, that Winnie Ruth was completely, or at least partially, innocent. Her book is good in depicting the attitudes of 1931 Phoenix, then a small city. The sections on the prosecutions withholding of evidence from the defense demonstrates why we applauded Eric Stanley Gardner when he had Perry Mason bedevil district attorney Hamilton Burger. (Were Gardner alive and writing, Mason would be an anachronism in these post-Miranda days). Speaking of anachronisms, Ms. Bommersbach jars in a reference to the 1931 evidence against Judd as creating a "slam-dunk case."

Date with a Dead Doctor (1991; St. Martin's, $17.95; reprinted by Worldwide Library $3.99) marks the debut of Toni Brill, said to be the pen name of a married couple living in Hamilton, NY. It introduces Margaret "Midge" Cohen, yet another of the first-person narrators who have become so prevalent in recent years. She is clever, modern, and gutsy, though no more courageous than Mary Roberts Rinehart's women. The unmarried Ms. Cohen is "fixed up" with a doctor by her mother, who is anxious for grandchildren. (Midge is reluctant, claiming, accurately, that she is not broken.) On her very unusual first date, Midge agrees to translate a letter written in Russian for the doctor. She taught that language but is now a writer of children's mysteries. Midge is soon plunged into an unlikely murder mystery in which a Chagall painting becomes the MacGuffin. She tosses off some good lines, but her narration is so fraught



with emotion and self-analysis, that her lack of objectivity detracts from the mystery elements in the book. Furthermore, Midge is a bit of a yenta and goes on and on when we yearn for clues and suspects, not her history and the guilt feelings her cliched Jewish mother evokes in her.



Isn't there any adage "Never judge a book by its title?" Well, something like that. The adage should apply to legal mysteries, whose titles all tend to blend for me. Gini Hartzmark's **Principal Defense** (1992; Ivy paperback original, $5.99) does not take place in court, but it has many lawyers in major and minor roles. It starts well, with the attempted hostile takeover of a pharmaceutical company, an event she analogizes to a rape. Then, there is a rather slow middle with a great deal of desultory conversation. This debut novel is at least partly rescued then by an exciting ending, albeit one which does not play fair in its resolution.

Hartzmark's protagonist and amateur detective is Katharine Anne Prescott Millholland, a lawyer with many personal problems, few of which have much relevance to the mystery, nor even make her a more interesting character. Her socialite mother is perhaps the most unpleasant minor character I've encountered in mystery fiction in years, and she has an equally obnoxious, though badly troubled, teenage sister. (Hartzmark has disposed of Katharine Anne's brother and husband, by suicide and cancer, before the book even opens.) One is never convinced she will solve the case. She is, after all, the type of lawyer who, given a critical assignment, plays Elvis Costello on her Walkman with "the volume cranked way up" while she does research. Though not one to give her fictional employer one hundred percent of her attention while she works, she fulfills her creator's plan. She identifies a despicable murderer, albeit in another of those solutions I consider unfair because the clues are unavailable to the reader.

That great growth industry of the 1970s, Sherlock Holmes pastiches, suffered a mild recession but now seems booming again, spurred by Edward B. Hanna's **The Whitechapel Horrors** (1992; Carroll & Graf, $19.95). Though he uses the familiar device of the found Watson manuscript, this book is told in the third person. Hanna is well versed, not only in the Holmes canon but in the writings about it, and he includes 28 pages of notes. As the title indicates, Hanna pits Holmes and Watson against Jack the Ripper, as have others before him, including Ellery Queen and Nicholas Meyer. Many real people populate the book, including Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, and Lord Randolph Churchill. There are also frequent references to Queen Victoria and her offspring, with the theory of a royal Ripper given prominent attention. Perhaps this book is too long at 395 pages, though I certainly wouldn't leave out any of the descriptions of London fog which give it atmosphere. Its length helps demonstrate why, even in the original Doyle, the Holmes short stories are more satisfying than the novels. Still, it has great appeal to Sherlockians and those interested in historical mysteries, especially about Jack the Ripper. ■

THE INCREDULOUS JAMES CORBETT

by William F. Deeck

Unsung, unread, some would say unintelligible—James Corbett has long lurked in the shadows of literary obscurity. But at last his champion has arisen. Bill Deeck has devoted himself to resuscitating the reputation of this literary criminal—er, crime writer. The following remarks were made at the 1992 Malice Domestic Conference at which Deeck was named the Fan Guest of Honor.

At our previous banquets the Fan Guests of Honor have delivered speeches witty and entertaining and informative. Surely you knew your luck couldn't last. While my remarks are serious, possibly even dry, I hope that the information will make up for the lack of entertainment and wit.

After it was announced last year that I had been designated Fan Guest of Honor for this session, several people asked me what I had done to deserve the honor. Well, I would have thought it was obvious: The committee was recognizing my vigorous efforts on behalf of resurrecting the reputation of James Corbett, an unrecognized genius in the mystery field.

It is my contention that James Corbett's name belongs in that pantheon of what we Corbett admirers call the great C's of mystery fiction—Carr, Christie, and Queen.

You may laugh derisively, but I intend to prove that contention this evening.

At this point I had planned to mention that those who had attended the

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William F. Deeck, is co-author with Steven A. Stilwell of *The Armchair Detective Index (Volumes 1-20)*, published in 1992. He has had more than a score of articles and over 500 book reviews published in *The Armchair Detective, The Poisoned Pen, CADS, The Mystery Fancier, The Mystery Readers Journal and The Criminal Record.* His latest, *Index to The Mystery Fancier,* will be published this year by Borgo Press.

panel at Bouchercon at which I had made similar remarks could leave the room. But I see they have anticipated me, and taken many of their friends with them.

"His eyes were bloodthirsty"

Between 1929 and 1951 James Corbett wrote 42 thrillers and one science-fiction novel. If there are any science-fiction fans in the audience, they will surely remember Corbett's classic, *Devil-Man from Mars*. That's the one in which the Devil-Man travels from Mars to Earth not in the nine hours he had predicted but in a mere three hours. The Devil-Man's explanation: He had a fine tail wind.

Wonderful as *Devil-Man from Mars* was, particularly with its emphasis on science, you are eager—some of you possibly anxious—to hear about Corbett's thrillers.

As I said earlier, James Corbett was a genius. First, he was a genius as a plotter. No doubt many of you have read Corbett's *The Merrivale Mystery*. In that novel, you will recall, it turns out in the end that the villain is an unknown twin.

I know, I know. You are thinking that that is good, indeed very good, but

"Treat gave a guttural grin"

not quite genius. Remember, that was Corbett's first novel.

In a novel Corbett wrote just a few years later—I refer, as some of you may have surmised, to *The Monster of Dagenham Hall*—twins were present from the beginning, and the villain turns out to be an unknown triplet.

Should security have been lax here this evening and some intellectuals have been allowed to join us, they are no doubt muttering, "Plot is not everything. How was Corbett's prose style?"

Easily answered. I can say, with absolute certainty, that Corbett was a master of the language. Unfortunately, despite my being the world's foremost authority on the writings of James Corbett—no one else wishing to claim the title—I must confess that at this point I am not certain which language it was.

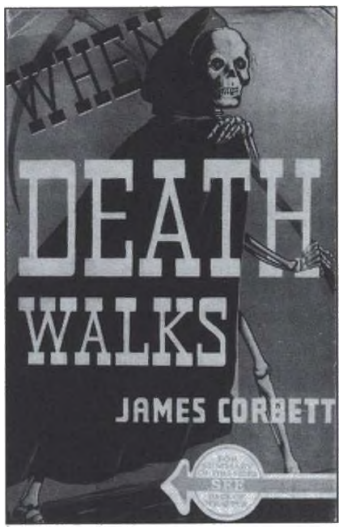
Again, those who have read *The Merrivale Mystery* will remember the detective's keen observation: "Your steps are feline and catlike."

And there's the doctor's dire diagnosis: "The brothers are developing into congenital idiots."

And who could forget that most remarkable weapon? In Corbett's words: "It was a single chambered revolver."

Do I detect some nervous laughter? Have a few of you noticed that I have quoted only from *The Merrivale Mystery*, and are you fearful that this genius burned himself out on his first novel?

"Her tone was coldly if normative"



Not so. In another novel, Corbett wrote: "His eyes were bloodthirsty."

In another novel, Corbett wrote: "Her tone was coldly if normative."

In another novel, Corbett wrote: "He was galvanized into immobility."

In yet another novel, Corbett wrote: "Not a flicker on his face moved."

And, of course, there's my current favorite: "Treat gave a guttural grin."

That's all right. Boo and hiss all you want. It will not change my mind, but it may make Aaron and Mary feel better.

Another area in which Corbett excelled—some of you are asking, "Is there no end to Corbett's genius?" while the rest, particularly the Whimsey group (the Whimsey Foundation is a nonprofit organization, or maybe a nonprofit nonorganization, that honors significant achievement in comedic mystery fiction), having grown tired of all this seriousness, are asking, "Is there no end to Bill Deeck's tedious remarks?"

But the information that follows is, I feel, essential for the many people in the audience who, quite naturally, will wish to learn how to write in the Corbett manner.

The other area in which Corbett excelled was episode, incident, scene, call it what you will.

Oh, I could tell you about the detective in *Gallows Wait* who lights his cigarette with a match, stands twisting the spent match, and puts his lighter back in his pocket.

Or I could read to you this incident from *Red Dagger*. The incident takes place between the hero and the heroine and is set in a public lounge.

> "Have you a cigarette?" she asked.
>
> Cavanagh threw his case on the desk.
>
> "You have something to tell me?" he suggested, lighting a match and holding it to her lips.

As I said, I could tell you the one or I could read you the other. But I won't. I have taken the measure of the score of you still awake—reading Corbett has made me shrewder than you might have supposed—and realize

"Not a flicker on his face moved"

I shall be frank here: While I have the greatest respect for our Guest of Honor and our Toastmaster, I must say, though it may earn me their undying enmity, that neither Aaron (Elkins) nor Mary (Higgins Clark) is capable of writing that someone "gave that you would argue, unwilling to give up without a struggle, that those incidents are not genius and that any merely exceptionally fine writer could do as well.

Instead, I will relate to you the most brilliant of Corbett's incidents, with a

resolution that very well may be unique in mystery annals and will prove to you, once and for all, that Corbett was definitely a genius. As the detective exclaims in *The Monster of Dagenham Hall*, "The whole thing is so fantastic as to appear incredulous." Ladies and gentlemen, what follows is, I think you must agree, incredulous.

This incident takes place in *The Vampire of the Skies*. The hero and the villain are at the villain's house, at which point the villain eludes the hero. As you may have surmised from the quotes I have provided, Corbett's heroes were fallible. Not human, mind you, but definitely fallible.

Let me digress, assuming I haven't already. This is the perfect opportunity to provide you with an example of Corbett's brilliant descriptive ability. This is how Corbett described the villain's house:

> It somewhat resembled the French villas found at Paris Plage, except that the design was entirely English, while in that respect it was unique.

Explanations on a postcard, please. For best explanation the first prize will be a James Corbett novel. The second prize will be two James Corbett novels.

Let us return to our thrilling story. Near the villain's house, whatever it looked like, is a landing strip. On that landing strip are two airplanes. One is a Bristol Fighter; it is the fast plane. The other is an Avro; it is the slow plane.

Yes, I know that's a lot to grasp quickly. Feel free to make notes. After all, this is James Corbett at his most complex and most subtle, and it requires a keen mind to keep pace with this genius.

The villain—those of you who don't remember the villain might as well give up now. The villain arrives at the landing strip. As Corbett would put it, there are no flies on this chap. The villain leaps into the Bristol Fighter, and he takes—oh my, lots of bewildered faces; the Bristol Fighter is the fast plane—and the villain takes off, as Corbett puts it so graphically, like a flash of lightning.

No one in a Corbett novel ever did anything quickly or rapidly. It was either like lightning, in a flash, or, when Corbett was seeking greater precision, in a single bound.

The hero—remember, he is the one who was eluded by the villain—comes to the landing strip. As the few of you who are keeping up are aware, it's Hobson's choice. The hero jumps into the Avro—if the Bristol Fighter is the fast plane, the Avro must the slow plane—and he takes off, in no particular fashion.

Ah, five—no, six; more than I expected—six of you are nudging your slower-witted neighbors and saying, "This *is* a pretty problem. With the villain in the Bristol Fighter—which, we have been told, is the fast plane—and furthermore with the villain having taken off prior to the hero, how is the hero—in the Avro, the slow plane—going to catch the villain?"

Well, I certainly hope that's what you're saying.

I shall be frank again: I suspect that the writers in this audience, having reached such a point in their work in progress, would throw up their hands in horror and take up another, simpler profession.

The tension in this room is palpable. While convinced by now, kicking and screaming all the way, that Corbett was the genius I claimed, you are nonetheless wondering how even Corbett's massive intellect—or what he, with his vast vocabulary, would call his "gray matter?"—can resolve what can only be called an incredulous problem.

I shall now relieve you of the intolerable suspense and reveal what Corbett did. On the next page—the very next page, his mind working like lightning—he had a character declare that the hero was in the Bristol Fighter and the villain was in the Avro! ■

Murderous Affairs

By

Janet A. Rudolph

Several years back I wrote about mystery events and mystery weekends, events where you become the sleuth as a mystery is enacted around you, a craze which was "sweeping the country" in 1986. I stated that the craze had from six months to a year to run its course. Boy, was I mistaken. In the past year we've seen mystery dinner theatre and mystery weekends springing up in big cities, invading the suburbs, and spreading crime and wreaking havoc all over the rural countryside. As a perpetrator (I write and produce mystery events in the San Francisco Bay Area), I get from 20-30 calls a week from people who want to go to a mystery event, but don't know how or where to find one. This does seem to be a well-kept secret.

If you're a mystery person, you already know to ask Bill and Karen Palmer of Bogie's Mystery Tours in New York City, Harriet and Larry Stay of Murder by Invitation (Bellingham, WA) or me Janet A. Rudolph of Murder on the Menu (San Francisco, CA) about upcoming public events. But if we're not doing anything in your area, I suggest you look in the yellow pages under entertainment for companies which might be offering events. If you don't find a company in the yellow or white pages, you can always look in the entertainment section of your Sunday paper for ads. You can call the convention and visitors bureau of your city or the chamber of commerce. Or, you can peruse various mystery listings in the mystery fanzines and other rags.

There are some general mystery dinner theatre places the quality of which is pretty uneven. If shows are running on a weekly basis, the story will probably be repeated, so even if it's great, you can only go one time. (This excludes the long-running play "Tamara," which is not really interactive, but rather voyeurish. At this play, being performed in both New York and Los Angeles, one can return many times and follow different characters.) Many regular dinner theatres change their story every month.

Another place to "witness the crime and play detective" is at fundraisers. Most of my own events are written and performed for corporate clients or associations, and the general public is not invited, but because I like to do a few for the general public, I write about seven or eight a year as fundraising events. Mystery events are terrific for fundraising because everyone loves a good mystery (or so I believe) and the non-profit organization can make money.

Since my mystery events are participatory, I get the people involved in the action in many ways. I usually create some kind of hook for the guests (for example: attending the reading of a will, winning a radio contest circa 1947 to be in the studio audience, sailing to Treasure Island for the 1939 World's Fair, attending an engagement party, or some such hook). In addition, guests are involved because I give them personal clues like: "You think that John blackmailed Susan. Accuse him during the second course at dinner. Go to a microphone." or "You heard that Lucy is less than honest. Tell three people whom you don't know." These personal clues get people interacting as soon as they enter the room. During the course of one of my mystery fundraising events, five or more murders may occur. And, by the ending of the evening, the police or detective will ask WHODUNNIT. People usually work in teams to solve the crimes—motive as well as perpetrator is important.

A mystery fundraiser is a great way of making money for or donating to your favorite charity. Some of the organizations for which I've written and produced mystery fundraisers are our local PBS station, the Make-A-Wish Foundation, the Boys and Girls Club of Petaluma, historic homes, universities, schools, churches and synagogues.

You can organize a mystery event for your favorite charity—but before you do, let me tell you that it takes a lot of organization, good publicity, and careful attention to detail to make it a success. Like any fundraiser, it's always good to consult an expert before you begin. Why recreate the wheel?

The most important aspect of a successful mystery fundraiser is the mystery and the theatre company who performs it. A good fair-play script and actors who are good at both script acting and improvisation are the most important elements of a successful mystery fundraiser. Guests who are drawn into the mystery by the actors and script is what makes it work. Not only can you make money for your organization or support one, but you can have fun and a good mystery at the same time. The mystery event is a unique component of the mystery world.

I'd love to hear from you about mystery events, fundraisers, dinner-theatre, and the even longer mystery weekends. Write to me at Mystery Readers International, PO Box 8116, Berkeley, CA 94707 with your news.

Mystery Week, May 8-13, 1993: Unique to the San Francisco Bay Area is the annual May blitz of mystery signings, readings, and talks. Joel Quigley, this year's chairperson, has outdone

himself. Virtually every library, bookstore, literary organization and even some wineries will be hosting local mystery writers this year. This is a project of Mystery Writers of America NorCal chapter. These activities provide readers with many places to meet their favorite authors. Books, of course, will be available for signing. And, this year due to the demand, there will be several events scheduled even after the week. Check local papers for listings.

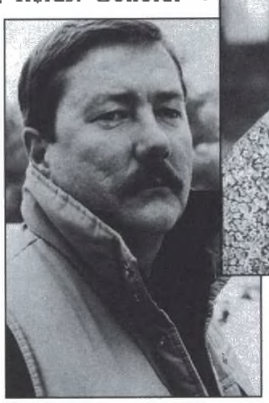
One tagline to this—or should I say toetag. Lorraine Petty of A Clean Well Lighted Place for Books in San Francisco came up with a great idea for authors who don't have books out at the time of Mystery Week—Toe Tags from the Morgue. Each tag (which looks authentic) will have the name of the book and author which is forthcoming. Toetags can be redeemed at the bookstores for the real thing upon publication. Good going, Lorraine.

Chicago has declared June as **Mystery Month**. The catalyst behind this is Connie Goddard and her vehicle is the Friends of the Chicago Public Library. Included will be the June 5th conference Of Dark and Stormy Nights (a writers conference in its 11th year) at the Holiday Inn of Rolling Meadows, northwest of Chicago. This terrific conference is put on by MWA, Midwest Chapter. Number 11? They are definitely doing something "write." Call Marilyn Nelson at (708) 980-9535 for more information. The Friends of the Chicago Public Library will be offering a bus tour of Mysterious Chicago on June 5 led by Alzina Stone Dale. [Author of *Mystery Readers Walking Guide: New York* (Passport Books, 1992) and co-author of *Mystery Readers Walking Guide: London*. Dale is hard at work on *Mystery Readers Walking Guide: Chicago*] The tour begins with an informal reception at the Harold Washington Library Center's Authors' Room to meet some Chicago's mystery authors. The bus will leave the library at 1 p.m and return at 4. To make a reservation call (312) 747-4907.

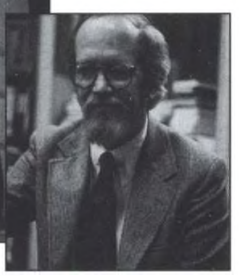
Victorian Mystery: An Interdisciplinary Conference, August 5-8, 1993. Kresge College, University of California at Santa Cruz. Sponsored by the Dickens Project. Write to John O. Jordan, Director, The Dickens Project, UC Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA 95064 or call (408) 459-2103; fax: (408) 459-4424.

Poisoned Pens III is set for November 6, 1993 at the SeaTac Marriott, Seattle. This is a writers' conference sponsored by MWA Northwest. For more information, call (206) 637-9637.

Conference on Nancy Drew: University of Iowa. April 16-18, 1993. The program features a day of sessions for the general public (children as well as adults) and another day of sessions for scholars of popular culture, children's literature and other fields. General keynote speech by Carolyn Heilbrun, feminist literary critic and writer (Amanda Cross) of the Kate Fansler mysteries. Carolyn Steward Dyer, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242.



(CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT) RECENT SPEAKERS AT THE SMITHSONIAN'S "MURDER THEY WROTE" SERIES: ROBERT B. PARKER, JAMES LEE BURKE, ED MCBAIN, ELMORE LEONARD AND PATSY CORNWELL.



Mystery writers will again be featured in the 1993 version at the Smithsonian of **"Murder They Wrote."** Elmore Leonard (April 19), Sarah Caudwell and Patricia Moyes (April 26), James Lee Burke (May 3), Carl Hiassen (May 10), Ed McBain (May 17), Robert Parker (June 7), and Patricia Cornwell (June 14). For information, contact Susan Morgan at Mystery Books (a great mystery bookstore), 1715 Connecticut Avenue N. W., Washington DC 20009 or phone (202) 483-1600. If you've missed these talks because of the long lead time of this column, look for next year's event. With President Clinton, a mystery reader, in the White House, it will be sure to be repeated.

So you couldn't make any of the above events, and you'd still like to meet some mystery authors and talk with other fans. CONVENTION, CONVENTION, CONVENTION. The mystery world is "riddled" with local and larger conventions. My next column will be devoted to conventions, complete with dates and times. Other placesto check out: bookstores (both mystery and general), libraries, and classes.

Manderly, PO Box 880, Boonville, CA 94515. From the people who bring you Mysteries by Mail, one of the best mystery mail-order catalogues, Lucinda May has created a catalogue for romance readers. The catalogue is divided into categories such as historical romances, Regencies, contemporary romances, historical and modern novels, romantic suspense, fantasy and more.

One of the most complete mystery catalogues (for used, hard to find mysteries), is ***Pandora's Books Ltd***. It covers all kinds of fiction, but the mystery section in the latest catalogue covers Murray-Spillane only and it's 33 pages of double column tiny print. Write to Box 54, Neche ND 58265 or call (204) 324-8548; fax (204) 234-1628.

One catalogue I haven't mentioned in a while is **Jeffrey Meyerson's**. I was impressed with the January 1993 issue because it began with British

Old & Rare Hardbacks—books set in Australia or New Zealand. Titles were unknown (to me) or hard to find. If you're looking for good books, this is the catalogue. Jeff tells just about everything you want to know about the condition of the book and the prices are very reasonable. Jeffrey Meyerson, 8801 Shore Rd, 6A-East, Brooklyn, NY 11209 (718) 833-8248.

The October-December (1992) issue of ***Drood Review of Mystery*** was made even more interesting (is this possible?) by the wonderful biographies of "The People behind *The Drood Review*." What an interesting group!!

I especially liked the article "The Buildings of Perry Mason" by Jim Davidson in the ***NAAPM Newsletter*** (National Association for the Advancement of Perry Mason). The photographs by Kate Bennett were great. For Perry Mason fans, don't miss this single author newsletter. 2735 Benvenue #3, Berkeley, CA 94705. (510) 548-4237.

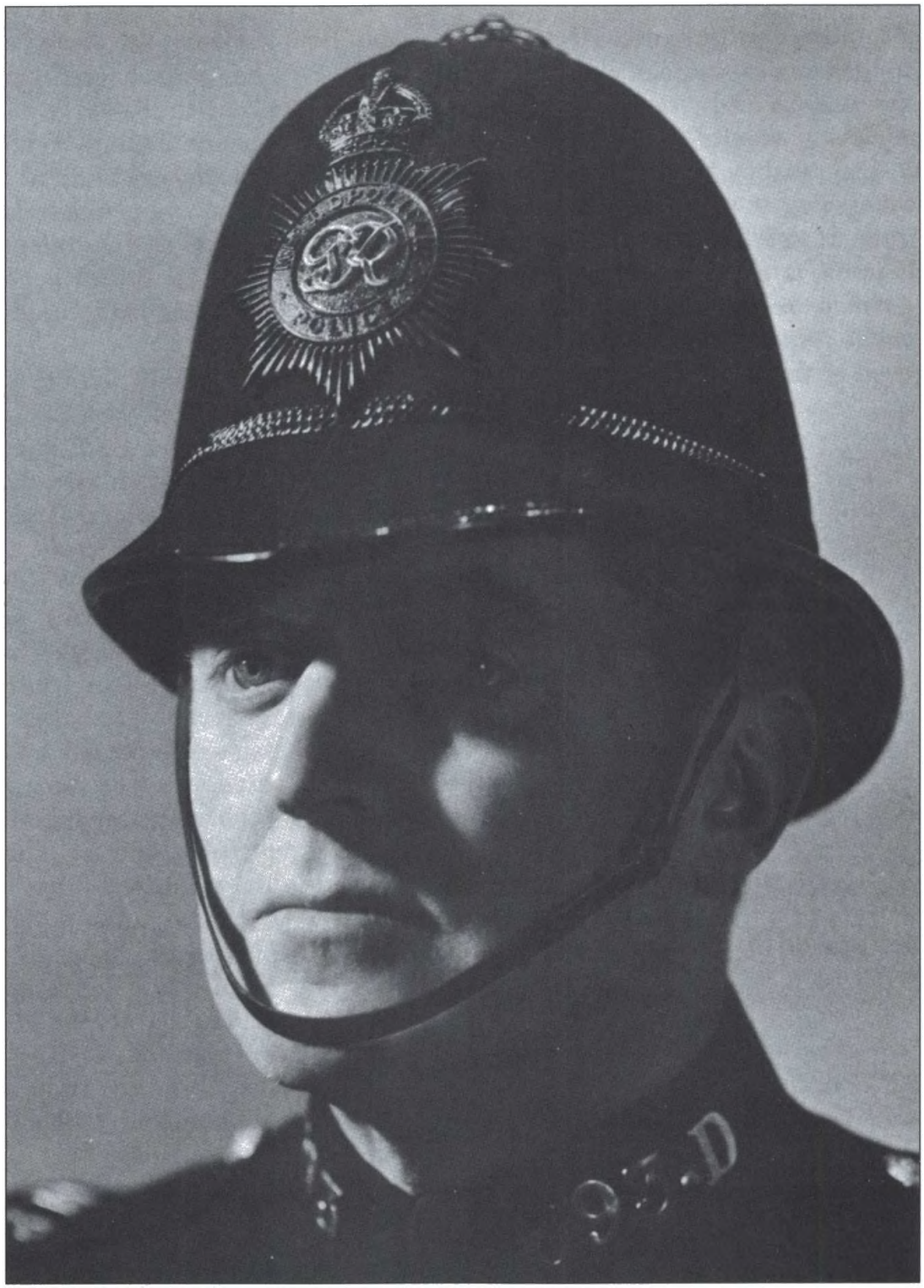
The Mystery Review, a new Quarterly Publication edited by Barbara Davey recently made its debut. It contains interviews with authors, real life unsolved mysteries, word games and puzzles. Write to *The Mystery Review*, PO Box 233, Colborne, Ontario, Canada KOK 1S0 for more information.

Lawrence Block has a rambling newsletter full of news of new projects, travel plans, special offers and whatever else seems interesting. He is now making this available to anyone who wants it. If you would like to receive his mailings, send your name, address, and check ("in any amount whatsoever) to God's Love We Deliver, an organization which provides meals and TLC for homebound AIDS patients. Lawrence Block, 205 W. 13th ST, #4-A, NY, NY 10011.

And if you have any mystery news on events, conventions, conferences, bookstores, fanzines, periodicals or anything else related to the mystery world, send it to me, Janet A. Rudolph, Mystery Readers International (home of the *Mystery Readers Journal*), PO Box 8116, Berkeley, CA 94707-8116. ■

PAREER PHOTO BY MEL PARKER. BUNK PHOTO MICHAEL ALCHER. COWELL PHOTO ROSEMARY BARRA

A POLICEMAN'S LOT



BY WILLIAM A.S. SARJEANT

MAURICE PROCTER BENEFITTED LITTLE FROM HIS POLICE CAREER IN AN ENGLISH MILL TOWN—UNTIL HE BEGAN TO WRITE ONE OF THE VERY EARLIEST POLICE PROCEDURAL SERIES.

The "police procedural" is a genre of crime fiction whose principal growth has been here in North America; but it has its British practitioners, in particular J.J. Marric (a.k.a. John Creasey) and Bill Knox, subject of an earlier article in TAD 20:4. Its earliest exponent, however, was Maurice Procter, who wrote from 1947 to 1969. Procter's police novels, which are set in the Pennines, give an authentic portrait of these small Midlands towns and their constabularies.

Maurice Procter was born in the cotton-mill town of Nelson, Lancashire, on February 4, 1906. His family wanted him to become a schoolteacher, but he had other ideas. He ran away from home at the age of fifteen to join the Army. His military career was "cut short after only a few months through the efforts of the local Member of Parliament, egged on by alarmed and indignant parents" [19, 243]. He re-enlisted as soon as possible, though, and served from 1921 to 1926.

Even when Maurice left the Army, it was a case essentially of his exchanging one uniform for another, for he promptly joined the Halifax Borough Police. (Halifax, just over on the eastern side of the Pennines, is a mill town much like Nelson, though its mills produce woolen, not cotton, goods, and it is somewhat larger.) Maurice was with the Halifax force for nineteen years (1926-1945) and spent that long time mostly on the beat. "I walked 5,000 miles a year," he recalled later, "and my weight fell to nine stone"—126 pounds.

After gaining official approval—for, in those days, that was a prerequisite before a policeman could marry—he was wedded to Winifred Blakey in 1933. They had one son and quite a hard struggle to survive on a policeman's pay. Nor did Maurice foresee any better future if he remained a constable. When his first book was accepted for publication, he resigned thankfully from the force.

His later life was much more tranquil. A dustjacket summary states: "He writes four and a half hours a day, gardens, has a drink at his club and plays a lot of patience." [26]. His portraits show him to have been a big man—in his day, a policeman had to be at least 5'8" tall—with a direct gaze, a strong chin, and a neatly trimmed military-style moustache. Indeed, he remained the classic image of a policeman, even after ceasing to be one. He wrote 26 books, all published in London, most also in New York, and many translated into other languages, including Japanese. In addition, he wrote at least six short stories for magazines or anthologies. He died, four years after his last book was published, in 1973.

In all his writings, his police experiences were very much drawn upon. Indeed, his first two books served to release the bitterness and frustrations accumulated during nineteen years of tough discipline, hard work, and small reward. I have not found a copy of his first book, *No Proud Chivalry* [1], but Steinbrunner and Penzler report that it was "a critical novel about his former colleagues."

His second, *Each Man's Destiny* [2], provides perhaps the best portrait ever to be published of the realities of a policeman's life in a small city before the Second World War. It is a true "police procedural" in that it has no single central character, instead examining the vicissitudinous careers of a group of officers who chance, for a time, to be in the same suburban police station.

The name of the town in which the novel is set, Broomhill, was borrowed by Procter (consciously or unconsciously) from a prosperous Sheffield suburb, but the town is surely the Halifax he came to know so thoroughly. Broomhill is more or less the personal empire of a dictatorial Chief Constable named Rowantree, whose carefully chosen minions do what he instructs but enjoy also their exercisings of a petier personal power. To this situation, the group of policemen, who are at the book's core, respond in various ways.

Because of its detailed recounting of the life and tasks of policemen in pre-World War II England, this book makes rewarding reading for anyone interested in *real* police life; indeed, it

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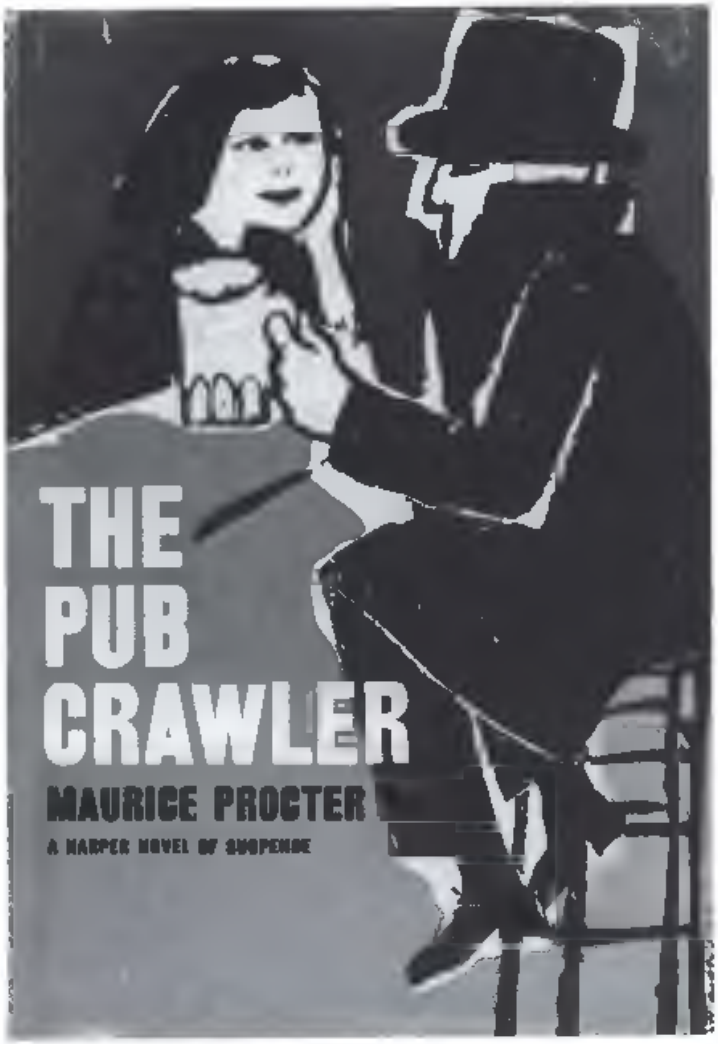
would furnish an excellent document for a sociological study. The tiresome regulations and the petty injustices to which the policemen are subject are all to believable, while their attempts to evade a burdensome responsibility—sometimes successful, sometimes not—and to live a normal life in a society that does not consider policemen to be normal, arouse sympathy. The accounts of the sexual affairs of the officers are both sensitive and convincing. The arbitrary fashion in which good police work may be rewarded, ignored, or even penalized likewise has a depressing authenticity. A letter from one of the constables to his brother, who is being urged not to take up a police career [2, 136-39], is convincingly specific and, in its way, even more depressing.

These two works, then, are "police procedurals" in the fullest sense—and, as such, surely the earliest of the genre on either side of the Atlantic, for Ed McBain's groundbreaking "87th Precinct" stories did not begin to be published until a decade later, in 1956. Yet this pair of books is not, in any normal sense, crime fiction. Rather, they are true novels—if that distinction has any validity.

Procter's third effort, *The End of the Street* [3], is again essentially a novel with a strong police element, though it cannot be called a "procedural." While its autobiographical component is smaller, it is still significant; in particular, one can perceive Procter's continuing resentment of the fashion in which junior policemen are treated by the ranking officers. The tale is set in the mill town of Nunnerham—probably Nelson, Procter's home town—and tells of the ever-more-disastrous relationship between Ephriam Goddard and his son William, culminating in Eph's arrest for murder. It deals also with the ultimately successful investigations of Detective-Officer Edward "Ned" Barnaby and his much-less-successful love affair.



Procter's fourth work, *The Chief Inspector's Statement* [4], comes closer to regular crime fiction. It is an investigation into child murders, set in the small Yorkshire town of Pennycross, in the Utterborough police district. ("Pennycross" is surely Penistone and "Utterborough" Huddersfield). It is recounted in the first person by Chief Inspector Philip Hunter of the London Metropolitan Police. He describes himself thus:

> ...[T]he chair creaked because, as the fellow said, I am a little on the big side. Well, more than a little. I have the good fortune to be built like a heavyweight boxer and the misfortune to look like one. My mother used to say I had a nice smile, and that is the only compliment anyone ever paid to my face. [4,22]

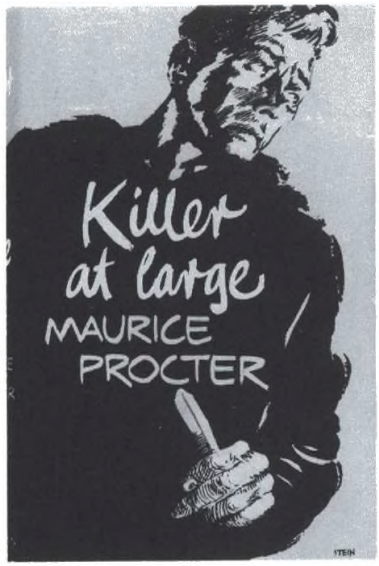
His principal assistant is Detective Sergeant Henry Dutton, "subtle and quick, cool and volatile, hard and cheerful...Dutton's grin can take a lot of disappointment" [4,21]. It needs to. Hunter is dispassionate in comparing their records:

> We were both about the same age and we had both worked hard, but whereas Dutton stormed after promotion, my efforts were made to keep pace with it. I have been lucky with promotion.

The story is a good one, of an initial failure in investigation that can only in part be compensated for when another murder affords a second chance. Hunter is not an endearing character; indeed, one of the witnesses says: "I fair hate the sight on him... He's nowt but a big...a big swaggering bully!" [4, 223]. But he has the great virtue of honesty in his recounting. Certainly Hunter is ruthless in his attitude to criminals:

> Civilization and tolerance went hand in hand. In our modern society the offenders were not slain unless their depravity involved the taking of life, as in the Pennycross case. Some good people sympathized with them, as they might with citizens who had less objectionable abnormalities. But criminals of all kinds thrive on sympathy and tolerance, then turn and bite the hand which feeds them. Nearly all crimes are acts of militant selfishness or even self-indulgence.

Hurry the Darkness [5] is another non-series work, set in Manningley, Lancashire, a town of moderate size 25 miles away from the city of Gretchester. ("Gretchester" is surely Manchester; "Manningley" is probably Burnley, possibly Chorley). It contains a vivid evo-



cation of the newer, more antiseptic architecturally barren construction commissioned by aesthetically blind Town Councils about the older cores of the Lancashire mill towns:

> ...[H]e was entering a new suburb whose avenues stretched away on both sides of the road, giving access to the serried hundreds of glaring brick dwellings. Obviously they were all council houses, built during the slum-clearance period of the nineteen-thirties. They covered the land like a rash. No private builder would ever have dared to put such hideous erections on the market. They seemed to have been made ugly on purpose, as if the very council which ordered them were reluctant to put transplanted slum-dwellers, the improvidence poor, into new homes which were as handsome as other people's. [5,20]

Hunter returns in the next work, a lively affair titled *Rich Is the Treasure* [6], in an adventure involving diamonds and set in a London in which the effects of German bombing are still very apparent—but it takes place too far from the Pennines to merit extended discussion here.

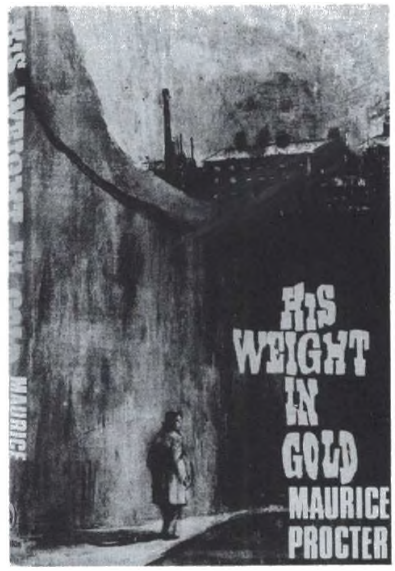
Hunter's last appearance is in what Barzun and Taylor [1971, p. 350] consider the best of all Procter's works, *I Will Speak Daggers* [8]. This brings Hunter north again, this time to Yoreborough—most probably Knaresborough; it is too small and undistinguished a town to be York, as George Dove (1980, p. 1217) suggests—where an attractive, wayward woman has been brutally murdered. This time, it is related in the third person. It features Hunter at his most merciless [8, 97] and has an unexpected and dramatic conclusion.

George Dove's comment on Hunter sums him up well:

> Hunter is...abrasive...He badgers witnesses and suspects unmercifully, and he is harsh toward his subordinates, blaming them severely when they make a mistake, bawling them out in public and then telling them they needn't shout. [1980, p. 1217]

All in all, Detective Superintendent Hunter may be a believable character, but he is certainly not an attractive one.

Procter's next non-series novel was *The Pub Crawler* [9]. This is set in Airechester—certainly, from the description of its City Square and trams, Leeds, and very well evoked, even the individual streets at the city center being readily recognizable under their disguised names. Although the ranking detectives are Detective-Inspector Robert Fairbrother and Detective-



Superintendent Belcher ("The Belly"), its principal protagonist is young Bill Knight. And, while Knight's pub-crawling adventures yield the hoped-for solution to a series of crimes and gain him the devoted love of Junie Byles, his adventures with her brother "Gunner" and the denizens of those mean streets leave him only with the desire to con-

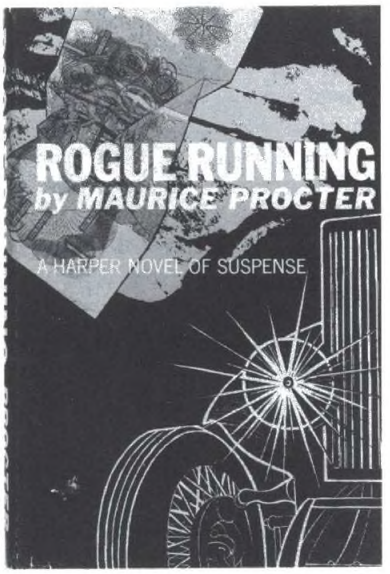
tinue his career somewhere else—in Sheffield, maybe, or London, but most certainly not in Airechester!

Three at the Angel [11] marks a return to London, but Hunter is not featured. Instead, the central character is Lou Fingerhut, a Londoner of mixed descent—Irish, Jewish, and Gypsy—who was doing well as a boxer until innocently involved in a fight that was too obviously fixed—so obviously as to destroy his ring career. He plans what seems a perfect crime but runs afoul of London gangleader Mike King. At the conclusion, after his many perilous adventures, Lou realizes bitterly that he has not only risked, but lost, all.

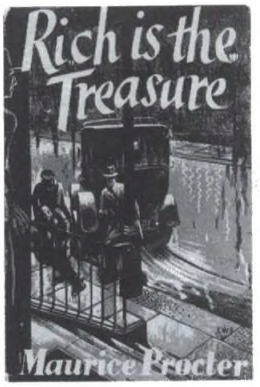
A third story to be set in London is *The Spearhead Death* [14]. It features Hatton Garden, London's diamond market, and involves a sort of contest in investigation between Detective-Superintendent Traill and his assistant, Detective Sergeant Robin Dacre, of Scotland Yard and Roger Quorn, chief security officer for the South African Gemstone Association. A secondary contest occurs between Dacre and Quorn for the affections of the attractive female "smudge boy," Lisa Huguenin. South African color prejudice has major significance in the causation and resolution of the crimes of theft and murder, but I cannot empathize with Barzun and Taylor's comment [1971, p. 350] that "one is sorry to see the attractive culprit found out." Certainly, any reader might feel sympathy with the secondary culprit, but not for the principal—a villain whose selfish crimes have not the least mitigation.

With the exception of his short stories, the last of Procter's non-series writings is *Devil in Moonlight* [17], which takes us back one last time to Yorkshire, to Utterham (which, being both near Leeds and near Halifax, is surely Huddersfield again, "Utterborough" having been an earlier pseudonym [4]). Its central character is Detective-Inspector Jim McCool, head of the Criminal Investigation Department in that not-very-large town, with its population of 110,000 and its police force of two hundred men. His approach to lawbreakers is somewhat unusual:

> ...[B]esides being remembered as a hard hitter, McCool had another reputation. He was known to criminals in his own and neighbouring towns as the most pitiless bastard in the world...He never hesitated to lie to a liar, if by doing so he could eventually learn the truth. With a trickster he would be tricky, and with a callous thug he would, without raising his voice or his hand, evoke images of maltreatment to make a man tremble. [17, 22]



His immediate assistant is Detective Sergeant Aubrey Violett "Hard" Times. (One can comprehend the sergeant's preference for his nickname—even his wife calls him "Hardie.") Times is a detective-fiction reader and is forever derisively comparing his superior to fictional sleuths: "You and Ellery Queen"; "You and Sherlock Holmes"; and even "You and George S. Simenon"—not



that Simenon was a detective! On one occasion, McCool half-mockingly says to himself, "You and Lord Peter Wimsey." But McCool's involvements with women—the former sweetheart Josephine Davenant, almost conveniently murdered, and the wealthy and amorous Chérie Sayle—would have made Lord Peter blush for shame.

Devil in Moonlight is not quite a "police procedural"; rather, McCool is of the "Great Policeman" genre (see below). Eight years before it was published (in 1962), however, Procter had made a true return to the "police procedural" genre in his seventh book. *Hell Is a City* [7]—or his first venture in the field of crime writing, if the earliest novels are to be excluded from consideration. This story and its fifteen sequels are set in "Granchester," certainly Manchester, Manchester's earlier pseudonym "Gretchester" [5] having no doubt been felt to awkward to pronounce. (Dove's alternative theory [1980, p. 1217] that "Granchester" might be Liverpool can be ruled out: "Granchester" is not a seaport town, and in any case Liverpool gains direct mention in several adventures, including the first [7,3].) This book introduces also Procter's second and more important series character, Detective Chief Inspector Harry Martineau.

Dove has argued that, in fact, the Martineau stories fall somewhere between the Ngaio Marsh/Josephine

DETECTIVE CHIEF INSPECTOR HARRY MARTINEAU HAD LONG AGO DECIDED THAT HE COULD NOT BE BOTH A DETECTIVE AND A GENTLEMAN.

Tey tradition of The Great Policeman and the true police procedural. I would argue otherwise. In many of the sixteen books in which Martineau appears, other policemen are at the forefront of the story and Martineau on the sidelines. Neither Marsh, with her theatrical sense of the demand of the principal actor to be at center stage, nor Tey would ever have permitted their heroes to occupy such comparably minor roles. Their heroes may appear late in the story, but, when they do appear, they take it over in a fashion that Martineau does not.

The difference is apparent from the outset. While Martineau is given a prominent role in *Hell Is a City*, with his marriage as well as his investigations serving as prime plot concerns, almost equal prominence is given to Detective Constable Devery, his investigations and his love affair. Moreover, Devery later is to remain, and a number of other policemen are to become, prominent in later works, while in at least two [20, 22] it is the criminals, rather than the police, who are given greatest prominence.

Somewhere in Martineau's ancestry there must have been a Frenchman–perhaps one of the Huguenots who fled to England from persecution during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries–but he himself is as Lancashire as bread-pudding.

Martineau was probably born, and certainly grew up, not in Granchester but in nearby Boyton (surely Bolton). His background was not a wealthy one, and he attended council school there, before moving up to grammar school and learning to play Rugby football. On leaving school, he took employment in a bank and fell in love with a "handsome, strapping blonde girl" called Sylvia Howard. Fortunately or unfortunately, Sylvia jilted him for a husband with sounder financial prospects, though she was to remain attracted enough to Harry to try hard, during a very much later encounter, to seduce him–and came close to succeeding [12]. Perhaps it was in part because of that disappointment in love, but certainly it was because he was bored, that Harry Martineau threw up his comfortable bank job and, in quest of excitement, joined the Granchester Police.

At the beginning of his earliest chronicled adventure, we are granted a first vision of Granchester, as viewed from a high moorland:

> Though the day was dry and clear, there was not much to see; only rough fields stretching away downhill until they faded into the haze from several hundred square miles of smoking chimneys. Down there, ten miles away, was a city of a million people, but the city was only the hub of a wheeling spread of suburbs, satellites and close neighbors which made it, in reality, one of the very big cities of the world.
>
> "I don't know about London," [Martineau] said. "They should have called Granchester the Big Smoke."
>
> "The Metropolis of the North," Devery said. "What Granchester says today, London forgot yesterday."
>
> Martineau considered the gibe. Devery was a Liverpool man, and such remarks were to be expected from him. But they were not to go unanswered.
>
> "I'd sooner be a church gargoyle in Granchester than the Lord Mayor of Liverpool," he said.
>
> "Every tomcat likes his own back alley," Devery retorted. [7, 4]

On that moorland, Martineau is beginning the search for a jailbreaker, Don Starling. Martineau and he grew up together in Boyton [7, 46], but, both as boys and as men, the two have been antitheses. Consequently they have become mortal enemies–mortal indeed, for Martineau survives Starling's murderous attacks and ensures that Starling is hanged.

At this time, Martineau has already attained the high rank of Detective Chief Inspector. Of his climb to that rank, we are told nothing, though it is mentioned incidentally that he left the police during the war and was on military service in Germany in 1947 [21, 178].

The gnawing problem for Martineau at this time is a rapidly deteriorating marriage:

> Julia Martineau was not unfaithful, and it was impossible to suspect she ever would be. She was only interested in fine clothes, social standing, attractive homes, and the affairs of her acquaintances. The sexual behavior of other people (as a topic of scandalous conversation) was more interesting to her than her own or her husband's. [7, 27]

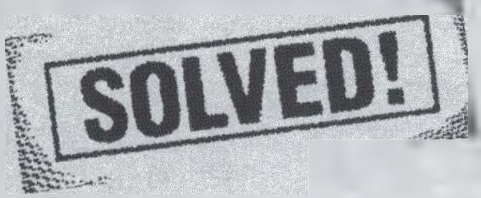
Their views of their marriage are profoundly dissimilar:

> His conception of a happy home had always included one or two children. He had married Julia under the delusion that children would arrive in the natural course of events. But from the beginning Julia had quite positively refused to have a child. [7, 30]

In the end, only a justifiable explosion of anger by her husband saves their

Continued on Page 99

The Case of the Extraordinary Mystery Selection



by The Berkley Publishing Group

MRS. JEFFRIES DUSTS FOR CLUES EMILY BRIGHTWELL
Author of *The Inspector and Mrs. Jeffries*
When a servant and a valuable brooch vanish at the same time, Inspector Witherspoon of Scotland Yard must call in his housekeeper, Mrs. Jeffries! **Berkley June**

BROADCAST CLUES DICK BELSKY
"Fast, funny, and first-rate!"—ASSOCIATED PRESS
TV newswoman Jenny McKay scoops everyone when her first story uncovers the dirty dealings of a powerful political family. **Jove June**

FRAMED IN BLUE D. C. BROD
Author of *Error in Judgment*
Quint McCauley is hired to prove the innocence of an environmentalist accused of murder…but this is one assignment that may put Quint on the endangered species list. **Diamond June**

DEAD IN THE WATER DANA STABENOW
Edgar Award nominee for *A Cold Day for Murder*
After two crew members disappear from an Alaskan fishing boat on the Bering Sea, Kate Shugak goes undercover to cast her nets for a killer. **Berkley July**

THE LAST LAUGH JOHN R. RIGGS
Author of *One Man's Poison*
"Offbeat…engaging."—THE KIRKUS REVIEWS
During his background check for Si Buckles's obituary, reporter Garth Ryland uncovers evidence that someone turned the tables on the infamous joker—and scared him to death. **Jove July**

FAT-FREE AND FATAL JAQUELINE GIRDNER
By the author of *Murder Most Mellow*
When her mother-in-law moves in, Kate Jasper needs to get out—at least for a weekly cooking class. Then one of the students is strangled and Kate must find the culprit to clear her friend of the murder. **Diamond July**

FROZEN STIFF SARAH J. MASON
Author of *Murder in the Maze*
A pesky management consultant has the staff of an English grocery chain ready to kill him—and then someone does. Now Detective Superintendent Trewley and Detective Stone must turn up the heat on a cold-blooded killer. **Berkley August**

THE SERVANT'S TALE MARGARET FRAZER
By the author of *The Novice's Tale*
"Appealing characters and crisp writing."—LOS ANGELES TIMES
When a medieval abbey offers shelter to a traveling actor's troupe—and unwittingly opens the door to murder—only Sister Frevisse can ferret out the killer in their midst. **Jove August**

SHOW STOPPER MARY MONICA PULVER
Author of *Original Sin*
"Pulver is one of the best kept secrets in mystery!"—THE DENVER ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS
A prestigious home show turns deadly when a brutal maimer is murdered. Kari Belchik's groomer is accused of the crime, and with detective-husband Peter miles away, Kari's got to solve the case on her own. **Diamond August**

THE CRIME SCREEN

BY RIC MEYERS

PHOTO MIRAMAX FILMS

FOREST WHITAKER (L) AND STEPHEN REA IN NEIL JORDAN'S *THE CRYING GAME*. THIS FILM WAS NOMINATED FOR 6 ACADEMY AWARDS AND WON FOR BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY.

The holiday '92 movies have gone, and while they were no better than the summer '92 dross, at least I had no undue expectations. You can see just how emotionally bereft the Hollywood fodder is when a little film out of England, by way of Ireland, show up and knocks all the big-budget, major studio stuff into a cocked hat (and I mean that in every definition of the term).

Those of you who have already seen **The Crying Game** may know what I mean. The unfortunate thing is that the best way to see this film is by complete surprise. The initial ripple came from critics who went to screenings knowing nothing more than it was the first film by Neil Jordan since his disastrous partnership with major L.A. studios. Prior to that he had made such fine little crime films as *Mona Lisa* (with Bob Hoskins as a low level mob soldier protecting a prostitute at the behest of a boss played by Michael Caine).

His films were so fine, in fact, that he was wooed from damp London to sunny Southern California where he made stunningly awful dreck (one with a title I can't quite recall at the moment starring Steve Guttenberg, Peter O'Toole and Darryl Hannah in a haunted castle). As John Woo, the superlative Hong Kong director, told me from the set of his first American movie *Hard Target*, starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, "I have less control and have to deal with all sorts of egoistic people."

I have little doubt Jordan was faced with the same thing, so he went back where he had more control and less egos. He reteamed with Stephen Rea, the star of his first film (*Angel*, an Irish film about "The Troubles," not to be confused with the Marlene Dietrich film or the exploitation movie about the high school honors student turned hooker). He joined English star Miranda Richardson (who is equally adept at drama and comedy—as viewers of both TV's *Black Adder* and *Enchanted April* can attest) and American actor Forest Whitaker to appear in one of the most unique movies in cinema history.

Unfortunately, the fact that you even know there is a surprise is enough to slightly lessen the film's effect, but anyone can enjoy the amazing combination of romance, humanity, suspence, and violence that makes *The Crying Game* so special. It is, without doubt, the best mystery and crime film of the year.

Of course, given the crime films that are being made lately, that's not so hard. 1993 does not seem any more promising than 1992 when it comes to movies. **Body of Evidence** is the third movie in recent months that was made with earnest, even deadly, seriousness, only to have publicity spokesmen maintain (after disastrous screenings) that the producers actually meant them to be campy and satiric (i.e.: stupid).

The first was Brian DePalma's *Raising Cain*. The second was Francis Ford

Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (or should I say Zoetrope Film's Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, or even Columbia Picture's Zoetrope Film's Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*....). The third is this, Madonna's latest attempt to go from being a music diva harlot and fashion tramp to cinema superstar slut. It's really a shame, too. She's actually a fairly good composer and fine singer.

No matter—this movie is a joke, and a pretty bad one at that. It's good to marvel at, but not to enjoy. The joke starts even before the theater lights go down. It starts in the lobby, with the poster, or even at home, with the television commercials. In both, the following words are prominently displayed: "not be confused with Patricia Cornwell's novel." It too was called *Body of Evidence*, and even though there was already a CBS television series called *Bodies of Evidence*, MGM didn't feel the need to help viewers distinguish this travesty from that.

Now, granted, Pat's book is exceptional, and it sold extremely well, but even on it's best day it didn't reach as many eyes as the CBS show did. Besides, Stephen Coonts had a novel called *Under Siege*, and the makers of the recent Steven Seagal movie of the same name didn't feel the need to help confused viewers figure out that. Finally, there was also a 1988 television movie with the title *Body of Evidence*, so what's with this? Already evidence of nervous filmmakers was in evidence.

More power to Cornwell. Not only did she get loads of free advertising, but she also distanced herself from a movie whose legal verisimilitude makes her novel look like *In Cold Blood*. Madonna plays a woman who allegedly sexed her elderly paramour to death. How did this case reach trial? "If I hit you and you die," says the D.A. played by Joe Mantegna, "then my fist is the weapon. I have killed you with my body." Thankfully he doesn't follow up with the rest of the allusion.

You've got to worry about a film where every male star in it refers to Madonna's character at one point thusly: "Well, she *is* a beautiful woman." Who are they trying to convince? Her? Themselves? Each other? Or us? In any case, it doesn't work, especially when the peroxided one is playing opposite a supporting female cast that looks better than her even on a really bad day without makeup in a burlap bag.

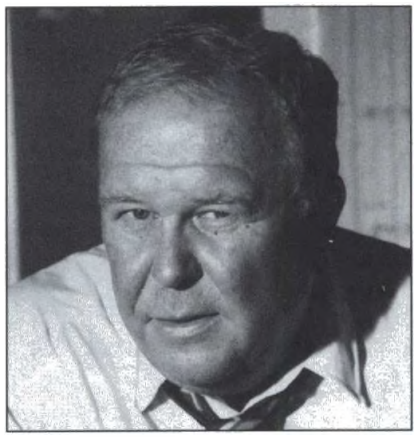
Apparently the poor director, Uli Edel (whose previous film was the promising *Last Exit to Brooklyn*), was attempting to out-basic *Basic Instinct* with the sexual content, but instead of a movie that women could love and men could laugh at, he made a movie that everybody can laugh at. Even lovers of handcuffs and hot wax find this impossible to accept as anything approaching life (and I ought to know). It does not have to be seen not to be believed. Maybe someone should make Patsy Cornwell's book into a movie and call it *A is for Alibi*. Not to be confused with...well, you know.

Enough bad movies, already. Meanwhile, NBC went on to tout it's new series executive-produced by filmmaker Barry *Avalon, Toys, Diner, Rain Man, Young Sherlock Holmes* Levinson. Levinson (no relation, to my knowledge, to the late Dick Levinson, co-creator of *Columbo, Mannix*, and *Murder She Wrote*) loves Baltimore and has adapted a nonfiction book by a Baltimore reporter to create **Homicide**—a series that has more than a passing resemblance to *Hill Street Blues*.

Again, I find the media coverage more impressive than the show itself. "Revolutionary! Breaks all the rules! Realistic!" have been words that were bandied about. A very telling consideration, Watson. Absolutely wrong, but very telling. *Homicide* is about as realistic as Star Wars. One of the very first images was of a homicide detective at a crime scene smoking a cigarette. And that was nothing compared to the literate dialogue. Hardened investigators were alluding to historical and cultural events all over the place!

I didn't read the book upon which this is based, but I lived in Baltimore for five years, and I did a chapter on the making of *Hill Street Blues* in my book *Murder on the Air* (available for a nominal fee from Mysterious Press. "It's great," say some of my friends. "Buy it before I'm forced to remainder it!" Otto might have cried before selling Mysterious Press to Warner Books. Honest, it was nominated for an Edgar and everything). The *Homicide* handheld camera work that a bunch of articles have trumpeted was well in evidence on Hill Street, on the short-lived syndicated series *The Street*, and still much in evidence on *Law and Order*.

By the way, none of this should detract



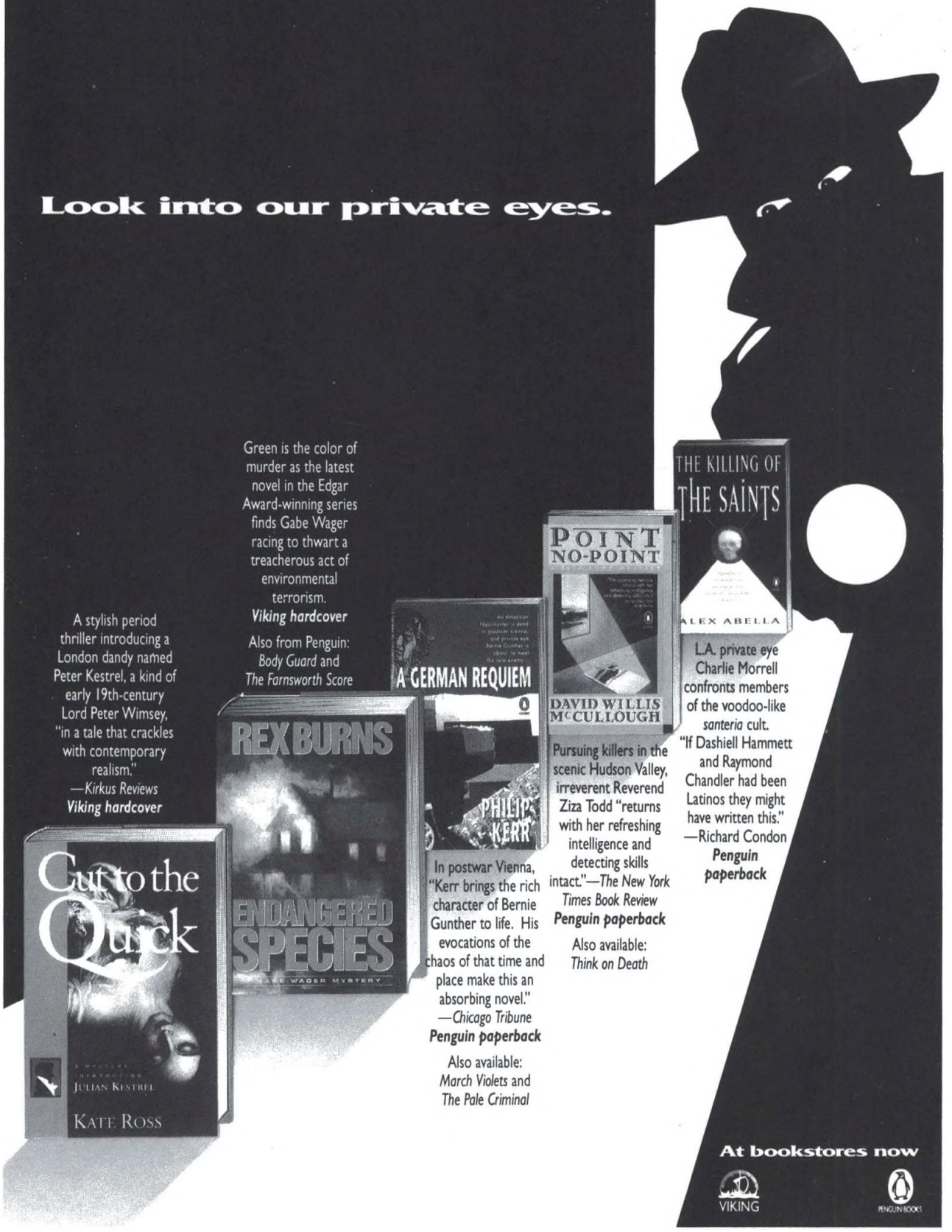
NED BEATTY STARS IN NBC'S HOMICIDE WHICH IS PRODUCED BY FILMMAKER BARRY LEVINSON.

from your basic enjoyment of the show itself. Although not revolutionary or particularly realistic, *Homicide* is still superior to most hour dramas running nowadays—especially the self-destructing *L.A. Law*. Actually, most of the stuff the media is trumpeting only distracts from the strength of the show, which is some of its writing and all of its cast.

Richard Belzer, Ned Beatty, Yaphet Kotto, Andre Braugher, and Jon Polito are always fun to watch, and the rest of the cast bear some scrutiny as well. The initial episode, aired after the Super Bowl, was excellent but there has been an obvious deterioration in the two episodes since. Polito's fascination with "solving" the assassination of Abraham Lincoln was refreshing in the first show, but its continued use is replacing his character development. And it only took two episodes before the detectives were investigating murders which involved their friends and neighbors. *Kojak* waited five seasons before resorting to that well-known network technique to "heighten viewer sympathy."

Homicide makes a decent lead in to *Law and Order*—still the best crime show on the air—but it should stop trying so hard to be different and rely on good, old-fashioned story telling. No amount of jump cuts and hand-held camera work can make up for that. ■

Look into our private eyes.



A stylish period thriller introducing a London dandy named Peter Kestrel, a kind of early 19th-century Lord Peter Wimsey, "in a tale that crackles with contemporary realism."
—*Kirkus Reviews*
Viking hardcover

Green is the color of murder as the latest novel in the Edgar Award-winning series finds Gabe Wager racing to thwart a treacherous act of environmental terrorism.
Viking hardcover

Also from Penguin:
Body Guard and
The Farnsworth Score

In postwar Vienna, "Kerr brings the rich character of Bernie Gunther to life. His evocations of the chaos of that time and place make this an absorbing novel."
—*Chicago Tribune*
Penguin paperback

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—Richard Condon
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Those Old Peculiars:

THE SICKLY SERGEANT WIGGINS, THE CANNY CAT CYRIL,

The richness of Martha

THE GREEDY AND KLEPTOMANIACAL AMERICAN AUNT,

Grimes' popular mysteries lies

THE MYSTERY WRITER POLLY PRAED, THE TOWN DRUNK,

in her characters. But it's not

THE PARANOID MRS. WASSERMAN, THE BEAUTIFUL AND

their plausibility that we like,

ELUSIVE JENNY KENNINGTON, THE LOCAL ANTIQUES DEALER

it's their sheer lack of it...

Martha Grimes is a writer whose popularity is based on her characters rather than on subtlety or indeed coherence of plot. This would seem to suggest that the characters are realistic, that they strike the reader as real people faced with real problems, coming to terms with real issues. One would also expect that, like real people, they change and develop over time, benefiting or at least being affected by experience. However, while the richness of Grimes' work does lie in her characters, they are creatures of fantasy rather than reality, static figures whose counterparts one would be hard-pressed to find in the real world. Remaining the same in book ten as they were in book one, they capture the reader not by what they show of actual human behavior but rather, by what they suggest are the possibilities and outcomes for such behavior. **by J. Kotker**

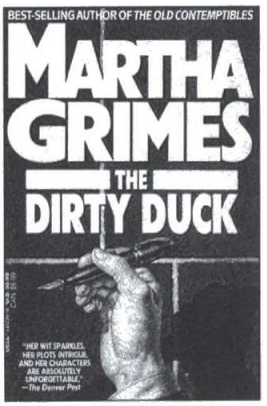
Joan Kotker teaches English and Crime Fiction at Bellevue Community College in Bellevue Washington.

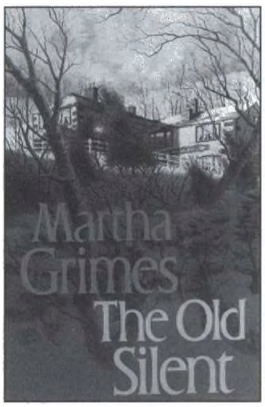
Grimes is an American who sets her mysteries in Britain, usually in areas that are associated with particular authors. Thus *The Dirty Duck* is set in Stratford-on-Avon, *The Old Silent* in Yorkshire, *The Old Contemptibles* in the Lake District, and so on. However, although settings change, characters remain constant. The individual novels feature a repertory group of players: Richard Jury, Superintendent of Scotland yard; Jury's assistant, the sickly Sergeant Wiggins; his superior, the Herbert-Lom-like Racer; Racer's secretary Fiona, a clone of Elvira, and his nemesis, the canny cat Cyril; Jury's good friend and unofficial aid in detection Melrose Plant, a once-titled aristocrat; Plant's greedy and kleptomaniacal American aunt, Agatha; mystery writer Polly Praed; Jury and Plant's friend, the wealthy, beautiful and elusive Vivian Rivington, who may or may not be in love with Jury; the equally beautiful and elusive Jenny Kennington, with whom Jury may or may not be in love; Marshall Trueblood, local antiques dealer of ambiguous sexual orientation and wildly colorful plumage; Jury's landlady, the paranoid Mrs. Wasserman; and a great number of extras including but not limited to Division Commander Brian Macalvie, pub owner Dick Scroggs, and Mrs. Weatherby, the town drunk. In addition, each novel has a child or children who have been abandoned either emotionally or in actuality by the adults responsible for them.

Grimes herself makes no claims to her characters' realism. In an article rather interestingly titled "Necessary Lies" she observes two real Scotland Yard detectives and notes that they "would never recognize Inspector Richard Jury as a co-worker. He moves too slowly, is too affable and urbane, spends too much time listening to suspects, uses his powers of deduction without much visible aid from ballistics and forensics....Jury is not really 'real,' except for me and (I hope) the reader, whose willing suspension of disbelief works with this sort of mystery if it ever works at all." Grimes also says that her "sort of mystery is far more an exercise in deduction (a statement that boggles the mind of anyone who has analyzed her plots) and an occasion to give free play to a dozen or so cranky types than it is a 'true' account of how Scotland Yard operates."

PHOTO: CAROLYN HARTMAN

Her group of characters has become very popular with American mystery readers and critics who see them as typically and authentically British, with comments such as "Grimes' sleuths and victims...come across as real people" (Chambers), "Grimes does have good characters, as usual (who give us) a way to experience England vicariously" (Andrews), "What distinguishes Grimes...is her characters. They are genuine characters" (Gillmore). However, this is surely a reaction based on innocence rather than experience. After all, most American readers have never lived in Britain, have little real-life exposure to the British as individuals and therefore have little basis to discriminate between realistic and non-realistic British characters. We do have a basis for making judgments about American characters though, and might extrapolate from Grimes' Americans to her British characters. The difficulty in doing so is that in most of Grimes' works, only one American appears, Melrose Plant's greedy Aunt Agatha. Agatha, Lady Ardry, is the widow of a British lord who is living out the rest of her life in Britain, making her so atypical to begin with that most American readers would be hard pressed to come to a determination of her realism. Agatha is her own person and no one else's, although readers might be surprised to find that Grimes' choice for an actress to play Agatha is Angela Lansbury. It's difficult to connect the





intelligent, articulate character Lansbury plays in *Murder She Wrote* with the grasping, intellectually limited Agatha of Grimes' novels.

Only two of Grimes' ten novels have American characters other than Agatha in significant roles, the writer Ellen Taylor in *The Old Silent* and a group of American tourists in *The Dirty Duck*. Grimes has drawn Taylor as a character who has taken on a persona, and thus she is by definition inauthentic. However, the characters in *The Dirty Duck* have no such caveat attached to their descriptions. They are intended to be a representative group of American tourists visiting the sites at Stratford-on-Avon, but as Americans they lack credibility. For example, one of the key tourists, a would-be scholar, introduces himself to Melrose Plant as "Harvey L. Shoenberg from D.C.," at best an unrealistically form introduction. John D. Rockefeller may have introduced himself using his middle initial, but few Americans since him have adopted the habit, nor do we usually attach our cities to our names. Schoenberg is writing a book, *Who Really Killed Marlowe?* and in discussing it with Plant he refers to Shakespeare as "Will" and "Billy Boy", as well as referring to Marlowe as "Kit," Walsingham as "Tom," and so on, something a scholar may do as an ironic comment but certainly not as a form of serious address. And when Schoenberg later refers to Melrose as "Mel" and Richard Jury as "Rick," this may well remind the reader of Peppermint Patty calling Charlie Brown "Chuck," but it does nothing to add to Schoenberg's credibility. Most Americans, indeed most people, refer to a person as that person refers to himself or herself, and Plant and Jury have introduced themselves to Schoenberg by their full first names. And if for some reason Schoenberg were looking for a diminutive for "Richard," "Dick" is the usual American shortening of the name, not Rick.

There are also problems with Schoenberg's use of slang, which is dated and has an off-key ring to it, as when he says that Marlowe "nearly wigged out" when he was put in prison and refers to the church where Shakespeare is buried as "neat". These are terms that most Americans would readily understand but few would use in the 1980's, the time of the novel. Another character on the tour, a wealthy American businessman, uses the expression "wherever they've a mind to" to mean "wherever they want to" and refers to Jury and his colleagues "you fellas", phrases that are certainly comprehensible but not typical of contemporary Americans.

Characters are also given atypical names. The businessman's wife is Amelia Blue and her daughter, Honey Belle, and while we Americans do go in for the occasional Lady Bird, this is the exception rather than the rule. The first victim of the killer is Gwendolyn Bracegirdle, another improbable name (and Gwendolyn's favorite drink is sweet sherry, a libation that has yet to make it as an all-American favorite). These names are all possible if unlikely but in *The Old Silent* we meet a character named Morpeth Duckworth, an American rock music critic and here, we are clearly out of the realm of the possible. Of course Grimes means these names to be humorous and certainly in the case of Schoenberg's referring to Plant as "Mel," she achieves her purpose. However while the names add humor, they detract from the realism of her characters.

A Grimes Bibliography

THE SUPERINTENDENT RICHARD JURY MYSTERIES

The Man with a Load of Mischief
1981

The Old Fox Deceiv'd
1982

The Anodyne Necklace
1983

The Jerusalem Inn
1984

Help the Poor Struggler
1985

The Deer Leap
1985

The Dirty Duck
1986

I Am the Only Running Footman
1986

The Five Bells and Bladebone
1988

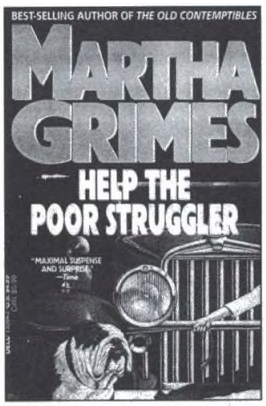
The Old Silent
1989

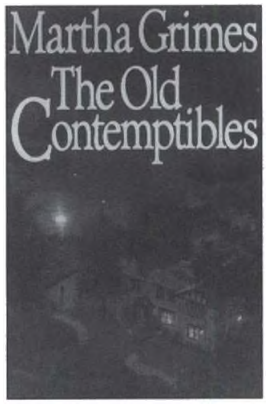
The Old Contemptibles
1991

The Horse You Came In On
1993

Such treatment of her American characters suggests that Grimes' British characters also lack plausibility, that they seem authentic to American readers not because they are authentic but because we have no real models to compare them to, and British critics of her novels confirm this. In a review of *The Dirty Duck* in *The London Times*, the writer says that while the novel is "not full of obvious mistakes or solecisms...for all (Grimes') research, she gets her English characters, especially the aristo companion, not quite right. It's an American interpretation of Brits; and in the end, it diminishes an otherwise exciting discovery." British mystery writer Robert Barnard, reviewing 1985's *Help the Poor Struggler* in Washington Post Book World, can't quite make up his mind. He says "there is the temptation for the English reader to go through (Grimes') books simply for the pleasure of catching her out," and he lists a number of examples where this can be done, but then he adds, "her middle and lower class characters have a ring of conviction," a qualification that leads the reader to conclude that the upper class characters do not. This is followed in the next paragraph with the statement, "the characters themselves are well enough done," a comment that has the feel of damning with faint praise. Barnard continues this tone of things-not-quite-right by hoping in the concluding paragraph that "Martha Grimes' readership will grow so large...she can take a sabbatical year or two in Britain...and add that top layer of total confidence to her picture of British life." In a 1991 review of *The Old Silent* in *The London Times*, Lisanne Radice has none of Barnard's reservations. She refers to Grimes as "an American writer whose success in the U.S. has baffled her English counterparts....Her compatriots love her for her 'authentic' descriptions of apparently rural pursuits, her eccentric aristocratic sleuths, her outrageous aunts cloned from Noel Coward, and her language, which purports to convey the bucolic nastiness of the rustic peasant" but in Britain, says Radice, "the critic, however well-disposed, clenches teeth and with growing disbelief hurries on through."

Perhaps, though, what American readers respond to in Grimes' characters is not their reality but rather, the implicit message they deliver. Much has been written about the underlying optimism of mystery and detective fiction with its basic premise that human behavior is rational, that cause and effect prevail, that there are answers to questions, that evil will be found out and punished, and so on. In a somewhat different context Grimes' characters can also be seen as optimistic. Many of them have qualities or exist in situations that would make life very difficult for them in the real world, but in the world of her novels, life accommodates them. Richard Jury, her Scotland Yard detective, is loathed by his superior, Chief Superintendent Racer, and yet Jury has been promoted to superintendent, only four steps from the highest rank possible to him. In the real world, Jury probably would not only never be promoted, he would more than likely have lost his job or at the very least, been transferred but in this fictional world, promotions appear to be based at least as much on merit as on personality. Jury's good friend Brian Macalvie is another example of such promotion. Grimes says of him, "Macalvie's suffering others to live had nothing to do with sex, age, creed, species. He had no end of tolerance as long as nobody made a mistake in the job" (*Silent*).





People who work under him are desperate for transfers (one, Grimes says, even accepted a demotion to remote Kirkcudbright in Scotland to get away from Macalvie and was disappointed in the nearness of the location: he'd asked for Mars). The author adds, "Not everyone on the force hated Macalvie; the police dogs loved him." In the real world, Macalvie would have been out of a job long before he ever made it through the probationary period, with some sort of comment in his record about his lack of interpersonal skills and inability to fit in as a member of the team, but in this fictional world he not only functions, he's been promoted to divisional commander, a position of considerable authority. The hypochondriacal Sergeant Wiggins, who develops more illnesses with each novel and

whose response to moments of stress and tension is to reach for a new box of cough drops, is another example of someone judged on the basis of performance, since he continues to work with and be a valued colleague of Jury despite his deep-seated neurosis about everything to do with his health.

And Wiggins is not an exception; Grimes' world is one in which neurosis is respected and accommodated. See for example Jury's fellow tenant, the elderly Mrs. Wasserman. She is certifiably paranoid, the legacy of her experiences as a Jew in Nazi-occupied Poland, and she spends her days in contemporary London imagining that she is being followed and watched. She reports these watchers to Jury, who invariably assures her that he has had a word with the local police station and then goes down to her apartment to add yet another lock to her door. Would that every victim could live in an apartment building with a police superintendent, and would that the superintendent would respond to the victim's fear seriously and create a sense of safety for her.

As with neurosis, asocial behavior also carries no penalty in Grimes' fiction. Mrs. Withersby, a drunken char who can be relied upon to be sitting (more often, sleeping) sozzled by the hearth at The Jack and Hammer pub from opening to closing is never kicked out of the place and is always treated with kindness by the rest of Grimes' regulars, even to keeping her in drinks. And Marshall Trueblood, a flamboyant character who flaunts his ambiguous sexuality in the small town of Long Piddleton, is not ostracized as one might expect but is instead respected in the village, whose inhabitants seem to have genuine regard and fondness for him. Plant's Aunt Agatha, a regular in all of the books, is yet another example of this acceptance. She is drawn as a greedy, unintelligent woman whose life is focused entirely on inheriting Plant's estate. In the interim she appropriates as much of it as she can, removing it bit by purloined bit to her cottage. Instead of disinheriting her, Plant responds by making jokes about her greed while continuing to have her to tea.

The optimism underlying Grimes' characters is also apparent in her children. As noted above, each of her books has at least one example of a child who has been either literally or figuratively abandoned by those who are charged with being the child's caretakers. A typical example occurs in *The Dirty Duck*, in which a 9 year-old boy and his 15 year-old sister have been abandoned by their mother and now live with a stepfather and stepmother. No one tells them what has happened to their mother, now dead, but they continue to love her and they forgive her for leaving them. In this they are typical of Grimes' children, who are consistently loyal to caretakers who have shown no loyalty to them, who have in this case walked away from them. The implicit message here is the very reassuring one that no matter what we do, our children will love us.

This 9 year-old boy is kidnapped by his natural uncle, and then he seems to be forgotten by the authorities who are far too busy searching for a killer to be concerned about one missing child. His sister says to Jury, "What about Jimmy? There ain't no one looking for Jimmy, not with all this other going on." And in a small voice she said, "Jimmy's dead, ain't he?" Jury assures her that Jimmy is still alive and that the police are combing the country for him, and then Grimes tells the reader "Jury only hoped, looking down at the girl, his instincts were right." The boy succeeds in rescuing himself, a feat achieved by many of Grimes' children, and this is indeed a rosy view: wouldn't it be wonderful if the hurt, neglected and abused children of the world could save themselves?

This theme of abandoned children is reiterated again and again in Grimes' novels, even when there seems no reason to introduce it. In *The Old Silent* Jury is questioning Alvaro Jiminez, a famous blues musician, about one of the members of the band and when he is through, he says, "Mind if I ask you one more question? About yourself?" Jiminez tells him to go ahead and Jury then asks him if the name "Jiminez" is his father's last name. Why the question should occur to Jury is never explained, but Jiminez answers, "Nope. That's my mama's maiden name.... Mama ran off when I was eight years old with a stand-up piano player. Never heard nothin' since...What I thought was....maybe she'd recognize her own name and come see me." Note that whether or not this reunion occurs, the child she walked out on is now a world-famous musician, someone who has not only survived but has triumphed.

There are exceptions to the scenario of self-reliant children, as in *The Old Silent*, where a child is kidnapped and murdered by his father and aunt, but for the most part Grimes' children survive, and in doing so they are routinely helped by sensitive, intelligent dogs, cats, horses and even in one case sheep, animals who suggest to the reader that there's always someone or something somewhere who will love us and help us.

Overall, the examples discussed here from Grimes' cast of characters are typical in that they bring to the reader an underlying message of optimism: our friends will support us no matter what, our eccentricities and neuroses will be accepted and will not count against us, we will be judged in terms of the quality of our work and not the charm of our personalities. If the characters who embody these messages seem authentic to readers it is surely less because they are fully developed and accurately drawn than because they respond to authentic emotional needs in all of us. Ultimately they tell us that we will be forgiven, we will be loved, and this will happen in a world that makes sense to us, a world where all of our questions can be answered. What a fine world this would be! ■

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"This magazine will self-destruct in two minutes."

LORBER/DAVIDSON

Report from 221B Baker Street

BY

SHERRY ROSE BOND

AND SCOTT BOND

ALMOST A DECADE AGO THERE APPEARED ON THE SHERLOCKIAN SCENE A FASCINATING NEW COLLECTION OF PASTICHES COLLECTED BY ISAAC ASIMOV, MARTIN HARRY GREENBERG AND CHARLES WAUGH CALLED *SHERLOCK HOLMES THROUGH TIME AND SPACE*. THESE ARE EXTREMELY CREATIVE, PRIMARILY FUTURISTIC STORIES IN WHICH HOLMES WAS IN ANOTHER TIME PERIOD, WAS AN ALIEN CREATURE OR was able to employ technology to unravel the mystery. How much fun it is to imagine the quintessential nineteenth century Holmes in the world of high technology!

It now appears that the past and future worlds of Sherlock Holmes have collided in both the twentieth and the twenty-fourth centuries. The imagined worlds conceived by the likes of Isaac Asimov, Philip Jose Farmer, and Poul Anderson have taken shape in a number of very interesting manifestations: all involving Holmes and technology.

The television series, **Star Trek: The Next Generation,** takes place on the Enterprise, a starship cruising through space in the twenty-fourth century. To amuse the crew on the long voyage, the ship contains a device known as a "holodeck." Here crew members can act out their fantasies by conjuring up and playing with holographic images of people, places and things. One of the crew, Lieutenant Commander Data (an android), enjoys playing Sherlock Holmes so he has the holodeck create 221B Baker Street and the London of Sherlock Holmes. Here, assisted by his friend, Chief Engineer Geordie La Forge (as Watson), he solves mysteries created by the computer controlling the holodeck. Data asked the holodeck to create an adversary who would be worthy of him and a holograph of Professor Moriarty promptly appeared! In an episode which recently aired, Moriarty, rather than Data/Holmes, was at the center of the action. He had, in a manner of speaking, "come to life," and then took control of the ship. The program demonstrated an imaginative blend of nineteenth century villainy and twenty-fourth century technology. What fun!

Another technological manifestation of Sherlock Holmes can be seen which uses both a television and a video cassette recorder. This is a video game called **VCR 221B Baker Street** (from VCR Enterprises of Clarksdale, Mississippi). Each of the ten episodes or cases in the game begins with Holmes and Watson in their sitting room discussing a case. Holmes announces a series of questions to be solved and the players begin to watch a segment of the tape showing the first part of the action. Players then are given a quiz question and those who correctly answer it are entitled to get a clue and to advance. After watching the three parts of the episode, players try to answer the questions initially posed by Holmes. Thus, they are competing against each other as well as against Holmes.

There are many more elements to the game but, essentially, you watch TV and try to answer as many questions as possible. The acting and the production are acceptable with few glaring gaffes or glitches. It's a bit slow-moving and Sherlockian knowledge is not a factor so the die-hard Sherlockian player may not find it especially challenging, but, as a video game, it is moderately diverting.

Our current mail, magazines and mail computer stores all advertise a number of Sherlockian computer games. These

combine the elements of a traditional board game with those of popular arcade-type games (such as "Pac-Man"). These games require relatively sophisticated (albeit increasingly more commonplace) computer hardware as well as a certain degree of manual dexterity. The computer games we've seen use Sherlockian icons and artifacts but, generally, no Canonical content. In fact, the Sherlockian elements are often merely gratuitous. Consequently, they are merely a curiosity to the Sherlockian—their real audience is the computer game aficionado.

Computers are now being used by Sherlockians for research purposes as well as for fun and games. PsyLogic Systems has produced **An Electronic Holmes Companion.** This consists of the entire Canon in a format that can be accessed by story or by specific words or phrases. Thus, for example, the user who is interested in references to "tobacco" can locate each of the stories in which this word can be found. Then the exact context containing that word in each story can be highlighted. A printer can reproduce this information for use in quizzes or for scholarly papers. This is certainly considerably easier that trying to locate these references by going through the text manually. Other Sherlockian concordances are now also available for use with CD-ROM (see below).

There is another kind of computer game which uses significantly more sophisticated equipment than a standard personal computer (PC). This a game designed for CD-ROM, using a special compact disc (CD) in a special CD player connected to a PC. The game is **Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective** and is an adaptation of the paper-and-pencil version of the same game. However, the CD-ROM version (from ICOM Simulations, Inc.) takes the action to an entirely different level. Like the original, it permits the player to consult newspapers, reference material, and Scotland Yard and to meet with suspects, witnesses and others. This is where the technology really comes into its own. You can actually "visit" the characters and both see and hear them. What you see are like motion picture vignettes (whose quality depends upon the size and quality of your video monitor). There is the illusion of actually interviewing each individual, allowing you to observe their reactions and mannerisms. With the press of a button or the motion of a "mouse" you can advance the play, collect more information or take time out.

This CD-ROM game was the most exciting Sherlock Holmes game we've ever played. The graphics, the sound and, especially, the interaction all contributed to making this an unforgettable experience. It was easy to play (even for the neophyte) and each of the three games on the disc could take hours to play (if you investigated every option). We've been informed that a second disc is now in production and will be available shortly. The cases are, of course, non-Canonical, although many of the characters and locations echo those found in the Canon so it's fun for the show-off Sherlockian to identify. Prior knowledge of Sherlock Holmes is not a prerequisite to playing so this could serve as an exciting introduction to the Sherlockian world. Even the most jaded Sherlockian found this game both challenging and diverting.

None of the preceding should suggest that technology is new to Sherlock Holmes. Holmes, himself, used an automobile, the telegraph, the telephone and the gramophone in the course of solving his cases. One cannot help but think, therefore, that if Sherlock Holmes were still professionally active today he would certainly not be adverse to employing all the electronic tools available to aid him in his work. It is quite conceivable that, even now, somewhere on the Sussex Downs, Holmes is working on an update of his magnum opus, *The Practical Handbook of Bee Culture*, using a laptop computer. He might even attach it, with a modem, to a telephone and communicate with Sherlockians around the world through a Sherlockian computer bulletin board.

Like the Baker Street Irregulars, the new technology enables Holmes to "go everywhere, see everything, overhear everyone." And, to quote Mr. Spock, we hope it also enables him to "Live long and prosper." ■

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.

Cutler, Stan
Shot on Location
New York: Dutton, 1993. **(B)**

In a situation transparently based on the Brando family case, Carey Jaeger, son of obese acting legend Stacy Jaeger, goes on trial in Los Angeles for the murder of his sister's abusive boyfriend. In an unlikely turn of events, middle-aged private eye Ray Goodman winds up on the jury and stays there long enough for twenty pages of scattered trial action, described in anything-for-a-laugh style by Goodman or his co-sleuth, gay ghostwriter Mark Bradley. In the beleaguered courtroom of male Judge Steinberg (says Goodman, "I'd seen so much television it came as a shock the judge could be anything but a middle-aged black lady"), some seemingly inappropriate arguments are allowed to go on in the presence of the jury. Comic mystery writing is tough, and writers make it harder on themselves by trying it at such excessive length, in this case 341 pages.

Friedman, Philip
Inadmissible Evidence
New York: Fine, 1992. **(1/4)**

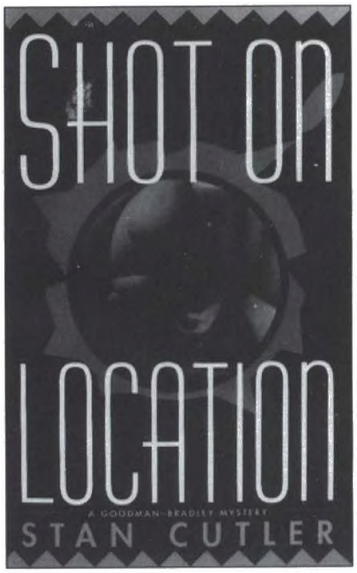
In a far better book than his 1990 best-seller *Reasonable Doubt*, Friedman presents a situation rare in courtroom fiction: a retrial, three years after the death of Mariah Dodge and two after her lover, Brooklyn real-estate magnate and community hero Roberto Morales, was convicted of first-degree manslaughter. An appeal has granted Morales a new trial. The more Manhattan prosecutor Joe Estrada prepares for the case, the more complicated and ambiguous it gets. The trial consumes about 175 of the novel's 548 pages, following the action from thoroughly described jury selection through well-wrought closing arguments to an intriguing motion by one lawyer during jury deliberations.

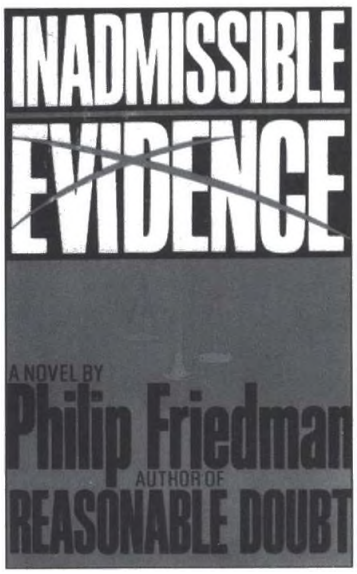
Higgins, George V
Defending Billy Ryan
New York: Holt, 1992. **(B)**

Though Boston attorney Jerry Kennedy debuted in a book promisingly tided *Kennedy for the Defense* (1980), he managed to stay out of court throughout. This time, though, he spends about 35 pages there, mostly on the arraignment and trial of elderly politico Billy Ryan, accused of bribery and assorted corruption while serving as a Commissioner of Public Works. Ryan allegedly built a four-lane highway for his own and friends' monetary benefit. Higgins, via Kennedy, is one of the most knowledgeable and entertaining guides to how things really work in law and politics. In the process, he overturns some truisms about trial tactics: "Yeah, yeah, I know: I must've been absent the day the professor admonished the class about asking a question to which you don't know the answer. Well, hogwash. Professors go to court about as often as the Easter Bunny does. When they give advice about trying cases, all they're doing's coloring eggs."

Kincaid, D., pseudonym of Bert Fields
The Lawyer's Tale
New York: Turtle Bay, 1992. **(1/4)**

In his second appearance, L.A. lawyer Harry Cain is not quite as thoroughly despicable as in *The Sunset Bomber* (1986), but otherwise this is the mixture as before: a modular lawyer story marked by legal legerdemain a la Perry Mason (or sometimes Randolph Mason). Trial action, totalling over ninety pages, begins with a contempt proceeding in New York Supreme Court against Cain and client Joe Miletti over the disappearance of director Miletti's latest film, involved in a final-cut contractural dispute they lost in an earlier hearing. Here Cain's wire-walking is at its most entertaining. Back in L.A., Cain requests an order to seal all documents in a potential extortion case and appears in a "bullet arbitration" on the wrongful dismissal of film exec-





utive Aaron Fernbach by studio head Tank Slutsky. (In this kind of proceeding, discovery rules do not apply and surprise witnesses are the order of the day, allowing a return to the good old days of trial by ambush.) The final extended proceeding finds Harry defending Japanese woman Fumiko Masami, accused of the poisoning murder of her husband Hiraiko. Following a dramatic stunt in that trial, he is again charged with contempt of court. Reader's advisory: read the trial scenes carefully, and skim everything else.

. . . . . .

Mehling, Harold
Assumption of Guilt
New York: Carroll & Graf, 1993. **(1/4)**

In Hudson Ferry, New York, preschool teacher Laurie Coles is accused of child sexual abuse, and the townspeople are as ready to give her a fair trial as the residents of Salem in the witch-hunting days. Taking her case is Capraesque defender Harry Hull, the only fictional lawyer I can recall who consults the ever-present courtroom buffs for advice on jury selection and other strategy. The trial is covered in over a hundred pages from arraignment to jury deliberations. Though I found the novel absorbing reading, I could not believe for a moment the loose and sometimes incompetent legal procedure.

Like many writers of legal fiction, Mehling assumes jurors routinely ignore the judge's admonitions not to deliberate prematurely. (My own experience as a juror contradicts this.) While the judge is clearly prejudiced against the defense from the start, I don't believe he could expect to get away with letting so much inappropriate colloquy go on in the jury's presence. Lawyer Hull wears his appropriate contempt of this court like a flower in the buttonhole. The D.A. fails to cross examine damaging defense witnesses even perfunctorily. The defense lawyer fails to discuss with his client in advance whether she will testify or to explain to her the reasons why she should not. Both closing statements are incredibly abbreviated and non-specific in their arguments. The jury instructions also seem unbelievably short. The local prejudice is the only explanation for the jury not delivering an instant verdict of not guilty. Given all these caveats, it's hard to be convincing in calling this a good and readable book. But it is.

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Perry, Anne
Defend and Betray
New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1992. **(B)**

In the third William Monk/Hester Latterly novel, barrister Oliver Rathbone becomes almost a coequal third character and the courtroom activity is even more plentiful than in 1991's *A Dangerous Mourning*. General Thaddeus Carlyon, a military hero for his service in India, is run through by a halberd at a fashionable London dinner party, and it appears only his widow Alexandra could have killed him. Rathbone defends her in about 78 pages of well-wrought Old Bailey action. The author's depiction of upper-crust Victorian society, especially the claustrophobic constraints on its women, has been a strength from her earliest books, and the quality of her writing, complexity of her plots, and contemporary relevance of her themes have grown from book to book. ■

SON OF BOB'S YOUR UNCLE

An Addendum to *Bob's Your Uncle: A Dictionary of Slang for British Mystery Fans*

by Jann Turner-Lord

Have the novels of Agatha Christie and Jonathan Gash left you in a pea-souper? Do you spend candle hours trying to suss out the Limey lingo and feeling a right burke? Don't get your knickers in a twist, Jann Turner-Lord's handy little dictionary, *Bob's Your Uncle* is a treasure trove of lexicography for puzzled Yanks. Here are some new additions to her recent book.

Argy-Bargy: Argument
"I won't say there wasn't a bit of argy-bargy now and then, she did have a temper."

Accumulator: Car battery

Bit over the top: Gone too far

Blue Bottle: Policeman

Blagger: Boaster, macho type, fighter
"No blagger he, for a criminal he was a timorous type."

Bovver Boys: Skinheads, troublemakers

Bun in the Oven: Pregnant

Busmans holiday: a working holiday

Cake Hole: Mouth
"Shut yer cake 'ole!"

Clanger: Something said in bad taste

Cornet: Ice cream cone

Chummy: Criminal, perpetrator
"Chummy made his getaway through the open window."

Dob in: Turn in to authorities

Fair cop: Good arrest, caught red-handed

Flash & dab boys: Photographer and fingerprint men

Gladstone Bag: Small black leather doctors' bag

Hole & Corner: Sneakily
"They could have put a fair bit away in their hole & corner manner."

Keep your wool on: Don't worry, be patient

Manor: Shire, County

Odds on: More than likely

Old age P.: Old age pension, social security

On Appro: On Approval

Paki: Pakistani

Pudding Club: Pregnant
"She's in the pudding club now!"

Pig in clover: Sitting pretty

Pip Emma: P.M.

Panda: Police car
"He borrowed a constables' panda and drove off at a great speed."

Ropey: Bad, gone bad
"This cider's ropey!"

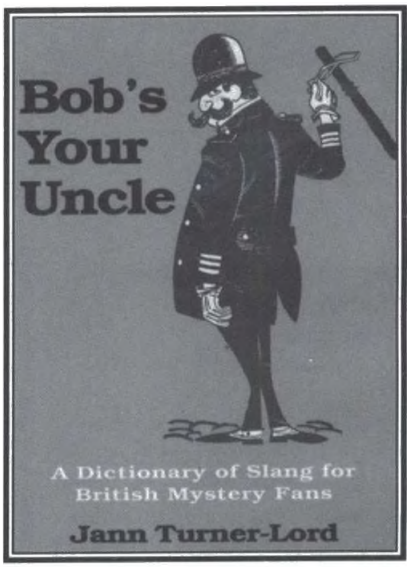
Rounder: Baseball

On our uppers: Broke, poor

Rayburn: Space heater

Shifty: Look
"Take a shifty at this."

Slap up: Special, fancy, done well
"They had a real slap-up lunch."



BOB'S YOUR UNCLE **(1992, $7.95) CONTAINS OVER FIVE HUNDRED TERMS, PLUS A SECTION OF COCKNEY RHYMING SLANG. IT'S AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL MYSTERY BOOKSTORE OR FROM FITHIAN PRESS, P.O. BOX 1525, SANTA BARBARA, CA 93102.**

Strike a light: Well, I'll be
"Well, strike a light, I'd never of guessed."

Stair dancer: Burglar
"I'm not having any stair dancers running loose in my manor!"

Snout: Police informant

Swans off: Leaves in a huff

Tizz-Wozz: Confusion, worried

Tottie: Female

Totting up: Adding up

Tum-jack: Stomach

Walkies: A walk

Waterproof: Raincoat

Y-Fronts: Men's underwear ■

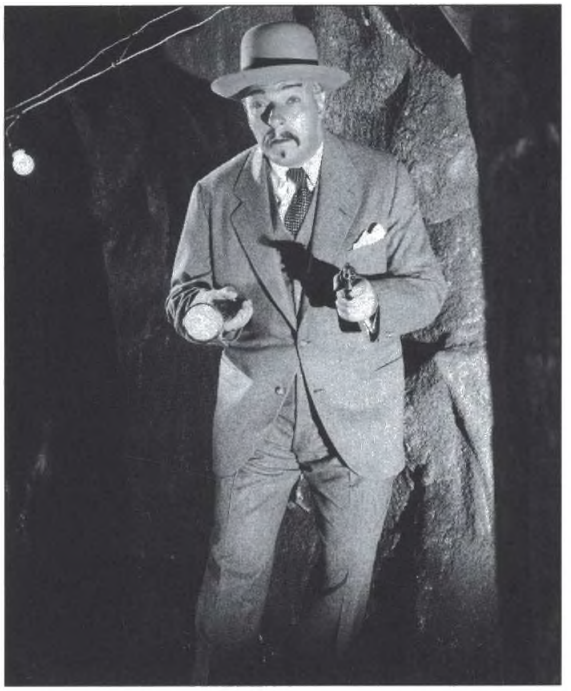
Jann Turner-Lord, confirmed anglophile and mystery-addict, loves anything British—especially England's cozy mysteries—notably those of Jonathan Gash's character *Lovejoy*. She lives, writes and paints in Saratoga, California.

What About Murder?

By Jon L. Breen

Carper, Steve, ed.
The Defective Detective: Mystery Parodies by the Great Humorists,
New York: Citadel/Carol, 1992. 222p.

If you consider the parody a form of literary criticism, this anthology has a double-barreled excuse for inclusion in WAM. The editor provides a learned five-page introduction and substantial story notes, often a page or more. Contributors, with their targets in parentheses, include Woody Allen (minute mysteries), Corey Ford (magazine serials of the twenties), S.J. Perelman (Raymond Chandler), Alan Coren (Ian Fleming), Ogden Nash (the Had-I-But-Known school), Ira Wallach (Mickey Spillane), Stephen Leacock (Sherlock Holmes), Henry Beard (Raymond Chandler, with Ralph Nader in the Philip Marlowe role), Christopher Wood (S.S. Van Dine), James Thurber (the hardboiled school), Garrison Keillor (private eyes, with an arts administrator in the role), Bret Harte (Holmes), John Harris (Umberto Eco), Jon L. Breen (Dick Francis), Robert Benchley (British Detection of the Golden Age), Jim Davis and Ron Tuthill (Dashiell Hammett), Bob and Ray (radio's Mr. Keen), John Sladek (Edgar Allan Poe), E.C. Bentley (Dorothy L. Sayers), and Fran Lebowitz (Holmes). P.G. Wodehouse's essay "About These Mystery Stories" closes the book. At least one contributor feels incredibly flattered by the subtitle.



Author Ken Hanke finds Roland Winters' portrayal of Charlie Chan in some ways closest to Earl Derr Biggers original character.

Hanke, Ken
Charlie Chan at the Movies: History, Filmography, and Criticism,
Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1989. xvi, 270p. Illus., index.

Here is a book that ought to have been in the 1981-1991 supplement to *What About Murder?*, but I discovered it too late. It is the fullest account ever presented of Charlie Chan's long motion picture career. Complete coverage, with credits, plot summary (not revealing murderers), and critical appraisal, is given the series entries starring Warner Oland, Sidney Toler, and Roland Winters, with earlier and later one-shot screen Chans discussed only briefly. Though the Chan films are the focus, Hanke obviously knows the six Earl Derr Biggers novels well and frequently contrasts the screen Chan with his literary original and comments on Biggers's plotting techniques as reflected (or not) in the film versions. Keye Luke, who played Chan's number-one-son in the Oland series and the last two entries with Winters, is quoted at length on the making of the films and the personalities involved.

The author's strongly held and often contrarian critical views add to the enjoyment. He finds the highly regarded *Charlie Chan at the Opera* (1936), in which Boris Karloff co-starred with Oland, overrated. (He scoffs at the claim that Karloff did his own singing. Keye Luke reports he tried for years to find out who actually provided the beautiful voice and failed.) Among the Chan films Hanke views most fondly are *The Black Camel* (1931), *Charlie Chan in Paris* (1935), *Charlie Chan's Secret* (1936), *Charlie Chan at Treasure Island* (1939), and *The Shanghai Cobra* (1945). He has an open mind about the low-budget Monogram Chans of the forties, seeing much to admire in them and even finding them, in their portrayal of a more acerbic Chan, less racist than the 20th Century Fox series. He salutes the comedic talents of later unfashionable black comics Stepin Fetchit and Mantan Moreland. He is particularly interesting on the differing approaches of the three actors who played Chan. Amazingly, he finds Roland Winters in some ways closest to Biggers' original conception.

A short chapter "Imitations and Offshoots" discusses the Peter Lorre series about Mr. Moto (one of whose screen adventures, *Mr. Moto's Gamble* <1938>, was begun as a Chan film and hastily retooled after the death of Oland) and Karloff's series as Mr. Wong. Illustrations include a good selection of stills and lobby cards scattered through the book.

Harmon, Jim
Radio Mystery and Adventure and Its Appearances in Film, Television and Other Media,
Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1992. xvi, 286p. Illus., bibl., index.

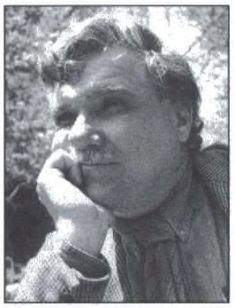
One of dramatic radio's most learned

historians discusses fourteen programs, including main credits, a summary history, considerations of appearances in other media, and finally a list of premiums offered listeners with estimated current values. Nearly all the shows covered included some mystery, most centrally *Dick Tracy*, *I Love a Mystery*, *The Shadow*, and *Sherlock Holmes*. Most detective shows are omitted here, to be covered in future volumes. Though Harmon takes his subject matter seriously—he disdains "trivia" games, for example—he writes with great humor. His hilarious descriptions of the one show I'd never heard of before, *The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen*, are somewhat in the manner of Bill Pronzini's *Gun in Cheek* volumes. Harmon can make some rather inflated claims for his subjects—Carlton E. Morse, for example, is compared in a single paragraph to Doyle, H.G. Wells, John Ford, Capra, Hitchcock, and Orson Welles! Morse contributes a foreword to the book, as do radio actors Jack Lester and Les Tremayne. There is a valuable annotated bibliography and a good selection of photographs scattered through the book. When discussing the mystery field outside the boundaries of radio, Harmon occasionally gets names wrong, e.g. "Denis" Lynds, Mary Roberts "Rhinehart."

(In addition to being a critic and historian, Harmon is a radio actor of considerable talent and enthusiasm. In a series of not-for-broadcast adaptations of Edward D. Hoch's Dr. Sam Hawthorne stories produced as a hobby by old-radio buff Dave Amaral, Harmon provides a memorable characterization of Sheriff Lens.)

Smith, Marie, ed.
Nobel Crimes.
London: Xanadu; New York: Carroll & Graf, 1992. viii, 263p.

This collection of mysteries by Nobel Prize winners lacks individual story notes, but the three-page introduction advances the award as a potential mystery-story background, discourses on what major literary figures did or did not win it, and touches on the selection process. ■



Dial N for Nonsense

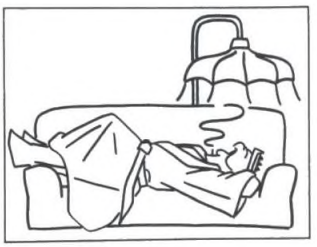
BY

LOUIS PHILLIPS

THE MOST BIZARRE OF ENGLISH DETECTIVES

IN 1991 CARROL & GRAF PUBLISHERS ISSUED *100 GREAT DETECTIVES*, EDITED AND INTRODUCED BY MAXIM JAKUBOWSKI. IN THIS BOOK (WHICH SHOULD BE PART OF EVERY MYSTERY LOVERS LIBRARY) FAMOUS MYSTERY WRITERS EXAMINE favourite fictional investigators. I was intrigued to learn about a character named Prince Zaleski, whom Brian Stableford describes as "...the most bizarre of all English detectives." Mr. Stableford, who has written widely in the field of science fiction, goes on to say that Zaleski is "a perfect portrait of the decadent genius. He lives alone, surrounded by ludicrous Orientalia, permanently stoned. He solves the first two mysteries which confront him without rising from the couch where he languishes."

The detective can be found in *Prince Zaleski* by M.P. Shiel, published in 1895.



Great Moments in the History of Crime #809980

The following item was collected by Chuck Sheppard who has published a number of volumes of *Weird News*:

In March, 1992, Steven A. DeFoor was arrested in Warren, Ohio, moments after allegedly robbing a downtown Bank One branch.

According to police, DeFoor planned to exit the bank building through an elevator. However, DeFoor incorrectly assumed it was an automatic elevator. Actually, the elevator operator had stepped down the hall to help move some furniture. As DeFoor waited in the elevator for the door to close, bank employees pointed him out to arriving officers.

Great Moments in the History of Crime #809981

The Sunday December 27, 1992 issue of PARADE featured "The Best & Worst of Everything." The Most Inept Burglary, as originally reported in the *Oregonian*, is too good to be neglected by readers of this column:

Carlos Carrasco, 24, was sentenced to 10 years' probation in San Antonio for a bungled burglary of a liquor store. According to records, Carrasco cut his hand badly when he broke through the store's roof; tried to throw a bottle of whiskey out through the hole he created but missed, causing the bottle to fall back to the floor, shatter and set off the burglar alarm; fell on the broken bottle, cutting himself again; left his wallet in the store; once on the roof for his getaway, fell off; and left a trail of blood from the store to his home, just down the street.

The Nursery Rhyme Murders

When you are stalled in traffic or if you cannot sleep, here is a pleasant way to pass the time: try to think of all the murders that take place in nursery rhymes. How many can you think of? "Who killed Cock Robin" will get you started.

A Very Short Detective Story in the Form of a Palindrome

Trap Ed. Depart.

On the Origin of Stone Jug

"This name for a prison which sounds so like a slang term, is really very old, and is to be accounted for by the fact that the Greek word *Keramos*, means either a stone jar or a prison. Homer, in the Iliad V. 387 and IX 469, uses the word in both senses."

Basil Hargrave, *Origins and Meanings of Popular Phrases and Names*, London. 1911.

Shakespeare and Mystery Titles

Josephine Tey was the pseudonym used by playwright Elizabeth Mackintosh, the author of some of the finest mystery novels written in this century. One of the titles of her books was *To Love and Be Wise* (1950), based upon the notion "It's not possible to love and be wise."

The sentiment reverses the actual quotation as expressed by Cressida in Act III, scene 2 of *Troilus and Cressida*. Cressida's wording is: "...to be wise and love exceeds man's might; that dwells with gods above."

Doppleganger?

S.S.
Van Dine going to dine on the S.S.
Van Gogh one night
Bumped into William
Huntington Wright.

Can You Match Each Detective with His or Her Creator?

1. Miriam Birdseye	A. Dorothy Davis
2. Achille Perini	B. Arthur B. Reeve
3. Julie Hayes	C. K.C. Constantine
4. Scott Jordan	D. Ross Spencer
5. Lt. Luis Mendoza	E. Nancy Spain
6. Mario Balzic	F. Dell Shannon
7. Luke Lassiter	G. Phoebe Atwood Taylor
8. Asey Mayo	H. Harold G. Masur
9. Craig Kennedy	I. Ross Spencer
10. Jacob Asch	J. Arthur Lyons
	K. Timothy Holme

Answers to Detective Match
1.E, 2.K, 3.A, 4.H, 5.F, 6. C, 7.D, 8.G, 9.B, 10.J

CLAIRE MALLOY IS AT IT AGAIN...

...AND JOAN HESS IS SURE TO EARN THE USUAL RAVES:

"Joan Hess fans will find a winning blend of soft-core feminism, trendy subplots and completely irreverent style that characterizes both the series and the sleuth, all nicely on stage." –Houston Chronicle

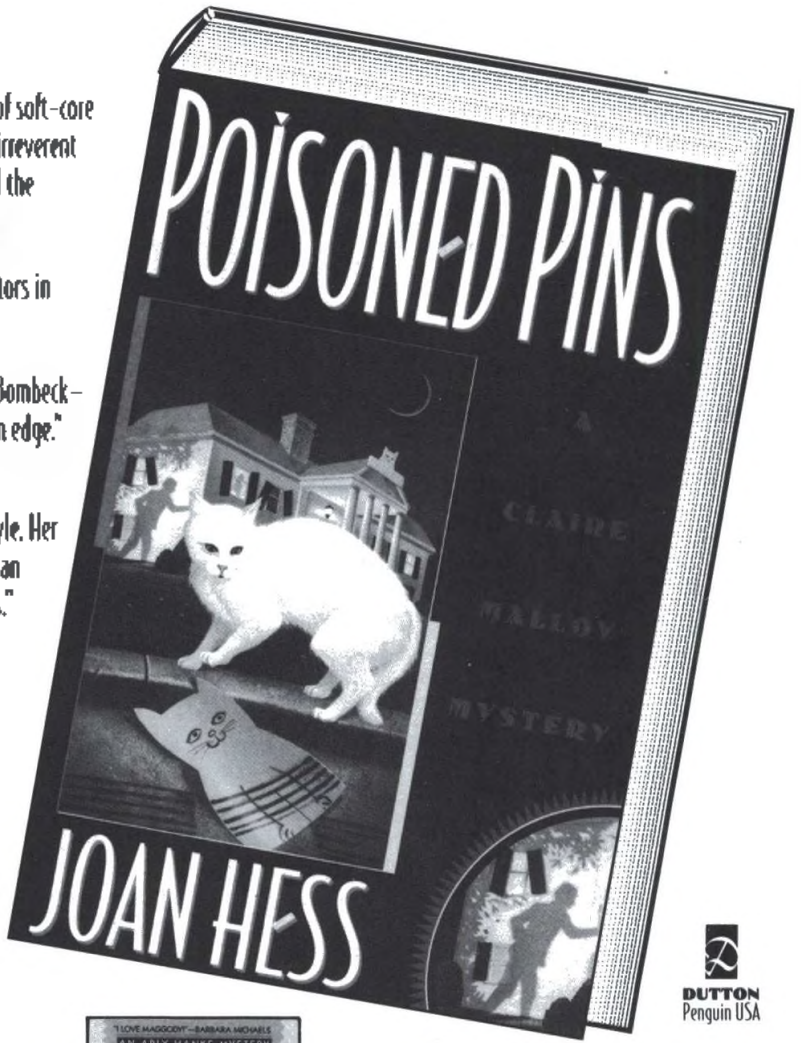
"Malloy is one of the most engaging narrators in mystery." –Dallas Review

"Hess's style–that of a more worldly Erma Bombeck–rarely flags. Amiable entertainment with an edge." –Kansas Reviews

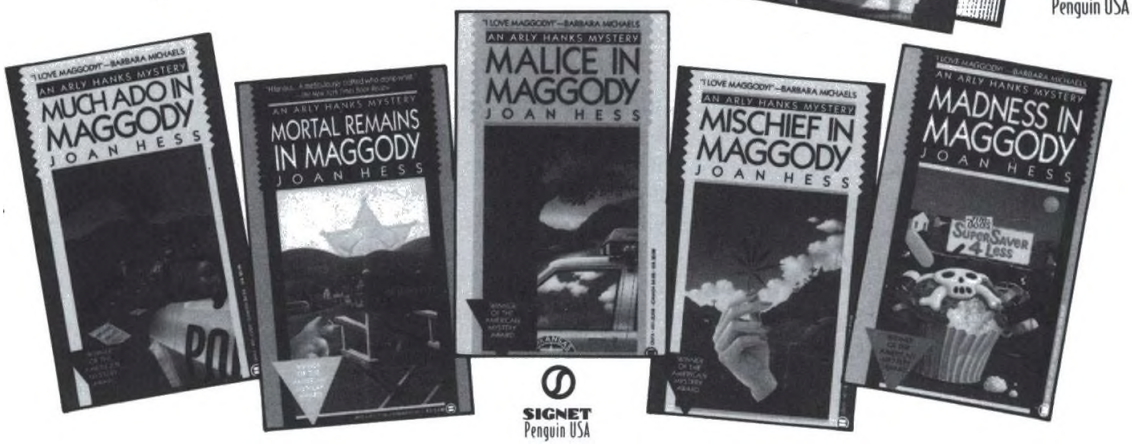
"Mrs. Hess goes about things in a lively style. Her heroine, Claire Malloy, has a sharp eye and an irreverent way of describing what she sees." –New York Times Book Review

"Joan Hess is one very funny woman." –Susan Dunlap, past president of Sisters in Crime

Check out Joan Hess's MAGGODY series too!



DUTTON
Penguin USA



SIGNET
Penguin USA

SOUNDS OF SUSPENSE

BY DICK LOCHTE AND TOM NOLAN

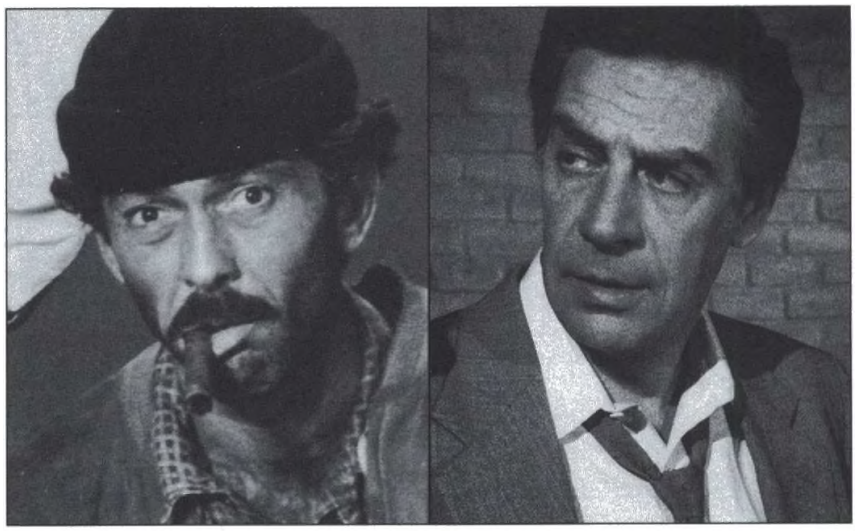
Lawrence Block
A Walk Among the Tombstones
read by Stephen Lang
(Harper Audio; 3 hrs., abridged).
Block's Matthew Scudder is in fine form as he tracks down the vicious murderers who not only kidnapped the wife of a heroin wholesaler but sent her back to him in pieces. It's pretty gruesome stuff, but riveting and suspenseful. And very well narrated by theater and television actor Lang.

Simon Brett
Corporate Bodies
read by Simon Jones
(Durkin Hayes Audio; 3 hrs., abridged; toll-free order 1-800-962-5200).
Actor Jones is well-nigh perfect as the narrator of this recent comic mystery featuring actor Charles Paris, Brett's perennially on-his-uppers thespian-sleuth. This 1991 outing has Paris "starring" as a forklift operator in a corporate video. The commercial turns fatal after an accident that Paris suspects is intentional. A second corporate gig gives Paris the chance to pursue his theories. As usual, Brett's satirical instincts are keen; and Jones delivers the goods–ad-biz foolishness, show-biz travails–with zest. In the end, though, the culprit is allowed to go free. Will that bother you? It doesn't much bother Charles Paris.

Agatha Christie
Thirteen at Dinner
(BBD Audio/BBC Radio; 155 minutes)
Sad Cypress
(BBD Audio/BBC Radio; 2 hrs. and 10 min.)
both performed by a full cast.
While British television has actor David Suchet to bring Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot to life, British radio has the equally capable John Moffatt to play the famous Belgian detective. In the BBC dramatization of this 1933 story, Poirot is hired by a flamboyant actress to intervene with her husband, who has refused to grant her a divorce. When the husband is murdered, the actress is blamed–until she proves to have a foolproof alibi. Poirot wends his way through a deadly masquerade of double identities and triple twists in order to find the true killer in this well-paced Michael Bakewell adaptation, directed by Enyd Williams.

Poirot doesn't come on the scene in the 1940s *Sad Cypress* until two deaths have taken place: that of a wealthy old woman and the young village girl who had served as her companion. The old woman's niece may have harbored murderous thoughts–but did she act on them, as charged? Musical punctuation by a bluesy singer and pianist compliment the fine acting in this excellent BBC show, also directed by Enyd Williams.

James Crumley
The Last Good Kiss (excerpts),
read by the author, including an author interview with Kay Bonetti
(American Audio Prose Library; reading: 69 minutes; interview: 63 minutes;
toll-free order 1-800-2275).
Crumley, a Texas native and a Montana resident, has won praise from "mainstream" writers like Barry Hannah for his three quirky private detective novels, which include *The Last Good Kiss*. Interviewer Bonetti does an excellent job of drawing the author out on his background and his approach to fiction. A graduate of the University of Iowa's writers' workshop, Crumley has worked on oil rigs and taught at the university level. "I sometimes think Abbott and Costello had as much to do with how I view the world as Dostoevsky did," he quips, in one of the many one-liners that enliven this 1992 conversation. ("What you call 'turn of phrase' I call 'cheap irony.'") Crumley also discusses his screenplay labors, which include scripts for the as-yet-unproduced *The Last Good Kiss*. The author reads two chapters from that book in a straightforward, effective, no-frills manner. Someone like actor Will Patton could really go to town with Crumley's hardboiled poetry.



BRUCE WEITZ (LEFT), FORMERLY OF HILL STREET BLUES, NARRATES CONNIE FLETCHER'S *WHAT COPS KNOW*, WHILE JERRY ORBACH READS FLETCHER'S *PURE COP*.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Vol. 19
(Simon & Schuster Audioworks; 1 hr.).
In these two original radio broadcasts from the mid-Forties, the great detective visits Tibet ("Murder Beyond the Mountains") and, gasp, takes a wife ("The Book of Tobit") for one of the shortest marriages on record. The scripts are by Anthony Boucher and Denis Green, loosely based on the original canon. Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce portray the sleuth and his biographer. There's also an interview with Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock's smarter brother.

Connie Fletcher
What Cops Know
read by Bruce Weitz
(The Publishing Mills; 3 hrs., abridged)
and
Pure Cop, read by Jerry Orbach
(The Publishing Mills;
2 hrs., 10 mins., abridged).
Chicago crime writer (and journalism teacher) Fletcher spent a considerable amount of time with the police of her city, taping their conversations, opinions and war stories. The verbatim results add up to a wealth of fascinating background material for mystery readers and writers. Both narrators of these adaptations are familiar with the jargon. Weitz was one of the regulars on TV's *Hill Street Blues* and Orbach has carried a badge in *Prince of the City* and countless other cop operas.

Graham Greene
Graham Greene Biography
narrated by Paul Rogers
(BBC/Audio-Forum; 1 hr.;
toll-free order 1-800-243-1234).
This well-produced radio documentary about the late Graham Greene, made while the author was still alive, includes interview segments with a number of the writer's colleagues (John le Carre, Anthony Burgess, Dilys Powell, Paul Theroux) as well as with Greene himself. A lively and fascinating sound portrait emerges of one of the century's most influential and popular literary figures. Fans of one of the greatest novelists never to win the Nobel Prize will be delighted with this audio journey into "Greeneland."

DAVID MCCALLUM, A FORMER MAN FROM UNCLE NARRATES ANTHONY HYDE'S *CHINA LAKE*.

Tony Hillerman
The Ghostway
read by Gil Silverbird
(Harper Audio; 3 hrs., abridged).
Officer Jim Chee of the Navajo Tribal Police, investigating the shooting of a man outside the Shiprock Wash-O-Mat, is puzzled by the condition of an Indian hogan he comes across. The hogan has been prepared to indicate that a death has occurred inside; why wasn't the dying person moved outdoors, as tradition would dictate, so that the hogan would not be contaminated by its ghost? Tribal ritual and police procedure interact in fascinating ways throughout this 1984 work, one of the best of Hillerman's Jim Chee mysteries. *Ghostway*'s action shifts from New Mexico to Southern California and back again. Silverbird, a Native American of Navajo descent, does a fine job performing this author-approved abridgement. For enhanced suspense, avoid reading the tape package's notes.

Anthony Hyde
China Lake
read by David McCallum
(Simon & Schuster Audio;
3 hrs., abridged).
Twenty years ago, David Harper, a scientist at the China Lake, California nuclear testing facility, was accused of passing along classified information. He claimed he was framed and now, in these post-Cold War days, it looks as if he's being framed again. The set-up is good, but there's a sort of le Carre world-weariness, which has by now become a cliche, hovering over the story, and this adaptation is strangely uninvolving. McCallum, a former *Man from UNCLE*, is no stranger to the spy world, and delivers the narrative crisply and intelligently.

P.D. James
An Unsuitable Job for a Woman
(Bantam Audio; 2 hrs., dramatized
by a full cast).
Judi Bowker is Cordelia Gray, private eye by default, in this BBC radio adaptation of James' 1972 novel. A young man has been found dead in a most indelicate condition. Gray is called in to see if foul play lies behind the official verdict of suicide. The novice detective digs up plenty, but what she does with it is not strictly by the book. An unsuitable job for a woman? Hardly. An unsuitable woman for the job? James' Scotland Yard man Adam Dalgliesh has the final word on that score–and it's an ambiguous one. This capable enough production was written by Neville Teller and directed by Matthew Walters.

David Lindsey
Body of Truth
read by Keith Szarabajka
(Bantam Audio; 3 hrs., abridged).
Lindsey trudges through very familiar Graham Greene country as his detective Stuart Haydon flies to Central America to find a private eye pal and the daughter of a wealthy Houston businessman who have gone missing. He meets crooked officials, sleazy CIA reps and various other friends and/or foes hanging out in Guatemala. There is some suspense and a surprise or two. Szarabajka likes to use a hardboiled flat monotone for his narrations, and it seems fitting here.

David Lindsey
Mercy
read by Judith Ivy (Bantam Audio;
3 hrs., abridged).
Heroine Carmen Palma, a Houston policewoman, investigates a series of

murders in which the victims seem to have participated in their own demise. The serial murder mystery has become its own sub-genre and is taxing its proponents to come up with ever more unusual spins. This one, involving masochistic victims, is fairly unique and very much subject to the taste of the reader-listener. Actress Ivy does an excellent job of narrating the adaptation.

Ngaio Marsh
Opening Night
read by James Saxon
(Chivers/G.K. Hall;
7 hrs. 42 min., unabridged.
Toll-free order: 1-800-257-5755).
Would-be actress Martyn Tame, down on her luck in London, accepts a last-minute job as dresser for the female star of a play about to debut. The young woman finds herself caught in a tangle of romantic and dramaturgical intrigues. The tensions culminate in an opening-night murder, and Inspector Roderick Allyn arrives to investigate. This 1951 novel is full of the theatrical atmosphere Dame Marsh was noted for. Saxon ("A Prayer for the Dying") does a grand job with all the onstage and backstage types in this full-length audio reading.

Martin Cruz Smith
Red Square
read by Robert O'Keefe
(Random House AudioBooks;
3 hrs., abridged).
The second mystery spawned by Smith's successful *Gorky Park* finds Moscow's intrepid police Inspector Arkady Renko back on the job, making his bosses nervous by snooping once again into an apparently political murder everyone wants left ignored–in this case the firebombing of one of his snitches. The thing that gives Smith's thrillers their distinction is his flair for description of contemporary Russia (and in this case, Germany) that are thoroughly unique and seemingly credible. Much of this is lost in abridgement, leaving a rather confusing plotline for the listener to ponder. Theater actor O'Keefe has no trouble whatsoever with the Russian names and accents. But you may with the characters' moods and motivations.

Stuart Woods
Santa Fe Rules
read by Tony Roberts
(Harper Audio, 3 hrs., abridged).
Wolf Willett, Hollywood producer and Santa Fe resident, comes out of a day-long amnesia to find himself the prime suspect in the slaying of his wife, his partner and an unidentified third victim. He turns for help to Ed Eagle, a celebrated criminal defense lawyer famous for playing by "Santa Fe rules" (whatever they are). Seems the dead wife had a shady past that Willett knew nothing of; he learns of it in some detail through her obituary in *The New York Times*–the first of many implausibilities and cliches in this 1992 novel. Seems also that the dead wife had a lookalike sister, with whom Eagle promptly begins an affair. Similar siblings lead to double trouble, and then some, in this forgettable item. At least reader Roberts has some fun with its abridgement. ■

LONG BEFORE ANY OF THESE WORLDWIDE MYSTERY CHARACTERS ARE BOOKED FOR MURDER, YOU'LL BE FASCINATED BY A GREAT BOOK....

July 1993

THE HOUR OF THE KNIFE by Sharon Zukowski

P.I. Blaine Stewart wasn't enjoying her "vacation" in sleepy Dolphin Beach. Finding an old friend's dead body in her car made it hard to relax. Having the sheriff try to run her out of town before she could find out why wasn't exactly restful, either....

"Readers looking for a feisty and intelligent female detective will be thrilled with the heroine of Zukowski's sizzling debut.... (Her) pacing is good and her characterizations superb."
— *Publishers Weekly*

August 1993

DEATH DOWN HOME by Eve K. Sandstrom

The last place Sam and Nicky Titus wanted to spend their honeymoon was Oklahoma. But when Sam's father suffers an unexplained "accident" and his brother disappears, it's clear no one in the Titus family is safe — not even its newest member....

"Sandstrom unravels an intriguing plot with an exciting climax."
— *Publishers Weekly*

"A crackerjack new series...a strong tale of conflicts..."
— *Kirkus Reviews*

September 1993

MURDER TAKES TWO by Bernie Lee

Tony Pratt is directing a TV ad in London when wife Pat stumbles over a corpse. The dead man was a black-mailer — and when his victim dies in a car accident, the cops close the case — but Tony thinks a trail of kick-backs and debt leads all the way to Musket Beach....

"The Pratts are likeable, believable and will certainly return...quality genre fiction." — *The Sunday Oregonian*

"Funny, well-paced, recommended." — *Nashville Banner*

WORLDWIDE MYSTERY NOVELS—CRIMES WORTH INVESTIGATING.

THE 1993 EDGAR AWARDS

THE MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE NOMINEES AND WINNERS FOR THE 1993 EDGAR ALLAN POE AWARDS, HONORING THE BEST IN MYSTERY, FICTION, NON-FICTION, TELEVISION AND FILM. MWA PRESENTED THE "EDGARS" AT THEIR ANNUAL GALA AWARDS BANQUET ON FRIDAY, APRIL 30 AT THE SHERATON NEW YORK HOTEL & TOWERS.

BEST NOVEL

BACKHAND by Liza Cody (Perfect Crime)
32 CADILLACS
by Joe Gores (Mysterious Press)
★ BOOTLEGGER'S DAUGHTER
by Margaret Maron (Mysterious Press)
WHITE BUTTERFLY
by Walter Mosley (Norton)
POMONA QUEEN
by Kem Nunn (Pocket Books)

BEST FIRST NOVEL BY AN AMERICAN AUTHOR

TRAIL OF MURDER
by Christine Andreae (St. Martin's)
★ THE BLACK ECHO
by Michael Connelly (Little, Brown)
TRICK OF THE EYE
by Jane Stanton Hitchcock (Dutton)
LADYSTINGER
by Craig Smith (Crown)
SAINT MUDD by Steve Thayer (Viking)

BEST ORIGINAL PAPERBACK

THE GOOD FRIDAY
by Lee Harris (Fawcett)
PRINCIPAL DEFENSE
by Gini Hartzmark (Ivy)
SHALLOW GRAVES
by William Jefferies (Avon)
NIGHT CRUISE
by Billie Sue Mosiman (Jove)
★ A COLD DAY FOR MURDER
by Dana Stabenow (Berkley)

BEST FACT CRIME

THE TRUNK MURDERESS:
WINNIE RUTH JUDD
by Jana Bommersbach
(Simon & Schuster)
BLOOD ECHOES
by Thomas H. Cook (Dutton)
★ SWIFT JUSTICE
by Harry Farrell (St. Martin's)
EVERYTHING SHE EVER WANTED
by Ann Rule (Simon & Schuster)
MY HUSBAND'S TRYING TO KILL ME
by Jim Schutze (HarperCollins)

BEST CRITICAL/BIOGRAPHICAL

DOROTHY L. SAYERS: A CARELESS
RAGE FOR LIFE
by David Coomes (Lion Publishing)
★ ALIAS S.S. VAN DINE
by John Loughery (Scribner's)
EDGAR ALLAN POE: HIS LIFE AND LEGACY
by Jeffrey Meyers (Scribner's)
DOUBLEDAY CRIME CLUB
COMPENDIUM, 1928-1991
by Ellen Nehr (Offspring Press)

BEST SHORT STORY

CANDLES IN THE RAIN
by Doug Allyn (EQMM, November)
THE HOWLER
by Jo Bannister (EQMM, October)
LOUISE
by Max Allan Collins
(*Deadly Allies*, Perfect Crime)
ONE HIT WONDER
by Gabrielle Kraft (*Sisters in Crime 5*, Berkley)
★ MARY, MARY, SHUT THE DOOR
by Ben Schutz (*Deadly Allies*, Perfect Crime)

BEST YOUNG ADULT

BREAKING THE FALL
by Michael Cadnum (Viking)
THE ONE WHO CAME BACK
by Joann Mazzio (Houghton Mifflin)
THE WEEKEND WAS MURDER
by Joan Lowery Nixon (Delacorte)
★ A LITTLE BIT DEAD
by Chap Reaver (Delacorte)
THE HIGHEST FORM OF KILLING
by Malcolm Rose (Harcourt)

BEST JUVENILE

★ COFFIN ON A CASE!
by Eve Bunting (HarperCollins)
SUSANNAH AND THE PURPLE MONGOOSE
by Patricia Elmore (Dutton)
THE TREASURE BIRD
by Peni R. Griffin (McElderry Books)
FISH AND BONES
by Ray Prather (HarperCollins)
THE WIDOW'S BROOM
by Chris Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin)

BEST EPISODE IN A TELEVISION SERIES

CONSPIRACY
teleplay by Michael S. Chernuchin and
Rene Balcer (*Law & Order*, Universal)

BEST TELEVISION FEATURE OR MINISERIES

HONOR THY MOTHER
by Richard Delong Adams & Robert
L. Freedman (Creative Artists)
MRS. CAGE
by Nancy Barr (American Playhouse)
STAY THE NIGHT
by Dan Freudenberger (ABC)
BURDEN OF PROOF
by John Gay (ABC)
★ PRIME SUSPECT by Lynda La Plant (Mystery!)

BEST MOTION PICTURE

★ THE PLAYER
screenplay by Michael Tolkin
(Fineline Features)
THE CRYING GAME
screenplay by Neil Jordan (Miramax)
UNFORGIVEN
screenplay by David Webb Peoples
(Warner Bros.)
A FEW GOOD MEN
screenplay by Aaron Sorkin (Columbia)
SNEAKERS
screenplay by Phil Alden Robinson,
Lawrence Lasker & Walter F. Parkes (UIP)

BEST PLAY

No Award

ELLERY QUEEN AWARD

No Award

ROBERT L. FISH MEMORIAL AWARD

A WILL IS A WAY
by Steven Saylor (EQMM, March)

GRANDMASTER

Donald Westlake

READER OF THE YEAR

President Bill Clinton

Ruth Rendell...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

disappear when Marty Foster and Nigel Thaxby rob the bank Alan manages. The lives of Alan, Joyce, Marty, and Nigel as well as that of Una Engstrand become intertwined as the story incorporates flashback and memory to weave background sketches of the five major characters into the current action.

Initially a hard-working but unfulfilled person, Alan impulsively seizes upon the robbery as a means of escape, making away and going underground with funds the robbers missed. Suddenly a criminal, Alan is also an innocent, learning to find his way in the world, and his affair with Una, his landlady, offers comfort and romance to both. Her days as hostage to Nigel and Marty test Joyce's courage and force her to examine many of her personal standards and beliefs.

Because Rendell reveals the personalities of these characters so fully (and dramatizes them so fully), reader identification is strong. Readers understand Marty and Nigel as thoroughly as they do Alan, the true protagonist, though they like them less. Readers know Alan so completely that they support his break for freedom even though it violates established custom or even many of their own codes of behavior. Empathy for Joyce runs high as she struggles against kidnapers as dangerous as they are inept.

Detailed characterization moves this plot along very briskly, allows for useful speculations about several themes (the most intriguing, perhaps, is modern attitudes toward romance), and prepares for the almost dual ending. For some characters, the story is over; for another, heartbreak will be a constant companion; yet another's self-image will forever be affected. Each of these outcomes is wholly correct for that character's story; each satisfies the reader even though she is left to ponder the consequences of those satisfying conclusions. *Make Death Love Me* is a wonderful combination of characterization, action, theme, and speculation.

Though she retains full control of theme and continues Rendell's trademark concentration on characterization, Barbara Vine's style differs from that of Wexford's creator, for unlike the Kingsmarkham series, the Vine books demand wholly distinct voices (sometimes several) for each book. In meeting these needs, Rendell/Vine also achieves some of her most effective manipulation of point of view.

Though *A Fatal Inversion* is written in third person, various sections clearly assume the points of view of various characters, a group of young men and women loosely allied in a quasi-commune during the summer of 1976. Years later, several characters look back upon that summer with awe and horror. The challenge here is to create a variety of persuasive voices, and, in effect, to do it twice. That is, some characters have two rather different voices and two rather different points of view: as youths and as adults. It's a difficult undertaking, and Vine discharges it with considerable success. She is so successful, in fact, that when she makes her final switch—the last, very brief chapter is told in a distanced, omniscient third

person voice—the effect is stunning and not at all confusing as it might have been in the hands of a lesser writer.

Gallowglass alternates the point of view of Joe, product of the social services system and of a working-class foster home almost devoid of affection, who speaks in the first person , with the limited third person point of view of middle-class Paul Garnet, an educated grass widower who works "beneath himself" as a chauffeur-bodyguard. Just to make things more interesting, Joe often quotes his upper-class hero, Sandor, so that one frequently hears a voice within a voice. Thus, Vine here juggles *social* points of view as well as a variety of narrative voices and perceptions. Again, what could have been an awkward arrangement is enriching and absorbing.

Both *A Dark-Adapted Eye* and *The House of Stairs* are told in the first person, but in an extremely complex first person point of view. In each instance, the narrator searches her memory in order to report exactly what occurred in days long past. Faith Severn of *A Dark-Adapted Eye*, niece of an executed killer, and of the killer's victim alike, strives to reconstruct the events leading up to the murder. Because she must speculate about what happened outside her presence and assume (or guess) what others were thinking in her presence, conjecture figures openly in Faith's search for truth, and her imagination and/or memory must recreate or simulate the voices of her aunts Vera and Eden as well.

With effective verisimilitude, Faith sometimes wonders about the accuracy of her memories—and she discovers that at least one surviving eye-witness to the murder misremembers a crucial detail, a misapprehension which has affected his life profoundly. If he is misled, might not Faith be also? This question becomes particularly cogent when she recalls that her perceptions of her aunts were (and probably still are) deeply influenced by their habits of secrecy, their preoccupation with one another, their constant efforts to exclude the young Faith from their charmed circle of affection and mutual admiration.

Elizabeth Vetch, narrator of *The House of Stairs*, struggles for veracity in much

the same way. Elizabeth's recollections of events leading to the murder of her aunt Cosette's fiance are informed by her deep affection for Cosette and her passion for Bell Sanger, Elizabeth's sometime lover. Regret, loneliness, or nostalgia might also color her memories. Moreover, as she reminds readers with some frequency, her own youth and inexperience kept Elizabeth from understanding much about Cosette in the days leading up to the murder, so inaccuracies may be inevitable.

Like Faith Severn, Elizabeth looks back over a period of years and tries hard to be fair and accurate, always keenly aware that she may not be able to do so. And, as with Faith Severn, readers empathize, fascinated almost as much by the narrator's self-assigned task as by the central mystery itself. Their attempts to report accurately lend considerable depth and texture to *A Dark-Adapted Eye* and to *The House of Stairs*.

Interestingly, the protagonists' uneasiness about their self-imposed tasks goes a long way toward solving one of Vine's toughest authorial problems. Though both are based on a host of uncertainties, *A Dark-Adapted Eye* and *The House of Stairs* are realistic stories which require reliable narrators. The fact that both narrators realize, consider, and discuss the difficulty of achieving their goals enhances their reliability by showing readers that they are serious, thoughtful, trustworthy.

To ignore the many chances for error in each woman's quest for truth would be to compromise the protagonists and the novels. Instead, readers share the narrators' points of view and appreciate the complexity of their undertakings so fully that trust arises quite naturally. Despite the fact that neither Faith nor Elizabeth is a wholly likable woman, readers identify with them. These characters' flaws become persuasive evidence of the realism necessary to the novels' integrity; their success as narrator-protagonists is strong evidence of Barbara Vine's skill at characterization.

Another surprising but realistic element enriches these Barbara Vine novels. Vine culminates plots which are almost entirely driven by a search for clarity and illumination with open endings. Certainly these plots conclude in very satisfying ways; Vine delivers on all that she has foreshadowed and suggested. Nevertheless, as in several Rendell novels such as *Make Death Love Me* and *The Lake of Darkness*, for example, vital questions remain unanswered; readers take leave of major characters as they face overwhelming personal losses. In this way as in so many others, Barbara Vine/Ruth Rendell is wholly contemporary, helping to demonstrate that the well-made book need not be predictable and that the novel form is capable of almost endless permutation.

Happily, Ruth Rendell's range and skill are widely recognized. Her peers have repeatedly acknowledged her talent, most recently by presenting her with the Crime Writers Association-Cartier Diamond Dagger Award. Previously, both as Rendell and Vine, she had accumulated three Gold Daggers and one Silver from the Crime Writers Association, three Edgars from Mystery Writers of America, *Current Crime*'s Silver Cup, the *Sunday Times* Award for Literary Excellence, the Angel Award, and the Arts Council

National Book Award. Warm and deserved praise.

Few responses are as gratifying as such recognition from one's peers, but for the writer, reader response is also very, very important. In this way, Rendell again scores highly. Readers expressed delight in the most recent Vine novel, *King Solomon's Carpet*, which explores the intricacies of life within one multi-family house against the panorama of the London Underground system. Similarly, the latest (and long-awaited) Wexford tale, *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter*, also drew raves from fans and critics alike, yet further intensifying readers' anticipation of books to come. Such levels of anticipation are a challenge to any author, but fans of Ruth Rendell and Barbara Vine are happily confident that she will again meet their expectations. After all, doing so has firmly established her as one of the foremost writers of the late twentieth century. ■

Policeman's Lot

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 61

marriage at half-past the eleventh hour.

A direct consequence is the birth of a daughter, Susan. In a later novel, three-year-old Susan and her mother escape a murderous attempt on Harry which destroys the house in which Julia has taken such pride. The fact that Julia is able to settle temporarily into her mother's house, grateful only that her husband and child are safe and only briefly repining for her lost possessions, demonstrates the degree to which she has changed [12, 111-17].

Julia plays a significant role in only one later adventure–when her husband is implicated in a sexual blackmail case and temporarily suspended from the police force. Again, the vast improvement in her relationship with Harry is made apparent:

> A trouble shared is a trouble halved, and very often a policeman's wife is the only person to whom he can confide his worries. She learns to bear the trouble as well. Julia Martineau had been learning for twenty years. [25, 25]

On that occasion, Julia's faith in Harry does not even flicker; and, of course, he is ultimately exonerated.

Martineau lacks the identifying features of most of the "Great Policeman" (an exception is, perhaps, Freeman Wills Croft's very domesticated Inspector Joseph French) in his freedom from eccentricities and his lack of unusual tastes and expertises. Instead, he likes his drink in a public house with congenial companions [7, 6], and, in later years, he plays golf [24, 67]. The biggest strike of all against the "Great Policeman" image, however, is contained in the brief statement that: "He had long ago decided that he could not be both a detective and a gentleman" [21, 23].

It is impossible to conceive of Roderick Alleyn making such a decision! Nor would Alleyn be ignorant–or, if ignorant, freely admit to ignorance–for example, of the classics, as Martineau does [15, 24]. It is also hard to imagine Alleyn making a mistake at the end of an investigation, whatever temporary errors he might have fallen into during its course. In contrast, in the adventure entitled *Death Has a*

Shadow, Martineau's deductions are shown to be quite wrong and it is a policeman of lesser rank who finds out the truth [21]. Yet, of course, "Like other successful policemen, Martineau did not make a habit of drawing attention to his own mistakes and omissions" [23, 52].

Martineau has a wry humor, as when, to a suspect's claim that she has "done nothing illegal," he responds, "Not one of the seven deadly sins is illegal, Mrs. Glover" [19, 177].

Most of the time, however, Martineau relies upon two strengths– on standard police procedures, as carried out by himself and others with a plodding persistence helped along occasionally by bright ideas, and on a thorough knowledge of Granchester and its criminals.

These are allied, in Martineau's instance, with a strong nerve and considerable physical prowess. He is correctly described as "a very formidable man" [10, 14]. He is not in the least afraid to tackle any criminal. There are many spirited descriptions of combats, from which he usually emerges victorious.

As with many physically active men, the part of Martineau's job he dislikes most is the intensive documentation it involves:

> Martineau reached his desk at nine o'clock and looked with distaste at the mass of statements and reports there for his attennon. He had never liked paper work, and nowadays it seemed to propagate itself. [23, 124]

Martineau's principal achievements are gained not by solo initiatives, but by the work of the police team of which he is only one member–though admittedly a senior member.

The titular leader of the team is "the Old Man" [25, 1], the Chief Constable of Granchester, "an alert, soldierly, rather impetuous man" who, "in spite of his many years in high office," has "never forgotten that he was still a policeman" [12, 3—31]. Certainly he is not of the arbitrary, egocentric menace variety that Procter had portrayed in earlier books. In such a large city, however, the Chief Constable's concerns are too wide for him to be encountered frequently by Martineau. Consequently, we never even learn his name.

The captain of Martineau's particular police team is Detective Chief Superintendent Clay. He is responsible for the detective work in all Granchester's divisions and is rarely able to leave his office. Indeed, his "thick torso" so exactly fills his office chair that he is reluctant to move, once he has made himself comfortable. Martineau treats Clay with respect but also with care, telling his superior only what is required or what he feels it is wise to divulge.

> There was nothing to tell, really. And in any case Clay's reactions would be to ask questions of the "Why didn't you do this?" or "Why didn't you do that?" variety. Clay was a good policeman, and a good-natured man up to a point, but he had the common fault of superior officers. After the event he could not refrain from telling his subordinates what should have been done. [10, 43-44]

Fortunately, Clay places considerable confidence in Martineau and, on the

whole, allows Harry to go his own way. On two occasions when criminals seek to destroy his career, by suggesting that Martineau has been taking bribes [12] and by implicating him in a pornographic blackmail scheme [25], Clay shows a solid trust in Harry that brings matters to an easier solution.

Of Martineau's subordinates, the first to be introduced, and the one most frequently encountered, is Detective-Constable (soon to be Detective-Sergeant) Devery. Devery is a Liverpudlian by birth, and sometimes teased by Martineau for that reason. He is quite good-looking, "as tall as the chief inspector, but younger and slimmer," a "cruiserweight" [15,2], dark-haired, well-built, and lithe [12, 7], "as eager for the chase as a young foxhound" [13, 10]. His skill in using skeleton keys, master keys, and picklocks of various kinds, all taken from criminals, is a handy one [25, 175]. Moreover, he has an interest in antiques, and in particular in antique weapons, which allows him to supply useful information to Martineau on one occasion [26, 54-55].

Detective Constable Cassidy, another recurrent character in the chronicles, is of quite different type. He is an Irishman who, at first encounter, is already married to an English wife and living in a "neat little" police house in attractively named Spicecake Lane [12, 81]. He is snub-nosed and powerful, older than Devery but envying his colleague neither his good looks nor his rank, for, after all,

> he could have been a sergeant years ago if he had wanted to bother his head with examinations. He took orders from Devery, and was content with a sly dig now and again. He liked to prod the English, and he often had an airy Irish answer to an English problem. [26, 9]

One device is to put on an extra Irishness when the occasion seems to warrant it. He uses his brogue "with intent, often in subtle mockery of the English: the simple Irishman who was not simple at all" [15, 24].

Detective Constable Ducklin is featured less often. He appears first as one of the policemen teasing Devery on his female prowl-car partner [16, 5,6]. We learn in a later case [23] that he is partnering Cassidy, enjoys a grumble, and likes watching wrestling–and that is just about all.

Several other Granchester policemen gain brief mention. One is Detective Sergeant Errol, whom Martineau considers capable and rather likes; he is married and has a good-looking wife with whom he has holidayed in Spain [26]. Sergeant Hildred is in charge of the Granchester City Police dog squad; he is a Yorkshireman, formerly with the West Riding Police, who crossed the Pennines only because his wife is from Granchester [26, 11]. Sergeant Bird, custodian of Granchester A Division's private museum and the "C.I. Department's quasi-scientist" [19, 36], is an "ingenious man" who can, like Devery, manipulate the trophy tools of criminals with skill. He has "his own sort of bad language calculated to relieve his feelings without offense to prudish ladies, children and clergymen"–phrases such as "Gott stang it!" [23, 51, 75]

Then there is Detective Constable Brabant, teased as "the smallest man in the C.I.D." and as having needed to stand on a little buffet to meet the minimum height standard [23,1]. He appears in two adventures and is a central figure in one. He is from Stockport, the son of an engineer [23, 150].

> Physically, he was more formidable than some men who looked bigger. And what he lacked in inches he made up in brains. He was one of the most knowledgeable men in the department. [23, 1]

Brabant blunders badly in the first case [19, 146] but redeems himself in the second. He looks set to gain his girl, Petal Rosedale [23], and seems likely to reappear in later adventures, but he does not.

Police-Constable Joe Ainslie is a major figure in another case. He is rewarded for his efforts by transfer to the C.I.D. and the love of the attractive cabaret dancer Cleo Patten [18] but likewise does not reappear. Several other Granchester policemen gain mention also, but they are mentioned too briefly to merit listing here.

Unlike his opposite number McCool of Utterham, Harry Martineau is quite

prepared to befriend criminals who might turn informer. One of these, Willis Cooper, comes to be called "Martineau's grasshopper"–and, because their association is recognized, is murdered [10, 3, 7]. Another, Pot Eye Walker, though "a brave little man in his way," is "not a suicidal type" [19, 13] and survives by managing to remain unsuspected by other criminals [18, 32]. Martineau was responsible for Pot Eye's only arrest....afterward has treated him well, a favor never forgotten by the little man [25, 54].

Martineau sat in his study and meditated about informers. They were fairly harmless little men as a rule, petty criminals usually. Strange people, they seemed to value the contemptuous friendship of police officers. They accepted money for their information, and they expected as much from other police officers as one policeman could give, but money and protection were not their main objects. In helping the police they sought to gratify some inner urge which had nothing to do with righteousness. There was vanity; they were proud of their own cleverness in getting information. And there was also a queer desire to have a part, though a secret one, in actual police work. They were usually small men. Martineau had heard more than one of them say, "I'd a been a copper if I'd been big enough." [10, 10]

And then there are the out-and-out criminals, chief among whom–and a particular bugbear for Harry Martineau –is Richard "Dixie" Costello. Just as Martineau's name suggest a forgotten French ancestry, so does Costello's suggest Italian descent. Like Martineau, however, he is Lancashire through and through, though representing the darker side of Lancashire. Costello is a dark-eyed, rather handsome man of medium height, thickset and compact [10, 24], with a rasping voice and so used to his "shadowy authority" that the "air of command seemed to be natural to him" [15, 6]. For many years–much too long, from Martineau's viewpoint–

> Dixie could not openly be called a criminal. He had no record at police headquarters, not even for motoring offences. And yet he was known as a boss mobster and a racketeer by Granchester people, by people in the underworld of London and other big cities, and by bookmakers who set up their stands on racecourses up and down the country.[10, 24]

In his early days, Dixie looked the part of the successful criminal:

> Characteristically he flaunted his wealth. He was loud. His suit of fine worsted was pinkish grey in color. He wore diamonds on his fingers, in his tie, and on his cufflinks. His car too was typical, a brand new grey-and-white Rolls Royce which stood out among the workday cars at the curb like a swan among starlings. [10, 24]

With time, as "an increasing amount of legitimate business had put him occasionally into the company of men of breeding," he

> learned to conceal some of his ineradicable vulgarity. Nowadays the clothes he wore were quietly elegant, and diamonds no longer flashed on his fingers and his tie. [15, 6]

Dixie has considerable talents to put to ill use. He has a power of effortless concentration and an ability to organize and dominate men. This has allowed him not only to form and hold his gang, but also to develop and extensive and profitable intelligence system–one which, for a time, extends even within the Criminal Investigation Department [19, 193] and is by no means limited to Granchester:

> ...Dixie and men of his kidney in other cities formed a loose, nameless association. They had understandings with regard to territory, and occasionally they helped each other in small matters. If Dixie wanted to trace a welsher, or any other person who had "twisted" him, he expected assistance from distant friends, as he was prepared to assist in his own "manor." [15, 109-10]

(Is Dixie Costello a far-fetched figure? Not at all. In my own home town of Sheffield–Martineau's "Hallam City" –there was an equivalent gangleader. I know this because the solicitor's firm for which my mother worked acted as his legal representatives, handling respectable property investments he had made with his ill-gotten gains. That

gentleman, if one can so term him, held court in coffeehouses, cafés, and restaurants, moving to another each day; he could be reached by telephone only through a succession of intermediaries. I am not sure that he has yet been successfully prosecuted for his crimes. Consequently, I dare not, even now, mention his very respectable-sounding name in this article, for British libel laws are much stricter that U.S. laws and I am still a British citizen!)

The services of all his gang are not continually available to Costello, however. Though long in catching up with the gangleader himself, the Granchester police secure convictions from time to time against other members. Higgs and Waddy are trapped at the end of the affair of *The Graveyard Rolls* [19, 233-34]. Goosey Bright is in lengthy imprisonment under maximum security in one case [22], and, though the release from prison of one Wallace and him is celebrated in another [24], they do not remain at large for long. There are other police successes, but Dixie himself is gathered in by Martineau after ten years of reported investigations and much police frustration [24]. Even then, he gets only a two-year sentence in Wormwood Scrubs Prison for receiving stolen property [25, 23].

Yet this is Dixie's downfall. He tries to gain vengeance on Martineau by implicating him in the sexual blackmail case mentioned earlier but succeeds only in being returned to jail on a much longer sentence [25]. Thus is the gang finally destroyed and Martineau's second greatest enemy eliminated.

Other gangs figure in the stories, in particular two London gangs that move to Granchester. One is the Islington gang–Henry "Harry-Boy" Hampson, Donald "Donnie" Lord, William "Peggy" O'Neill, William "Nipper" Wilkes, and Herbert "Creeper" Walker [22]–against whom Dixie is temporarily allies himself with the police. Another is the safe-cracking gang called "the XXC mob," from their use of oxyacetylene to enter safes–Howard Cain, Ned "The Gent" France, Bill Coggan, the cheerful Sailor Jolly, and the unspeakable Leo Husker, with Howard's attractive wife Doreen and her wayward sister Florence helping in "casing" the premises that are to be attacked [20]. The adventures of Howard's mob constitute what is surely one of the most expert and believable accounts ever written of how a criminal gang is organized and held together; how it operates; and why, in the end, it falls apart. The technical mastery of detail (e.g. 20, 31-32, 38-39, 155-56] is outstanding.

The difficult matter of Yorkshire and Lancashire dialect is also well handled. It is used correctly but sparingly, in a fashion that can confuse only the most obtuse reader but which is satisfying enough to one who, like me, hails from that part of England. (As an example, try 21, 28.) The geographic descriptions are so good that "Granchester's" (Manchester's) districts can be readily identified from the modified names Procter gives them–for example, "Mossbank" is surely Mossley [20], "Churlham" Cheetham [20], and the "Coverdale" side surely the Rochdale side [26]. A Mancunian might even be able to recognize the

very streets that are mentioned.

In the last analysis, however, Maurice Procter's writings succeed because of his profound personal knowledge of the police, of criminals, and of the Pennine environment. His policemen are ordinary men, doing a job that is always demanding and only at times either enjoyable or rewarding. Yet this job has set them apart and given them an *esprit de corps* which overrides, for them, their day-to-day difficulties and conflicts.

All in all, these are strong stories placed into an authentic setting. Perhaps Procter's police years left him with little direct benefit in terms of money or promotion, but they have given us an unsurpassable portrait of police work at a period, and in an environment, examined by few other writers.

The Writings of Maurice Procter

In the list that follows, the editions whose pagination is stated were the ones used by me. The numbers provide cross-references identifying books in the main text.

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1. 1947 *No Proud Chivalry*. London: Longmans, Green. [Not seen.]

2. 1947 *Each Man's Destiny*. London: Longmans, Green. [Republished London: White Lion Publishers, 1973, 411 pp.]

3. 1949 *The End of the Street*. London: Longmans, Green, 287 pp.

4. 1950 *The Chief Inspector's Statement*. London: Hutchinson, 224 pp. [Republished London: John Long, 1976; also published New York: Harper, 1953, as *The Pennycross Murders*.]

5. 1951 *Hurry the Darkness*. New York: Harper. [Republished New York: Collier Books, 1954; also published London: Hutchinson, 1952.]

6. 1952 *Rich Is the Treasure*. London: Hutchinson, 208 pp.

7. 1954 *Hell Is a City*. London: Hutchinson. [Also published New York: Harper, 216 pp. as *Somewhere in the City*; republished New York: Avon Books, 1957, as *Murder, Somewhere in this City*.]

8. 1956 *I Will Speak Daggers*. London: Hutchinson. [Republished London: Mystery Book Guild, 1957; also published New York: Harper and Row, 1956, as *The Ripper*, 218 pp.; republished New York: Avon Books, 1957, as *The Ripper Murders*.]

9. 1956 *The Pub Crawler*. London: Hutchinson. [Also published New York: Harper, 183 pp.]

10. 1957 *The Midnight Plumber*. London: Hutchinson. [Republished London: Panther Books; also published New York: Harper, 193 pp.]

11. 1958 *Three at the Angel*. London: Hutchinson. [Also published New York: Harper, 216 pp.]

12. 1958 *Man in Ambush*. London: Hutchinson, 224 pp. [Also published New York: Harper.]

13. 1959 *Killer at Large*. London: Hutchinson, 224 pp. [Also published New York: Harper.]

14. 1960 *The Spearhead Death*. London: Hutchinson. [Also published Leicester: Ulverscroft in large print, 337 pp.; republished London: Panther Books.] [Not seen.]

15. 1960 *Devil's Due*. London: Hutchinson. [Republished London: Panther Books; also published New York: Harper, 1960, 184 pp.]

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17. 1962 *Devil in Moonlight*. London: Hutchinson. [Republished London: White Lion Publishers, 1973, 192 pp.]

18. 1962 *A Body to Spare*. London: Hutchinson. [Also published New York: Harper, 180 pp.]

19. 1963 *Moonlight Flitting*. London: Hutchinson. [Republished London: Panther Books; also published New York: Harper & Row, 1964, 242 pp., as *The Graveyard Rolls*.]

20. 1964 *Two Men in Twenty*. London: Hutchinson, 208 pp. [Also published New York: Harper & Row.]

21. 1965 *Death Has a Shadow*. London: Hutchinson. [Republished London: White Lion Publishers, 1965, 224 pp.; also published New York: Harper, as *Homicide Blonde*.]

22. 1966 *His Weight in Gold*. London: Hutchinson, 207 pp. [Also published New York: Harper & Row.]

23. Harper & Row, 212 pp. [Also published London: Hutchinson, 1967.]

24. 1967 *Exercise Hoodwink*. London: Hutchinson, 207 pp. [Also published New York: Harper & Row, 185 pp.]

25. 1968 *Hideaway*. London: Hutchinson. [Also published New York: Harper & Row, 186 pp.]

26. 1969 *The Dog Man*. London: Hutchinson, 192 pp.

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1954 "No Place for Magic." In George Harmon Coxe, ed., *Butcher, Baker, Murder-Maker*. New York: Knopf.

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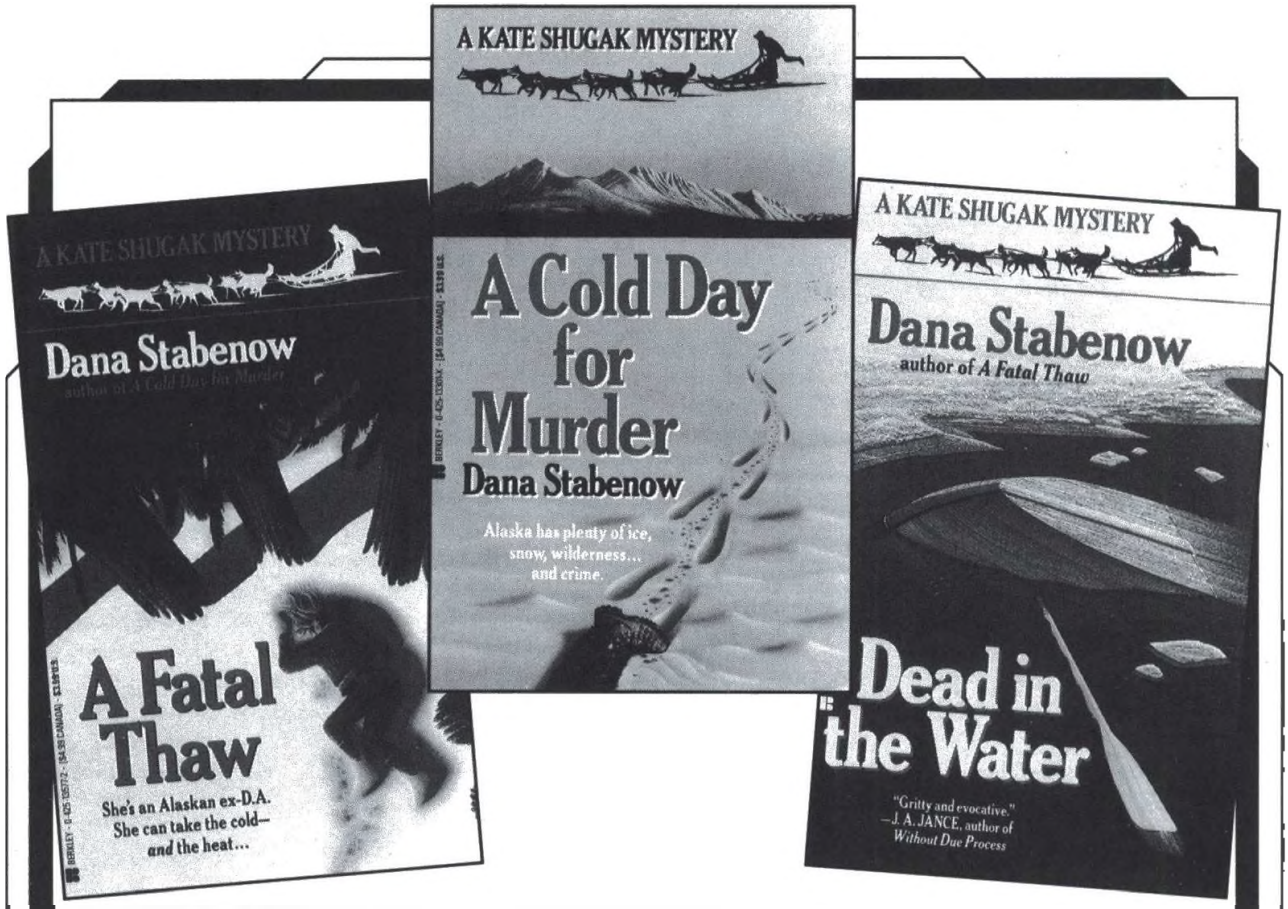

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BERKLEY PAPERBACKS

Armchair Reviews

COZIES

Hotel Morgue
by Janet Laurence. New York: Doubleday, 1992. $17.00

Subtitled *A Culinary Mystery*, this is another in the growing collection of such specialized mysteries. To the gastronomic aspects, add a British West Country setting (Somerset, to be specific) and mix in an assortment of interesting characters and a couple of murders–and the result is an intriguing, enjoyable novel.

The central characters in this series are Darina Lisle–caterer, chef, aspiring hotelier and observer of crime–and her gentleman friend, police detective William Pigram. The title is a play on the Hotel Morgan, an out-of-the-way establishment near Yeovil whose hotel and dining business is dying a slow death; later, a murder gives it somewhat of a morgue-like aura. The tall, blond and attractive Darina arrives at the hotel to explore the possibility of buying into the business, supervising especially its culinary needs. The owners are the recently widowed Ulla Mason, a lovely Norse lady trying to keep alive her husband's dreams, and her stepsons Alex Mason and Max Saunders, the former of whom assists Ulla, waiting for her to sell so he can collect his share and leave in pursuit of other interests.

A lovely young lady is found strangled in a ditch. Clues link her to Alex and to seemingly prosperous hotelier Adam Tennant of the upscale Park Manor Hotel, where the victim worked. The narrative alternates between chapters dealing with Darina and her affairs surrounding the Morgan and those of Pigram and the investigation. Eventually, of course, the two strands are woven together until the fate of the killer, the hotel and Darina's love affair are all affected by the climax.

Along the way, Laurence lays some strong, perhaps overly contrived, evidence pointing at the two major suspects (there are others). She also spins some appealing descriptions of both the dining room fare and of the tale's women characters. This is diverting entertainment worthy of attention.

–Douglas G. Simpson

An Uncommon Murder
by Anabel Donald. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. $17.95

While she was growing up in London foster homes, Alex Tanner always dreamed of being a private eye. She ended up as the next best thing–a freelance television researcher. Asking questions, digging up dirt, hunting down sources and putting the story together is all in a day's work.

But one afternoon, she happens upon an old lady being mugged in a rather nice, posh neighborhood. While helping the elderly victim home, Alex realizes that the woman is Miss Potter, a former governess to the Sherwin family. What incredible luck! The Sherwin family, and the shocking shooting death of Lord Rollo Sherwin forty years ago, is being researched by Barty, her main employer. With this chance encounter, she's got a source who not only knew the family well, but was also at the country estate the night of the fateful ball.

Barty agrees to let Alex take on the research and she immediately delves into the unsolved murder of London society man Rollo Sherwin.

This absorbing, well-written mystery has a flippant, wisecracking, self-sufficient Londoner matching wits with a seemingly dotty, prissy ex-governess who may or may not know more than she's ready to tell. Besides an unrealistic deadline, Alex is also pitted against the British upper class, of which she is decidedly not a part.

Alex is definitely pressed for time–if she expects her share of the fee, plus padded expenses, she's got to have the piece finished quickly. Unfortunately, Miss Potter has other plans. She lets Alex know that she has valuable information, but, before she can confide in Alex, she wants her to find Zara "Toad" Mayfield, the missing granddaughter of the murdered Rollo.

Sounds easy enough, except for a few complications. Only Miss Potter thinks Toad is missing. Toad's upper-crust mother, Charlotte (Rollo's oldest daughter) and MP father are convinced that the teen-aged girl is just off on holiday.

As Alex pries into the Sherwin family past, her initially casual concern about

finding Toad turns into a nagging worry. Is Miss Potter's anxiety affecting her or is there really cause for concern? And did Lord Sherwin's recently deceased wife actually commit the murder, or is the guilty party still alive...and dangerous?

An Uncommon Murder is an observant, humorous and often scathing examination of the English classes. The quick commentaries and sarcastic twists make this an engrossing, amusing and fast read...too fast, actually! Anabel Donald has created several incredible characters–hopefully, this book marks the beginning of an equally incredible series.

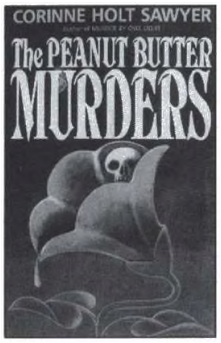
Both Alex and Miss Potter are immensely likeable and easy to admire, yet ultimately very human. Both characters make plenty of apparently logical leaps and erroneous judgements along the way. The presentation of any faulty reasoning, however, is cleverly done and had this reviewer sufficiently convinced until almost the bitter end.

The mystery–or mysteries–are finally solved through solid determination, hard work, and stubborn persistence. After all, Alex does have a mortgage to pay and this research, it it's ever to be completed, will fetch twice her usual fee. We can only hope that Alex's bills continue to mount–and that we will soon find her solving another mystery.

–Danielle Mowery

The Peanut Butter Murders
by Corinne Holt Sawyer. New York: Donald J. Fine, Inc., 1993. $18.95

The Peanut Butter Murders is the fourth novel in the series featuring Angela Benbow and Caledonia Wingate, two elderly women in a posh California retirement community who are, as Angela puts it, *"getting older, but not getting old."* The two make a delightful pair, with Angela the short, talkative, imaginative one given to darting off at the slightest scent of trouble, cheerfully chatting her way through all sorts of half-truths in an



effort to get any information she so curiously needs to know.

Caledonia, then, is the perfect balance. She adores her *"little friend,"* but is not above reprimanding Angela for her uncontrollable flights of fancy. Cal is impressively built (one wouldn't necessarily say fat, since she's the height and the good clothes sense to carry off a bit of bulk), outspoken, and lest apt to hike a flight of stairs unless absolutely necessary. She's the calmer, common-sensed one of the duo, and makes an excellent sounding board for Angela's far-fetched, but not always entirely inaccurate, takes on any unsolved situation at hand.

Rounding out the cast of regulars is Lt. Martinez, who respects the intelligence of both ladies, and also understands their not-so-hidden desire to stay in the loop with any ongoing investigation where they have a personal interest, no matter how stretched the personal connection may be. Confident in their abilities to nose around the retirement center and still keep themselves discreet, Martinez gives them the go-ahead to gather facts. Although he doesn't necessarily encourage some of their more desperate methods, like a little stint of breaking and entering, stealing files (or at least copies of files), and using fake names when being immediately recognized would be a disadvantage, he does manage to look away with an amused, hidden smile of amazement.

That the women manage to pull off these petty crimes is entertainment enough; that the information they gather leads them to solving a questionable murder is sheer delight. First, a body is found near the railroad tracks. Was the death accidental, suicide or murder? Then, the police identify the body as one Alexander Lightfoot, fiance of Edna Ferrier, who is another elderly woman residing in the retirement home of Camden-sur-Mer. Angela and Cal begin innocently enough, trying to find out background on the relationship between Alexander and Edna, probing to discover if he had any enemies. Then, another body turns up, and the investigation becomes increasingly urgent.

Another endearing aspect of this mystery is the warm, realistic sense of friendship and comradery the reader feels from the two, making this reviewer personally feel that growing older is a pleasure to look forward to as long as you manage to not grow *old*. Although Angela and Cal stick to the manners of their generation, like not wanting to be addressed by their first names by someone they just met, they also have a wonderful capacity for appreciating and acknowledging the changing times.

Sawyer gives the cosy reader a welcome choice when one is in the mood to read about the adventures of elderly female sleuths–it's refreshing to note that neither Cal nor Angela once picked up knitting needles during this stint. Whether those useful tools of inconspicuous detecting appear in any other of their series is yet to be discovered, but from the mental restlessness and desire for activity that these two have so deliciously shown, I have my doubts about seeing any balls of yarn...

–Danielle Mowery

Something Like A Love Affair
by Julian Symons. New York: Mysterious Press, 1993. $17.95

Something Like A Love Affair is a very genteel, very British mystery. At its heart is Judith Lassister, a vibrant woman trapped in a loveless marriage to a seemingly benign, milquetoast architect. From the outside, her life appears to be picture-perfect, but then again, appearances are never what they're cracked up to be.

Symons provides, a bit too earnestly, ample explanation as to how Judith ended up with her husband and Green Diamonds, the house he designed for her. Orphaned at a young age and sent to live with uncaring relatives, Judith's past practically insures her unhappiness in later life. Indeed, her need for affection is still so intense there's little surprise when Judith begins an affair with her young driving instructor. What follows is more than a tantalizing whodunnit. Though every one of the major players looks painfully guilty at one time or another, the crime itself remains the biggest mystery of all.

A body is found in the woods at the novel's onset. The victim's identity is not revealed until the final pages. In between is a delightful read, full of all the deceits and deceptions only a master storyteller can provide so convincingly. Symons has a sixth sense as to how long the reader's patience will hold out–clues are scattered liberally throughout the text. Most importantly, Judith Lassister is expertly drawn. From her first taste of sin to a very believable brush with the dark side, she makes *Something Like A Love Affair* sparkle.

–Jodi Lustig

The 27-Ingredient Chile Con Carne Murders
by Nancy Pickard. New York: Delacorte Press, 1993. $18.00

Get out your sombrero and throw a saddle on your horse, we're headed for the ranch with Mrs. Potter and a bowl of her famous chile con carne. (Don't take any home though!)

Nancy Pickard revives Virginia Rich's character Eugenia Potter cooking up a hot-as-chili-pepper mystery mixing Mrs. Potter's ability to cook.

While Eugenia, Genia for short, prepares a spicy meal in her Northcutt's Harbor, Maine kitchen, she receives an urgent phone call from Richard Ortega, her ranch manager. He asks her to return to her old ranch in Tuscon, Arizona. When she arrives in Tuscon, Ortega isn't there to greet her so she makes her own way out to her Las Palomas Ranch. At the ranch, she discovers both Ortega and his granddaughter, Linda, are missing and presumed dead.

A group of ranchers and neighbors conduct a search while Genia entertains an old boyfriend and stirs up her famous 27-ingredient chili con carne (she plays game of name the ingredients) for the tired and hungry searchers. That night, she learns one of her ranch hands has died after eating her chili con carne. Eugenia makes a house to house, or in this case, ranch to ranch, check to make sure no one eats any more of her leftover chili. It puzzles her as to why the chili would cause this unless someone put poison in it. The ingredients were fresh, but someone could have doctored the leftover cartons.

Mrs. Potter becomes suspicious of the surrounding ranchers, people she has known for years and even Jed White, her old sweetheart. In her amateurish way, she solves the problem and with a knowing hand cooks up a storm, recipes included.

A nice, folksy southwestern flavor to a mystery. So, step onto Mrs. Potter's ranch with Nancy, but a warning, stirring up this mystery will give you an appetite for more.

–Catherine M. Nelson

GENERAL

Don't Ask
by Donald E. Westlake. New York: Mysterious Press, 1993. $18.95

Okay, you asked so I'll tell you. What happens to Westlake when he puts on his clown suit? He becomes America's P. G. Wodehouse, that's what. He plunks us down into a comic world that's vaguely reminiscent of the familiar world around us but a lot more fun to be plunked down in. And he's just done it again.

John Dortmunder once more reassembles his gaggle of good-hearted

but luckless boobyhatch fugitives for a Big Caper like no other in or out of crime fiction. The target is a newly hatched East European country's New York embassy–which is an old tramp steamer moored in the East River under the FDR Drive–where reposes the holy femur of St. Ferghana of Carpathia–the real one that is, not the phony femur that skulks for a while around the edges of the plot–on the possession of which relic hangs the issue of whether a seat in the UN goes to the Free and Democratic Nation of Tsergovia or the Outlandish and Laughable Republic of Votskojek. To quote Dortmunder's sidekick: *"The United Nations lets you become a member if you got a bone? That's too stupid to even be a sentence."* But Westlake magically invests the premise with wacky plausibility. Like his other farces, this one is a cornucopia, from which pour down upon our hapless troop of thieves a mad scientist with a dream of creating edible socks, a millionaire hotelier and art collector with his own Alpine village in the middle of Vermont, a doddering archbishop, a brainwashing scam, a pile of bungling DEA agents, doctored pizza, a one-man commando raid on Governor's Island, et cetera, ad infinitum, ad absurdum.

Cuckoosnest characters and dialogue and plot twists (the beauty on page 147 being of *Crying Game* caliber) come tumbling out at us like gold coins from a slot machine run amok, and everything hangs together in perfectly interwoven patterns of nonsense. Wodehouse kept his looniverse going till he was over ninety, and every reader with a funnybone–the place where the ulna meets the humerus that is, not the femur that counts as the funnybone in this book–must wish Westlake the same longevity.

–Francis M. Nevins

A Deceptive Appearance
by John Malcolm. New York: *Charles Scribner's Sons*, 1992. $20.00

Mystery readers who have been following the Tim Simpson series will not be disappointed by *A Deceptive Appearance*, the ninth of John Malcolm's crime novels. With a dash of British wit and high quality prose, Malcolm whisks us through another adventure which combines an insider's look at merchant banking with a connoisseur's knowledge of the international antiques trade, an unbeatable combination of greed and intrigue that fortunately all too often leads to murder.

Tim Simpson, an investment specialist in the art and antiques market, manages the Art Fund for White's, a family-owned British banking house. He is also the firm's major trouble shooter, and, as in previous novels in the series, he is shipped off to foreign climes to investigate possible investment opportunities. Wherever he goes, the bodies eventually being to proliferate and soon Tim is involved in a full-blown criminal investigation. In this latest adventure, with the Art Fund temporarily on hold, he is sent to France to assess the financial strength of a cosmetics company, Bellevie, and to explore the possible cross-channel business partnership with the French bank, Maucourt Freres. From the beginning, however, things go awry. His colleagues in London failed to tell him that he was the second choice to do the financial detective work on the cosmetics firm and that his predecessor died mysteriously in a car crash after having apparently discovered something suspicious about the firm's manufacturing plant.

Then other people begin to die. First is the rather formidable dragon who manages Bellevie's commercial outlet in Paris who inexplicably falls under a subway train on the way to a meeting she had requested with Tim, presumably to reveal the company's secrets. Next an accountant in the firm falls out of a window before she can go over the firm's materials procurement procedures with him. And finally, the grandson of the house of Maucourt Freres is almost killed by two thugs while he is helping Tim with his investigation of the business. Even Tim finds himself a pawn in the financial games being played by the two banking houses and the families who own and run them, families whose connections date back to the war and obligations forged in the secret anti-Nazi underground which operated in France. In the midst of all this mayhem,

he discovers a cache of unknown paintings by the nineteenth-century French artist, James Tissot, who both lived and worked in France and England. Tim is saddled with the task of sorting out the murders and the mystery at Bellevie while keeping himself alive and snaring those Tissots for the Art Fund.

This is the sort of plot juggling that John Malcolm does so skillfully and that makes the Tim Simpson novels such wonderful books. Malcolm is equally adept at weaving his antique/art expertise into the mystery investigation, often creating surprising interconnections and relationships between the two. All of this is done within a sly perspective on the financial world's greed and politics. For those who have not yet discovered the world of Tim Simpson, *A Deceptive Appearance* is as good a place as any to start; for those who already know about John Malcolm's mysteries, this novel is a welcome addition to the series.

–Charles L. P. Silet

Edge City
by Sin Soracco. New York:
Dutton, 1993. $18.00

Street-smart Reno, who's fresh out of the joint (you know, the big house), plans on getting a job with big money and go straight, yeah, sure, that's what she tells her parole officer. (You believe that?) Well, her first stop is a dump called

Club Istanbul–where broken glass is mixed with ice, love is a commodity to be bought and sold and everyone's hustling something and danger lurks around every corner. Reno's kind of place, right? Well, now you get the mood of the book and the characters come into focus in the first fifty or sixty pages.

After Reno throws down a few stiff shots of Johnnie Walker Black, mixing with the worthless gang and feeling right at home, she accepts a job slinging drinks as the Club's cocktail waitress. She envisions other prospects of bigger and better advancements within her reach. (Dream on!) Her parole officer should be happy about this choice of employment since the Club Istanbul is a meeting place for drug addicts and drug pushers and where Reno is confronted with violence, seduction and betrayal. Now, with those lovely companions, it's just a matter of time before a murder will rear its ugly head.

Sin Soracco knows this seedy underworld of crime. Her first novel, *Low Bite*, was about women in prison and *Edge City* takes place after prison–sounds like she's done some intense research, because everything falls into place. This is a different type of woman's hero with an even more different point of view. A bad girl's version of Mean Street. A book on the wild side. Take a chance.

–Catherine M. Nelson

Ravenmocker
by Jean Hager. New York:
Mysterious Press, 1993. $17.95

You can almost feel how Jean Hager is comfortable with her new series featuring Molly Bearpaw, a young, single Cherokee Indian. Molly takes her job as an investigator for the Native American Advocacy League in Oklahoma seriously.

In the County Haven Nursing Home, Woodrow Mouse and Mercer Vaughan watch over dying eighty-four-year-old Abner Mouse. A third man, who while smoking his pipe also watches the old man pass away, was Vann Walkingstick, a medicine man. He advises Woodrow to ask Molly Bearpaw to attend his father's autopsy to make sure the ravenmocker (a Cherokee witch) doesn't steal his father's heart. A somewhat insecure medicine man, Vann Walkingstick seems to have his suspicions about the death, too. Makes for an interesting thought. The ravenmocker is a witch the Cherokee fear.

Because Molly Bearpaw views the autopsy, she is privy to information that turned up unexpectedly. She believes it is part of her job to find out just how Abner Mouse was poisoned. Nothing is discovered while she investigates the

nursing home or its staff. What was the motive? Who would profit from his death? These questions puzzle Molly.

Then, another patient in the same wing is poisoned. Neither murder seems to be related.

Molly works together with the Sheriff's Deputy, D.J. Kennedy, both hoping to solve the mystery before another murder is committed. Molly thinks she's next on the list.

The character Molly Bearpaw seems to be shy when it comes to relations with men, but determined when it comes to investigating her case. The found dog, her landlord and her noisy neighbor play a terrific part in what Molly's all about and I sure hope Hager plans on keeping them in the series.

The medicine man who isn't sure of his powers and if he can deal with the witch was terrific, but I wanted to know more about this ravenmocker. Did he make a practice of stealing only Cherokee Indian hearts or didn't Walkingstick do his job right? (too old, losing his touch?) Jean Hager's best book yet!

–Catherine M. Nelson

Dead Pan

by Jane Dentinger. New York: Viking, 1992. $19.00

Some novels succeed because of skillful plotting and suspense, others because of characters that command our attention. *Dead Pan* is one of the latter. Located mostly around a Hollywood movie set, it involves the murder of photography director Buddy Banks, whose unpopularity and ties to many involved in the making of a television film create an abundance of suspects.

The book is a good read primarily because of its sparkling heroine, actress Jocelyn O'Rourke. A New Yorker brought to Hollywood for a particular role, Josh (as she is called) not only acts, but influences female lead Ginger Jellicoe (former child star and later drug addict), assists police detective Dwayne Hamill, and carries on a torrid romance with company hairstylist Jack Breedlove (no stereotyping here!). In all respects, she is appealing, a compelling presence who livens up page after page, scene after scene, throughout the book. Besides being driven by her curiosity, Josh gets involved with the investigation because of her reputation as the sleuthing companion of well-known New York City police lieutenant Phillip Gerard (see the first three Jane Dentinger novels), whom the youthful Hamill holds in awe. O'Rourke needed a getaway because after she refused to marry Gerard, he chose someone else. The movie gives her something to do, and Breedlove enables her to revive her considerable sexuality.

O'Rourke probably comes as close to her creator as characters do. Detinger is herself an actor, director and teacher. Her knowledge of the theater and film is considerable, and she appears to be about the same age as O'Rourke. Detinger's story itself is not that memorable, but her witty dialogue, clever description, and the irrepressible Josh O'Rourke may send readers hunting for her earlier titles.

–Doug Simpson

Dartmoor Burial

by Audrey Peterson. New York: Pocket Books, 1992. $4.99

In her fist six novels, featuring Jane Winfield and Andrew Quentin, Audrey Peterson was a more literary alter ego (and apparently more accurate observer) than better known fellow American Martha Grimes. That is, she set most of her novels in England. With her seventh tale, *Dartmoor Burial*, she begins a new series featuring Clair Camden, like herself a professor of English literature. The fortyish Camden is reminiscent of Kate Fansler, the somewhat older heroine of Amanda Cross/Carolyn Heilbrun. *Dartmoor Burial* is as good as the best of Cross or Grimes, yet Paterson is little known nationally.

Camden, recently divorced from her English husband, is researching Victorian novelist M.L. Talbot for a book. The narrative is interspersed not only with references to the author and her life, but also includes extensive passages from Talbot's *The Specimen*. At first these passages seem intrusive, but as Peterson's story unfolds, it is apparent that Talbot's story has remarkable parallels to the crime Camden is following in Dartmoor and London. This may sound too coincidental, but it is handled very skillfully by Peterson.

The pregnant body of Darla Brown, a poor young Dartmoor girl, is found on the moor, poisoned and left in a remote locale. Camden is in the vicinity visiting her mother-in-law and her own daughter, a local college student. Acquainted with Detective Superintendent Neil Padgett, who is handling the case, she becomes involved with some of the Devonshire locals and close friends with Padgett, inevitably involving her in the case. She tracks down Brown's friend Harriet Thorne, who had disappeared in London, and counsels Brown's younger sister Ruby. Suspects include the father of Darla and Ruby, Harriet's boyfriend (Darla's former lover), and Oliver Bascomb, an ambitious local politician, rumored to have chased after Darla.

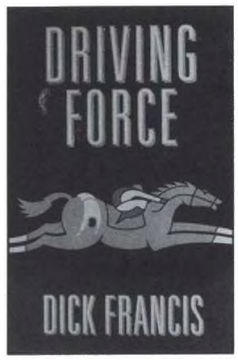
In chasing down rumors and pursuing clues, Camden is knocked down, has her purse stolen in London, is later abducted, then bound and about to be left on the moor herself. She also develops a serious relationship with Padgett, himself a recent divorcee. The Dartmoor area, including its gloomy prison, comes to life nicely in the story. Camden's adventures make her an attractive, appealing heroine, and she discovers that some of the problems of M.L. Talbot's women are not so very different from those of contemporary women. This is a wonderfully crafted novel deserving of wide readership–and more recognition for Audrey Peterson.

–Doug Simpson

Driving Force
by Dick Francis. New York:
G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992. $21.95

Like a good race horse that always finishes in the money, Dick Francis always delivers a story you can bet on. His latest, *Driving Force*, is no exception. Again we have that winning formula: a decent, resourceful and courageous hero finds himself pitted against an evil force, which he ultimately overcomes. And, of course, some aspect of the horse racing industry is involved.

In this case, Freddie Croft, an ex-jockey, owns a business that transports horses. It's one thing when a hitchhiker dies of a heart attack in one of Croft's vans. But when an intruder searches the van, Croft knows something is up. Then the mysterious death of his maintenance man is too much of a coincidence. Croft's investigation leads to malicious destruction of his office and computer records, a senseless deliberate collision of his prized Jaguar into his sister's helicopter, and his being assaulted



and subsequently dumped into the sea, where he nearly drowns.

Croft knows that some sort of virus is being transported, first because the deceased hitchhiker's thermos contained some tubes holding a liquid virus, and second because of the secret compartments discovered under his vans. The question is what was transported under there and why. The computer records might help discover the truth, but they were destroyed. Only Croft knows that he had a back-up disk locked in his safe. Imagine how a few well-placed viruses can debilitate good horses, and, in turn, affect the outcome of the races.

Francis builds his story skillfully, presenting an interesting variety of characters, some good and appealing, others unpleasant and possessing evil. The title, in fact, refers not to racing a horse, but to man's capacity for evil, that force within that obsessively drives an evil person to do what he or she does. It's always in a Francis novel, and it's always reassuring to see it defeated in the end.

–Doug Simpson

Cold Tracks
by Lee Wallingford. New York:
Worldwide Mysteries, 1993. $3.99

An interesting new detecting duo makes their debut in *Cold Tracks*, a mass-market reprint. Frank Carver, a burned-out Seattle detective, comes to Oregon's Neskanie National Forest as a Law Enforcement Officer to escape the violence and horror of big-city life. Expecting nothing more difficult than illegal hunting or lost hikers, Frank

soon learns that although the geography might be more scenic in the National Forest, greed and murder still occur.

Fire Dispatcher Ginny Trask, a young widow, is out on routine duty one fall day when she discovers the body of a missing fire-fighter, Nino Alvarez. A quiet and low-key man who kept his private life completely secret, Nino had worked at a local Christmas tree farm for many years. Recently fired for supposedly embezzling funds, he joined the forest service and maintained his private home life, hiding the fact that he had a wife and two children.

Carver soon deputizes Ginny to help him discover the truths hidden behind everyone's careful answers to his questions. In this small community, Ginny knows everyone's history, just as all her neighbors know her own. At first, Ginny resents Carver's taking her away from her regular duties, especially because her new work means she has less time for her young daughter, who's just become a local celebrity for recently sighting the legendary Bigfoot.

But gradually Ginny and Frank develop into a real team, with her sensitivity balancing his determination to find the truth, regardless of whose feelings he has to hurt along the way. They discover Nino had been having an affair with a local woman who tells Nino she is pregnant the same night he is killed. A coincidence? A trip to interview Nino's family turns up the fact that his wife and kids are illegal aliens; they also learn that Nino had started growing his own Christmas trees, using a new strain of tree he had stolen from his previous employer. Could that be the motive for his death?

When a late night intruder breaks into Ginny's house and tries to kidnap her daughter, Ginny and Frank realize they must be close to discovering the truth behind Nino's death. But when their prime suspect is found hanging from a rafter, they have to quickly look at all the pieces of the puzzle and determine what they've missed.

A former fire-fighter with the Forest Service, the author's intimate familiarity with the Oregon locale and with fire-fighting clearly shows through in this engaging book. She creates a believable group of suspects, any of whom could be the killer, and then continually surprises the reader with her deft use of carefully-placed clues.

Frank and Ginny are a likeable pair of sleuths whose budding relationship (both personal and professional) bodes well for future adventures. Neither is presented as a super-human detective –both make mistakes, misjudge people and get hurt feelings; yet each character has hidden strengths that keep us interested in reading about them. I look forward to meeting them again.

–Liz Currie

Shallow Graves
by William Jefferies. New York:
Avon Books, 1992. $4.50

"For a town where nobody seemed in a hurry, some things got done real fast in Cleary."

John Pellam, a location scout for Big Mountain Studios, thought Cleary, upstate New York, would be the perfect location for the studio's upcoming film. Pellam and his photographer, Marty Jacobs, move into the small town, two bars, and find small towners can be very unfriendly–ranging from signing with the middle finger to ominous graffiti on Pellam's Winnebago to exploding Marty's rented car.

It becomes apparent that someone influential, maybe the whole town, doesn't like "movie people" or doesn't want any strangers in town. After Marty is killed, it is also apparent that Pellam is not going away until he gets some straight answers. The natives seem hell-bent in not only frustrating Pellam's efforts but in trying to frame Pellam for anything and everything, including a second murder.

Jefferies does a great job of characterization. Pellam is an ideal hero, overcoming much adversity in his life, "laid-back," unassuming, focused and a quiet winner. You've run across Jefferies' people in other novels and he does use stereotypes, but his descriptions have a distinctive quality. His ability to paint with words extends to places as well as people: "the little, close-smelling, piss-ant, town-government office. A lumberyard calendar on the wall, a dead plant in a drought-struck flower pot, a few yellowing flies, a map."

Though the action starts slowly, the pace escalates to a final, well-planned twist. One feels that the last few pages are puzzling in that the so well-developed characters suddenly seem untouched by what has happened but even with that, *Shallow Graves* is recommended.

William Jefferies is a pen name of Jeffery Wilds Deaver, who has written the "Rune" series. As in the latter, the author's style has a trademark in the way he takes seemingly disparate episodes and skillfully integrates them into the plot. Some readers may find this disconcerting, but this reviewer found it intriguing.

–Maria Brolley

Motown Underground
by Doug Allyn. New York:
St. Martin's Press, 1993. $17.95

Doug Allyn, a resident of Montrose, Michigan, earns his main living leading and playing in a rock band with his wife, who sings. Doug Allyn also writes mysteries, in the form of short stories, which have won awards, and in novels, the first of which was Cheerio Killings, featuring Detroit homicide detective Lupe Garcia. His second book, *Motown Underground*, also features Garcia, who at the beginning of the story, resigns from the force after he and his partner are nearly killed in a brutal gang-set explosion.

While looking for a job at a nightclub called Underground where he once worked as an undercover narcotics agent, he is asked by the club's owner, Danny Kelly, to kill his partner, Richie Seayan, who has mob connections and is trying to squeeze him out. Garcia owes Kelly his life, and he can't walk

away. So Garcia decides to humor him until he can find another solution to Kelly's problems. Before Garcia can do anything, however, both Kelly and his partner are found dead after a fire at the club. Garcia finds out that the Underground had been under police surveillance, and he and Kelly's conversation regarding the plan to murder Zeayan had been recorded. Garcia is arrested when unexpectedly Kelly's widow bails him out with an offer to allow him to run the Underground until it is sold. Garcia and Kelly's attorney daughter, Erin, team up to find out what really happened. In the process, they come up against a big-time Cuban drug dealer and his sadistic and brutal henchman.

This is an incredibly violent book–dismemberments and torture abound. Although some of the violence does make a point, some of it is somewhat excessive and cruel. If you can get past the violence, there's a lot to recommend the book. The writing is intense and powerful from the very beginning when Garcia and his fellow officers find two teenagers who have been tortured and left for dead, until the end when Garcia is almost dismembered and killed by a sadistic mobster. The pacing is just fine, and there's not a lull in the book.

There's also a lot to like in Garcia who comes off as sympathetic and believable. Garcia is tough, loyal and moral, but he's also dispirited, tired and a little bit out of control. Although most of the other characters are not as well drawn, some of them, such as Kelly and the singer Risa Blades, are more fleshed out. Erin, who is also one of the central characters, however, never quite comes to life, and although she enters into the story quite often, all we basically know about her is that she's sensible, young, loved her father, but not her mother, in love with Garcia, and doesn't have much to do, although she's supposedly a high-powered attorney.

If gruesome violence (and there is quite a bit of it) bothers you, this is not the book for you. However, almost everything else is more than acceptable, and you might want to give *Motown Underground* a try.

–Lorne K. Inagaki

Wilkes on Trial
by Charles Sevilla. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993. $18.00

Al Pacino, who starred in *And Justice for All...*, plays a blind man in the recent movie *Scent of a Woman*. Perhaps he should be chosen to star in a film made from this book: for he would know, as the protagonist John Wilkes knows, just how blindness can affect people. But we feel sympathy for Pacino's character in *Scent of a Woman*, whereas, just like in *And Justice for All...*, we feel disdain for the court system portrayed in

Wilkes on Trial.

The disdain we feel, though, is lightened by the juxtaposition of some superbly written comedic scenes in this second novel by Charles Sevilla, in real life, a lawyer in San Diego. More than slightly reminiscent of Donald Westlake; you will find yourself laughing out loud at how well a good writer can produce a parody of first rank.

John Wilkes is a flamboyant defense attorney with a reputation for taking on tough cases, and winning them. But he is stretched to the limit when he must defend, for example among others, the Whiz Kids gang leader, Field Marshall Lyle Diderot charged with assaulting and robbing a blind woman.

It is here we meet Wilkes' nemesis, Judge Yulburton Abraham Knott. And who can feel a sense of loss when the Judge is found with a long letter opener protruding from his back? It is clear he will read his mail no more. But, who did him in? Could it be our hero, John Wilkes, who earlier that day had in public denounced the Judge with a final burst of anger, including his desire to see the Judge dead? (Note the deceased Judge's secret writing which is quite akin to Bestor's *The Demolished Man*.)

Enter Becky Buttermilk, perfectly named as the proprietress of the "Love Tub Tumble," where she has been busted by a Vice cop for (you will have to read the book). Things continue to get confusing with the advent of "The Hacker-Cracker" and Knott's replacement, Judge Throckton.

Perhaps one of the best satirical passages deals with a meeting of "The National Association of Greatest American Trial Advocates." Only a lawyer familiar with the type could have performed such a masterful job of dissection.

Winston Schoonover, Wilkes' Watson, is to be commended for giving us another most enjoyable book in what we hope will be a continuing series. With but one admonition: Could Wilkes have been a youngster in the Depression and be the age suggested in the novel?

Three Persian slippers on a scale of four.

–Cal Branche

Bloodlines

by Susan Conant. New York: Doubleday, 1993. $17.00

Concentrations camps for dogs. That's how writer and amateur detective Holly Winter describes so-called puppy mills and the industry they supply: pet shops. Indeed, after reading *Bloodlines*, it's highly unlikely I'll ever set foot inside a pet shop again, except perhaps to give the proprietor a good poke in the nose.

The plot of this canine novel involves Holly's search for a missing Alaskan Malamute named (appropriately) Missy. It also involves the murder of one Diane Sweet, owner of a pet shop called (inappropriately) Puppy Luv. Though Holly tries to feel sympathy for the murdered woman, she–and the reader–are not overly saddened by the death of someone responsible, however indirectly, for the suffering of countless animals. Holly explains: "Puppy mills breed their bitches the first time they come in season and every six months thereafter until the age of five or six, when the litter size decreases. And then? If the bastards used needles instead of shotguns, I suppose it could be considered mercy killing."

Cave canem. Or more accurately, beware of the writer obsessed with dogs. Bloodlines is more an instructional manual on raising and showing of dogs and a tract against the cruelty of puppy mills than it is a murder mystery. The bulk of the book is mostly explication: for example, the difference between Alaskan malamutes and Siberian huskies, two breeds which are often mistaken for each other by the unsophisticated public.

Read *Bloodlines*. But be prepared to learn more about the art of raising dogs than the art of murder.

–Edward Lodi

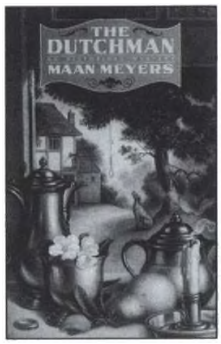
The Dutchman

by Maan Meyers. New York: Doubleday Perfect Crime, 1993. $18.50

New York City in 1664, before the tall buildings and madding crowd and Broadway shows. Can you imagine! Well, if you can't, read *The Dutchman* and see how far we've come, baby. Hogs roaming Broadway, unpaved roads, curbing your horse and half-naked Indians at your back door. Is it any wonder Tonneman, the Dutchman Schout (sheriff) is confronted with a suspicious hanging-suicide of a popular tavern owner, and good friend of Schout, a mysterious burning of private homes and a disappearing corpus.

Of course, the biggest problem the Dutch citizens realize is the scarcity of beer and lack of business, so the British crawling on their shores wanting to take over their property, seems to pass over their heads.

Wow, a murderer on the loose and the British invading, what more, you might ask. A romance, per chance?



Possibly! The Dutchman has recently been boozing it up over the loss of his wife, up until he meets Racquel Mendoza, an exotic Jewish beauty who isn't officially a widow, as yet. Her husband is missing. He seems interested and she likes him, but relatives get in the way.

This book has everything, even a sequel. Yes, the Meyers have a historical mystery trilogy in the making. *The Dutchman* is a great beginning; the next book is going to be out this fall.

Marty and Annette Meyers have joined together to set you on Manhattan Harbor and give you a clear picture of the way things were then and show us how a murder mystery in the heart of the Big Apple came to be. *The Dutchman* you'll love. He's warm, caring and gullible. Racquel Mendoza has spunk and comes alive off the page. And the story line has meat and potatoes. Guts! Lives intertwine with history and a murder changes history. A difficult book to research, plan and write. Annette and Marty Meyers–a job well done and a terrific read. Two thumbs up!

–Catherine M. Nelson

Bucket Nut

by Liza Cody. New York: Doubleday, 1993. $18.50

Eva Wylie is living a life that makes her fairly happy. She has an interest–wrestling. When we first meet her, she's grappling in the ring with the Blonde Bombshell. And, she also has a home and a proper job, rolled into one. As the security guard for Armour Protection, she gets the added privilege of calling a beat-up trailer on the lot home. Then, on the side, she runs errands for local Chinese businessman, Mr. Cheng. So maybe the errands are a little suspicious, but Eva is smart enough not to ask questions–until she's given a package that ends up exploding and destroying a local club. People are killed, and in the confusion, Eva rescues a young woman, nicknamed Goldie.

This is when Eva's rough, but fairly peaceful, existence becomes endangered. Literally. Private eye Anna Lee, known to readers as the main sleuth of Liza Cody's series, makes what you could call a guest appearance. She begins following Eva, and tries to warn her. But Eva is too angry to care about her own hide. She's got Goldie to think of, not to mention her upcoming big fight, the biggest of her career! Eva is determined to set things right. Hit men are following her, Ramses and Lineker, the two guard dogs, are viciously attacked, but Eva plows on. As she comments about one of her dogs after he's attacked: "Ramses would rather die than forgive and forget. And so would I..."

Liza Cody has created an entirely believable, tough yet vulnerable London amateur sleuth, one we'll hopefully see again and again. Apart from the unlikely title *Bucket Nut*, which barely has any connection with the story, this mystery is near perfect. Tough, sarcastic, yet good-hearted main character. Ferocious dogs. Shady mates and fellow wrestlers. Believable villains. Action-packed chaos. Awkward, vulnerable moments. If you like your main characters well-drawn and a bit on the quirky side, be sure to read this latest fare from award-winning author Liza Cody. All I want to know is: when

*"Well, it **would** have been the perfect murder..."*

LORBER/DAVIDSON

to expect the next Eva Wylie mystery!

This mystery was a double pleasure for me–not only am I now an avid fan of Eva Wylie, but I'm now aware of

Liza Cody's impressive talents. Having not read Liza Cody before, I'm delighted with the thought that a whole series of Anna Lee mysteries awaits...

–Danielle Mowery

Kill the Butler!

by Michael Kenyon. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. $17.95

Chief Inspector Henry Peckover of Scotland Yard doesn't know quite how it happened. One day he's enjoying his wife's exquisite cooking, the next he's serving the pretentious creations of Joop, a Dutch cook, at a beachfront mansion in Dunehampton, New York. Henry, aka Sydney Jarvis, goes undercover as a butler, trying to solve the suspicious hit-and-run death of octogenarian millionaire Lou Langley in this scathingly funny offering by crime writer Michael Kenyon.

With a stiff upper lip and an overdone accent, "Sydney" tries to sort through family relationships and find a motive. First, there's the widow, Millicent, a charming woman who has the final decision on what each of the two daughter's receives from the estate. Then, the daughters and their respective spouses, each with their own motives. And, not to be overlooked, especially not by the irate Langley clan, there's Timothy Thaite, fellow Englishman and ostracized historian, who stands to inherit the actual Dunehampton property.

Initially, Henry tries to work with the local police, especially since his being there was at the request of Gene Rosko, Chief Inspector of Dunehampton, but runs up against the usual resistence. When Henry finally asks for help from the Yard, it comes in the form of Detective Constable Jason Twitty, a trendy dresser and somewhat innovative cook. While Dunehampton prepares for Hurricane Doris, Henry and Jason head straight for disaster as they confront the murderer.

Filled with slapstick comic images and enough twists to keep you unsuspecting, Kenyon delivers an amusingly satisfying mystery. If you enjoy cultural and linguistic clashes and can feel great sympathy for misplaced, harassed Scotland Yard Inspectors, *Kill the Butler!* is well worth the read. This charmingly silly mystery, if one dares call a murder mystery charming, had me laughing out loud. If you're looking for a light-hearted, clever read, this is your book.

–Danielle Mowery

The Hanging Garden

by John Sherwood. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993. $20.00

The Portuguese island of Madeira is an idyllic spot, ideal for raising orchids–and a perfect place for murder.

A member of the island's expatriate community, Antonia Hanbury moved to Madeira several years ago to care for her father, Sir Adrian Morton, former deputy head of the British Secret Service. Sir Adrian suffered a debilitating stroke which left him an invalid. Although Antonia runs the household, the person who actually looks after her father is the reclusive and enigmatic Maria Silva, a young, attractive woman who oddly asks for no time off and who seldom ventures out by day.

Sir Adrian whiles away the long hours surrounded by his collection of rare orchids–hence the title, *The Hanging Garden*. This being a mystery novel, you might expect a death or two by hanging. But the end for Antonia comes by means other than a rope. She takes a tumble down the stairs and breaks her neck. Was it an accident? Or was it murder?

The person asking these questions is Celia Grant, Antonia's aunt by marriage.

Reluctantly, Celia tears herself away

from her thriving nursery garden business to fly to Madeira to serve as her niece's executor. Not least of the problems she faces is what to do with Sir Adrian now that there's no one to run the household. Worse still, Antonia left two school-age children, whose father–just released from prison–is demanding custody. The children, terrified of their father, want to live with Celia.

To make matters worse: Celia receives unwelcome sexual advances from an unsavory character who wants to buy the property, the mysterious Maria Silva disappears, Sir Adrian is badly beaten by thugs and the children are kidnapped.

Celia manages to sort out the whole mess, of course, and things end satisfactorily, though not without further murder and mayhem. The first two-thirds of the book are best; the ending seems somewhat contrived, like a jigsaw puzzle whose pieces all fit, but not very evenly. Even so, *The Hanging Garden* is a pleasant entry in this horticultural series.

–John F. Harvey

Growing Light
by Martha Conley. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. $18.95

Anne Munro just started a new job with a New Age horticultural computer firm. She has a boss named George Ashby who likes to meddle and play mindgames. On this first day, Ashby winds up murdered. The lazy sheriff and a belligerent co-worker want to prove that Anne murdered him. Anne, a widow with a young son and a mortgage to support, decides to tough it out and find out who really killed Ashby. Ashby had a talent for making people hate him. Anne, on the other hand, has a talent for making people like her.

The setting for Ms. Conley's first mystery is as much of a character as any of her human beings are. Although her Lake Harris County, set in Northern California, is fictional, her sense of place, space, and history is so well-formed and detailed that one never feels disoriented. Ms. Conley has also created her protagonist, Anne Munro, as an intelligent, independent woman who approaches her problems with practicality. And, although she is self-reliant, she attracts loyal friends and even the promise of romance in the person of Lt. Van Damme, one of the investigating officers.

Some of the plot details fall into place a bit too easily, and some of the supporting characters are drawn a bit too good and evil without enough shades of gray. However, Ms. Conley does not cop out on the motive for the murder. Martha Conley is a promising writer. I hope Anne Munro is a series character slated for return, and I hope some of the friends she made during this outing will join her.

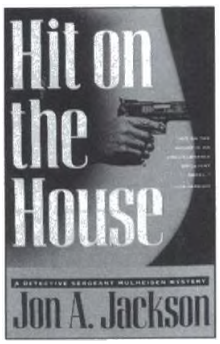
–Eva Schegulla

POLICE PROCEDURAL

Hit on the House
by Jon A. Jackson. New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993. $20.00

Detroit Police Sgt. *"Fang"* Mulheisen, linchpin of the best police series since the 87th Precinct started booking perps, returns in his finest appearance to date in *Hit on the House*.

One of Detroit's top mobsters is gunned down in his driveway, reportedly because his boss believed he had skimmed millions from drug deals. By luck, the cops unknowingly scoop up the contract killer with a group of other



potential suspects, but he escapes before anyone realizes who he is. Another suspect picked up in the same net, Eugene Lande, turns out to be married to Bonnie, an old flame of Mulheisen's from high school days. In renewing his old friendship with Bonnie, Mulheisen also becomes friendly with Lande, a seemingly semi-literate oaf who is a computer genius, is a partner with

mobsters in real estate ventures and also becomes an admirer of Mulheisen.

While Mulheisen tries to trace the contract killer, Hal Goode, using the information from the hitman's wallet left in his jail property envelope, mob boss Carmine, suspecting Hal was working with Big Sid and had taken the skimmed money, hires expert tracer Joe Service to find him.

Service, a character so strong he almost dominates the book, reminds Carmine that he will only find Hal, not kill him. "I'm not in the fatality line. I'm pro-life. But I will do it...when it seems necessary."

Service finds Hal through his answering service, and hops a train to Iowa–carrying his own wine, fish and Donald Westlake novel–to talk with him. However, Hal does not give him time for questions, and Service goes to Detroit to collect his fee from Carmine without any leads on where the skimmed cash may be.

While Mulheisen is also closing in on Hal, two more drug kingpins are mowed down, literally, by sprays of lead from automatic weapons triggered again by one man. Mulheisen knows he's not looking for two killers, because the hitman who used a .22 pistol and finished off his victims with shots in the eyes would not use automatic weapons firing hundreds of rounds to mow down clusters of mobsters.

Mulheisen begins to suspect Locke is doing more than real estate business with the mobsters, and may be laundering the skimmed drug money. Service, after collecting his fee from a surprised Carmine in one of the book's best scenes, hooks up with the assassinated Big Sid's daughter, Helen, who wants revenge from Carmine for her father's death.

The conclusion is an explosion of violence in which Carmine finds out the female is indeed the deadlier of the species. Service proves what a top-flight finder he is, and Mulheisen learns how Locke has done him favors which give the book its title. The book's conclusion is not an ending, but the beginning of the next confrontation of Mulheisen and Service.

Hit on the House surely is one of the best of the year, a novel with textures and dimensions that take it out of the thriller category and into the mainstream of American fiction. Don't miss this one.

–John E. Heaney

Pel and the Promised Land
by Mark Hebden. New York:
St. Martin's Press, 1993. $17.95

When Mark Hebden (John Harris) died in 1991 at 75, his literary legacy was a 15-novel series featuring Burgundy's Chief Inspector Everiste Clovis Desire Pel. His fans will be pleased to note that two additional Pel novels are being published posthumously, this being the first. The Pel series has an innate ironic humor to it; the British author has used a French police force to poke fun, to some extent, at the French, but even more so at the British. Harris/Hebden, by the way, published some 70 novels, also using the name Max Hennessy.

Pel and many of his local Burgundians are not only Franco-Philes protecting their *"promised land,"* but maintaining an Anglophobic prejudice. In this installment, the anti-British bias exists for good reason, as the French seem to stand helplessly by while wealthy Brits (and Dutch) come in with their carpetbags full and start buying up their land. It is criminal, though, when the invaders start setting fires in potential resort areas to bring down the value of the land. It is a scandal, as well, when greedy French builders are in on the conspiracy.

While Pel and his assistants are pursuing various arson outbreaks in Burgundy, they also have a murder to cope with–the body of a local Welsh-born baroness is found. The murder seems unrelated at first, but the baroness' plans for her aged husband's estate provides a link that Pel and company pursue to the story's scandalous conclusion.

Hebden had a nice sense of humor, and the story's procedural aspects are ably handled, but the 220-page story seems longer as a seemingly endless supply of local suspects are paraded out for the murder. One suspects that it takes more than one episode to become a Pel enthusiast.

–Douglas G. Simpson

Mirage
by J. Robert Janes. New York:
Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1992. $20.00

For this novel, we move back to Paris in 1942, occupied Paris where the Gestapo rules and the Surete is watched closely. There we meet two detectives, Louis and Hermann, French and German, who form a team in the German occupation. This is a densely written drama in which the reader's attention is held closely as detail is added to detail, climax added to climax, until we reach the bittersweet ending.

Jean-Louis St-Cyr, a Chief Inspector of the Surete Nationale is quiet, sophisticated, and deliberate, a wine connoisseur, and a diplomatic police officer. Louis is well-meaning but is also a wimp. He presents a contrast to his partner, Hermann Kohler, Gestapo Captain, who is brave, aggressive, bombastic, and undiplomatic, but who is also a strong supporter of St-Cyr and of fair play. Both men are in their fifties, and both men seek the truth about

the two crimes which they investigate. Janes emphasizes the shortages and deprivations of 1942 Paris life, as well as the inter-group jealousy and back-biting in German military life there.

Minor characters are numerous, but the more important ones include Marianne, Louis' wife, a sexpot with a good figure who lives currently with a young German Army officer; Gabrielle Arcuri, a beautiful night club chanteuse whose maid, Yvette, is one of the victims; and Countess Jeanne-Marie Theriault, heir of the Domaine Theriault, a strong and capable woman. There are assorted Nazi generals on view also, but the one we see most often is Hans Ackermann, an SS General well known for his military exploits under General Rommel in North Africa.

The plot is so complex and intricate that it is hard to summarize. Essentially, we follow Louis in his attempts to gather evidence related to the killings of Yvette and Jerome Noel, young brother and sister. They were murdered in about the same place in Fontainebleau Forest, but at different times. Sometimes Louis is accompanied by Hermann and sometimes Hermann is occupied elsewhere with other parts of the same investigation. Many false leads send us off in different directions.

The investigation takes Louis and Hermann to a variety of places. We can mention first a third rate Paris night club, The Mirage, where we meet Gabrielle and Yvette in their dressing room as well as General Ackermann in the audience. Louis goes by himself to a perfume shop to meet Chantal Grenier, still attractive at 70 and helpful in identifying the scent used in the woman's purse found near Jerome's body. He also visits the Solon Chez Nadean on the Rue de la Paix and talks with handsome Julian to try to identify a dress fabric.

There is the matter of the diary kept by one of the deceased–exactly to whom and to what does it refer? The the matter of the attractive young woman out after curfew and therefore in danger who discovers her broken shoe and Louis' nearby presence at about the same time. A visit is paid also to the Abbey of St. Gregory the Great, a monastery near the Chateau Theirault. There they find the Abbot, Brothers Sebastian and Michael, who are subject to the monastery's vow of silence on certain days. Later, we view the two young corpses and hear Hermann's banter with the caretaker. And late in the novel, we come to a long scene taken up with the funeral for Yvette and Jerome and the surprising things which Louis and Hermann learn there.

What are the strong and weak points of this thriller? Apparently, novelist Janes has a thorough understanding of Paris life during the occupation. He is also skillful in developing scenes and keeping the reader at least partially informed about progress toward a solution. Janes' portrait of Louis is quite detailed and we learn to respect the Chief Inspector's ability and understanding. A complex, even intricate picture is presented. Since they are not necessarily labelled, the reader must pay close attention in order to catch the points at which the plot moves forward.

The author draws sharp and distinctive portraits of several minor characters, also, such as Chantel and Brother Sebastian. His best quality is his ability to hold the reader's interest closely while also giving varied slices of wartime Paris life, especially those involving the seamy side of the city.

In conclusion, *Mirage* is well and carefully written, interesting and has several fascinating major and minor characters. This must be one of the most absorbing police procedurals recently published and can be strongly recommended to any reader.

–John F. Harvey

No Mardi Gras for the Dead
by D. J. Donaldson. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. $17.95

There's nothing like a forensic dig to start off a good mystery. No telling what nefarious secrets the anthropologists' tool will unearth.

In *No Mardi Gras for the Dead*, the skeleton of a young woman is discovered buried in Dr. Kit Franklyn's backyard. Though kit is a suicide investigator for the New Orleans Medical Examiner's Office, this is obviously not a case of self-murder and she has no official capacity in the investigation. Even so, she feels a proprietary interest–the remains were found on her property. And, a computer reconstruction of what the woman looked like in life arouses feelings of guilt in Kit, who once, long ago, failed to help a desperate friend who resembled the dead woman.

Examination of the bones suggests that the victim was strangled. Other

evidence–a tree root, a tube of toothpaste–indicates a time of death nearly thirty years ago. Since a murder this old is nearly impossible to solve, the police give it a low priority and do not object when Kit announces her intention to begin her own investigation. She does so by having a local newspaper run a story about the murder together with a request to the public for help in identifying the victim.

The newspaper article succeeds–all too well. To be sure, an acquaintance comes forward and identifies the murdered woman as a prostitute who disappeared nearly three decades ago. But at the same time, the murderer is alerted. Not only do a series of new murders begin, but Kit also finds herself the target of the desperate killer.

No Mardi Gras for the Dead is the third novel in a series featuring Kit Franklyn and her boss, Medical Examiner Andy Broussard. Besides local color–the sights and sounds of old New Orleans–the book is interesting for its scientific details as well as its quirky characters. The plot moves along quickly to an exciting, if somewhat improbably, conclusion. But then, real life is becoming more improbable each day and the best mysteries–such as this one–merely reflect that fact.

–Edward Lodi

SPY

Angle of Attack
by Robin A. White. New York:
Fawcett, 1993. $5.99

Here's the techno: The Soviets, on the eve of Operation Desert Storm, are perfecting an unimagined, incredibly destructive weapon.

Here's the thriller: American scientist and pilot Wyn Gallagher, who has worked on a top secret project to develop a bomb sight, is unceremoniously and unwilling reassigned.

An avid air competition flyer, and owner of a recently crashed Pitts racer, he accepts this offer: he'll go to Russia with a hefty bank check in hand to buy a new, ultra capable Sukhoi acrobatic airplane–an airplane that outshines any other in the world.

He gets to keep the plane, if he'll do just a little favor: help squirrel his Soviet counterpart Elena Pasvalys out of the country.

Once it leaves the landing strip, Robin A. White's *Angle of Attack* soars in non-stop flight. It's more a romance backed against an espionage tale than an outright techno-thriller. A Soviet-Iraqi angle gives it currency.

White is particularly facile in describing airborne sequences, but his earthen interludes aren't bad either.

–Bernard A. Drew

Deathright
by *Dev Stryker.* New York:
Tor, 1993. $21.95

Amelia Pierce's father raised her to be an independent thinker and an environmental survivalist. Only after he is murdered does she learn that he was far more than a reporter for Hyatt News Service. He was a spy. And he died with deadly information in hand.

Amelia kills her father's killer, but she's still very much a wanted woman. Davis Hyatt, who operates the most clandestine of international espionage organizations, suspects she is a double agent. Whoever killed her father thinks she knows what he knew.

The cold war-style novel is far from dead in the capable hands of Dev Stryker in "his" initial outing, *Deathright.* The deadly secret is a scientifically engineered strain of bubonic plague–not too far-fetched considering that this reviewer read the book in the same week *Newsweek* described secret Soviet germ warfare.

Amelia is a welcome, strong heroine, making mostly correct decisions as the garotte closes around her neck. The trouble is, what are the right decisions? Who do you believe? Is Hyatt legit? Is the agent Burt Sergeant on her side? And who is the unknown, unseen, vicious killer who continues to stalk her?

(Here's a suggested solution to one other mystery of this book: who is Dev Stryker? A jacket blurb identifies the writer as two best-selling writers who live in Bethlehem, PA. The book is copyright M.C.Murphy. Could anyone but Bethlehem, PA writers Warren Murphy and Molly Cochran have written it?)

–Bernard A. Drew

PRIVATE EYE

Eight Million Ways To Die
by Lawrence Block. New York:
Avon, 1993. $4.50

The theme of gritty city violence has a sometimes over-riding counterpoint in this novel: the sheer monotony and sly mind games which characterize an alcoholic's struggle to stay sober in surroundings where "gin joints" are across every street and around every corner.

Fighting the bottle is Matthew Scudder, Block's ex-policeman turned unregistered private eye ("Anything I do is very unofficial.") He has other battles, too; he owes rent, child-support, and the hospital bill for his latest drying-out session.

Against his better judgement, therefore, he takes an assignment from a hooker who claims to need an intermediary to convince her pimp to let her "get out of the life."

Naturally, succeeding violent events, including two particularly grisly mur-

ders, prove that Scudder's better judgement was, indeed, very sound.

Block's strengths include a descriptive style which captures big city corruption and cruelty so vividly that the reader truly understands Scudder's struggle not to succumb to an alcohol-induced state of numbed hopelessness.

He also excels in creating interesting, quirky male characters. These include Chance, a highly untypical pimp (his true passion is collecting authentic African tribal art); and Danny Boy Bell, a black albino, whose business is infor-

"Everything you told him got filed away in his mind, and by putting bits of data together and moving them around, he brought in enough dollars to keep his shoes shined and his glass full."

Scudder himself is far from being the off-the-rack private eye who's become cold, cynical and bitter. He's not lost the ability to feel, whether it be guilt or empathy; and he's even a compulsive tither, contributing to various church coffers even when his finances are at their worst.

Block is less successful at creating convincing female characters. His hookers, for instance, are mostly literary cliches, such as the beautiful milk maid from the Midwest; the doper; and the exotic Oriental. The latter, as described, might be a fugitive from an old adventure comic: "...her figure was lithe and willowy. She showed it off in a black sheath dress with a skirt slit to show a flash of thigh when she walked."

The book's title, by the way, paraphrases part of the epilogue tacked to each episode of the old TV series *Naked City*.

"There are eight million stories in the naked city," the tag-line went. Today, adjusted for population growth and greatly increased crime, I wonder just how many more millions of stories there are.

–Norma J. Shattuck

Copy Kat
by Karen Kijewski. New York: Doubleday, 1992. $18.50

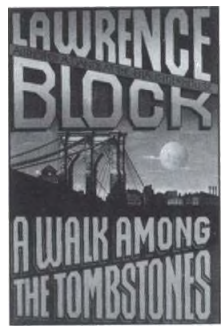
An old man in a wheelchair asks Private Eye Kat Colorado to solve the murder of his twenty-nine-year-old godchild. Deidre Durkin was shot in the chest at two-thirty in the morning as she crossed the parking lot of the restaurant where she tended bar. The old man wants her killer caught and brought to justice.

Kat is reluctant to take on the job. It's not the kind of work she normally does. But she feels sorry for the old man. And she has another reason for accepting the assignment: to escape the nightmares that haunt her sleep. She has been troubled by a homicide she committed in self-defense. Perhaps if she loses herself in work, she can regain her peace of mind.

And so she goes undercover, as bartender in the restaurant where Deidre worked. Her boss, Matt Durkin, was Deidre's husband. Kat is attracted to him and to his three-year-old son Toby. But is Matt the killer she is seeking? Other suspects include the murdered woman's brother-in-law, her sister Chivogny, a new-age flake named Luna, and any one of several regulars at the bar.

Soon an attempt is made on Toby's life. Someone pushes the little boy off a cliff. And someone tries to kill Kat. Fortunately, Kat Colorado is no wimp. Not only does she rescue Toby and escape unscathed when *she* is the intended victim, but on two other occasions she disarms and overcomes male attackers much larger and stronger than she.

The novel is presented in the first person, with Kat as narrator, and therein lies a problem. Though she is intelligent, resourceful and worthy of our respect, she has one trait which may put some readers off: verbosity. When she gets an idea, she talks it to death. A typical (though brief) example: referring to his not having an updated will, Matt says,"Let's hope that doesn't become an issue." Kat's unspoken comment: "Let's hope indeed. Cross our fingers. Pray. Anything, everything." The comment is unnecessary, certainly everything after *indeed* could have been cut. She some-



times goes on like that for sentences, even paragraphs. As a reader, you want to scream, "Enough!"

Despite its wordiness, *Copy Kat* maintains a high level of suspense and holds our interest. If author Karen Kijewski would only adopt the precept that less is more, she'd improve an already first rate series.

–Edward Lodi

A Walk Among the Tombstones
by Lawrence Block. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1992. $17.00

His stories aren't very pretty, but they are extremely engrossing and seem to keep getting better and better. Edgar award-winning novelist Lawrence Block (for *A Dance at the Slaughterhouse*) has provided another glimpse of New York City's dark side as Matt Scudder hunts for the perpetrators of the gruesome crime of not only raping a woman but returning her body to her

husband in wrapped pieces, like so much locker beef.

Assuming that this was not an isolated act of violence, Scudder digs and queries until he discovers similar crimes that provide further leads to the identity of the brutal butchers. Using the street smarts of his black teenage friend TJ and the talents of a pair of computer hackers that get him into the recesses of the phone company, Scudder is eventually able to zero in on his quarry. When the killers seize a teenage girl and expect their usual ransom, Scudder intercedes to deal with them himself. He puts his life on the line in an eerie cemetery showdown. Can he save the girl's life? Will he keep them from cutting off parts of her body?

One of the things that makes mystery writing stand out with greater depth and intensity than other genres is the utilization of ongoing series characters. Block continues to breathe new life into not only Scudder, the ex-cop and reformed alcoholic; but his lady friend Elaine, a classy call girl; the entertaining TJ, and other characters he interacts with. This novel provides more than a resolution to the offensive crimes in question; it also makes us look at TJ a little more seriously and enables us to see the beauty in developing man-woman relationships. The crimes involved may be difficult to stomach, but the writing is first rate and satisfying.

–Doug Simpson

Birth Marks

by Sarah Dunant, New York: Doubleday, 1992. $17.00

British private investigator Hannah Wolfe is hired to find missing ballet dancer Carolyn Hamilton. Before she can locate her, Hamilton is found drowned in the Thames River eight months pregnant, an apparent suicide. Unsatisfied and more curious than the police, Wolfe pursues the truth by filling in the past year of the young woman's life, a search that leads her to Paris and contact with the family of an aging, wealthy owner of a successful airline.

The issue becomes not just how and why Hamilton died, but how and why she was pregnant in the first place. The powerful Frenchman, unable to conceive with his young wife, had hired Hamilton to be a surrogate mother of *his* child. Searching for the truth of Hamilton's demise, Wolfe hears several possible versions before piecing together the reality of what had happened.

Surrogacy is certainly a topic of interest here, but not to the extent that it might have been. More subtlely woven through the novel is the broader question of motherhood and a woman's readiness for that life-altering role. Hannah-a thirtyish and attractive but single heroine-is contrasted with her married sister Kate, always the model female to the younger Hannah. Both are appealing characters, and their relationship is a special feature of the story. As Hannah views the ups and downs of her sister's marriage and motherhood, she wonders what Carolyn Hamilton was experiencing, and mulls her own feelings of the possible roles her sex has made possible for her.

This is the second novel for Sarah Dunant, hostess of a BBC cultural affairs program, but the first featuring Hannah Wolfe. Her book is heavy on psychology, light on violence, and very engrossing in its exploration of feminine psyches.

–Doug Simpson

Desert Sinner

by Ralph McInerny. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. $16.95

Desert Sinner is the fifteenth Father Dowling mystery novel (earlier efforts ran on television as *The Father Dowling Mysteries*), and this one has both the strengths and the weaknesses of a long-running series. Those familiar with the series will find the priest's presence nicely understated yet critical to the plot's denouement; newcomers may wonder at the lack of emphasis on a single protagonist.

Central to the narrative is the murder of wealthy Marvin Wilson, the subsequent conviction of his third wife, Stacey, a former Las Vegas showgirl, and the efforts of Stacey's son-by-a-previous-marriage, Tyrone, to gain access to Wilson's inheritance. Tyrone seduces Elaine McKorkle, an unattractive assistant to chief of detectives Phil Keegan, so she will help him establish his claim and find a way to get a hold of money that Stacey has secretly stashed in a Swiss bank account. Some of the most touching scenes involve Elaine's hopes and disappointments and the efforts of Dowling's housekeeper, Marie, to help her cope.

The gradual, if sometimes confusing, revelation of Stacey's past (and its relevance to the present) keeps the story on track. Amos Cadbury, an old-fashioned good-guy lawyer, and his detective play interesting and crucial minor roles in uncovering Stacey's secret, and Edith Hospers' bittersweet appearance as caretaker of a senior center at the former parish school adds to the charitable feel of the narrative. But the strongpoint of the novel is its quiet awareness of human susceptibility to temptation and strength in the face of adversity.

The ending is rather too obvious, in spite of all the red herrings thrown in the reader's path. But I won't complain. This is a congenial book, a fast read, and bound to be another hit with the fans of the good father.

–John Benson

Rich Kids

by Robert Westbrook. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1992. $18.95

If *Rich Kids* is, as the liner notes claim, "A distillation of (Westbrook's) own adventures growing up," Hollywood is indeed an "absurd and astonishing place." The author, son of Hollywood gossip columnist Sheilah Graham, displays a masterful touch throughout this fascinating and bizarre murder mystery, up until a slightly forced climax.

The opening scene sets the tone. In rapid succession, we meet Jonno Sangor, currently a restaurant pianist, his klutzy health-nut waitress girlfriend Kismet,

and a customer who turns out (after a skillful transition) to be a lesbian cop, Myra Fisher. The latter has come to question Jonno about the murder of his father, movie mogul Alexander Sangor, whose body had been burned after he was bludgeoned to death. Whew!

Jonno, who at age sixteen happened to have burned down his boarding school, returns to Hollywood and renews his acquaintance with his five siblings, his most recent stepmother, and the butler, Albert. Each sibling is introduced with subtlety, and they're quite a group: a TV star (Opera, 15); a conformist (David, 37), who runs the father's studio; a socialist (Carl, 38), who operates a homeless shelter; an AIDS sufferer (Ragnar or Rags, 45); and most fascinating of all, Zoe (37), just returned from a Tibetan lamasery.

What makes *Rich Kids* unique is the seventy-two page detour into the past that explains exactly how this family got to be the way it is, and manages to make everyone a convincing suspect. Written with a sense of humor and matter-of-factness that belies its truly kinky nature, this section is chockful of pithy self-effacing character notes (Jonno refers to himself in his pre-Zoe days as a "fart-and-booger man" and he describes a long scatological tirade as belonging to his "Chaucerian period of English usage"). By the time we return to the present, we know these folks are not only strange, but dangerous.

The keys to the plot are Jonno's love affair (longingly, convincingly and sometimes graphically depicted) with his half-sister Zoe, the five kids' love-hate relationship with their father, the father's will, and the rather too-literally incendiary nature of their family's history. You won't soon forget Jonno and Zoe on the pool table at brother David's house during a memorial to their father. And you'll never see homosexuality described from so many angles, positive and negative, in a mystery.

The only weakness in this otherwise wildly imaginative mystery is the climax, which seems forced and a bit impossible. But even that weakness is saved by the distinctly offbeat epilogue.

This one is lots of often disturbing fun.

–John Benson

A Still and Icy Silence

by Ronald Clair Roat. Brownsville: Three Oaks Farm or Story Line Press, 1993. $21.95

The hard-boiled detective has become a modern mystery fiction cliche. He is a "knight without armour" walking down Raymond Chandler's mean streets, intent on acheiving justice in an unjust world, protecting his client and following his own code of ethics. The recent hard-boiled dick, probably starting with Robert B. Parker's Spenser, is no longer a loner but has a girlfriend who is a mature professional woman with whom he shares a monogamous relationship while not being married or living together, and friends or fellow detectives whom he can call on for help when needed. This being said, the hard-boiled detective story is still highly enjoyable, and if this is your cup of tea (or in this context we might better say your poison), rush out and get a copy of Ronald Clair Roat's *A Still and Icy Silence*, his second novel featuring Lansing, Michigan private investigator Stuart Mallory, for it is among the best of the hard-boiled school that I have ever read.

At the beginning of the book, set during a typical Lansing below zero December, Mallory is packing up his things and closing out his office, planning to go out of the detective business in order to work full-time for the state planning commission. Through a raging blizzard, Sandra Goodman enters Mallory's office wanting to hire him. Mallory knew her father, Danny Goodman, who was a known but unconvicted arsonist. Goodman has just burned to death in his bed. Sandra had only recently gotten to know her father, who was dying of cancer. She is convinced that her father was murdered and wants Mallory to get the person who robbed her of whatever relationship she could have had with her father. Mallory reluctantly agrees to look into the matter.

Along with his girlfriend, lawyer Patty Bonicelli, Mallory examines the burnt-out building where Goodman lived and died. Though the police think Goodman fell asleep while smoking in bed, Mallory discovers that the mattress is not badly burnt. He also finds Goodman's pants, unburnt, with car keys in them. Later Mallory finds the car the keys belong to and finds a gun in it. He and Patty also speak to the woman next door, Terri Krug, who says that Goodman had a visitor the night of the fire.

The next day, the police call Mallory in to identify Terri Krug's body. She had been found frozen to death in a snowdrift. Later, the autopsies show that both Danny Goodman and Terri Krug were full of the same pain killer which would have made them senseless to pain or anything else. Mallory, feeling that if he hadn't spoken to Terri she'd still be alive, now wants to get the killer for himself.

When the police want Goodman's pants, Mallory finds that his car has been broken into and the pants taken. Later, a fire bomb is set off in Mallory's car, from which he narrowly escapes injury, and he is beaten and left for dead to warn him off the case. All of this only increases Mallory's determination, since the case has now become personal, and increases his feeling that

all this has to do with a new mall, supposed to revitalize Lansing, which is being built in downtown Lansing but is in financial trouble.

By the end of the novel, all the mysteries have been solved, and Mallory has decided to continue in business as a private investigator. To this last, the reader can only breathe a sigh of relief, for Mallory is more than welcome addition to the roster of fictional private eyes. While meeting all the standards there are some nice differences. Mallory's girlfriend Patty sometimes accompanies him on his interviews, giving him advice when they are alone together. Also, Mallory works along with the police, on his part for his own benefit and their help, on their part because of the lack of manpower due to budget cuts.

Ronald Clair Roat's writing is excellent. The story flows along seamlessly, with the characterizations well drawn and the Lansing, Michigan descriptions so well done you can feel the below zero winds that blow through the book.

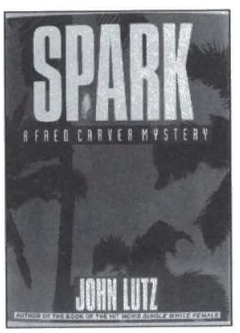
Once again, If you're a fan of the hard-boiled private detective, grab this at once. Though I haven't read it yet, I am sure tha Stuart Mallory's first adventure, *Close Softly the Doors*, will be just as good, and I eagerly await not only reading the earlier work, but any future adventures of Stuart Mallory that Mr. Roat will hopefully give us soon and often.

–Martin Friedenthal

Dark of the Night
by Richard Nehrbass. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992. $20.00

As a rule, Vic Eton doesn't do runaways. In the case of fourteen-year-old Laurie Gordon, however, he's willing to make an exception. Daughter of big-time Hollywood producer Mackenzie Gordon, Laurie is–in the words of her father"–cute as a bug, brown hair, big brown eyes, and a smile you'd kill for." She's also mentally retarded, with the mind of a five-year-old.

Vic has a daughter about Lauries's age. He's all too mindful of the horrors that can befall a young girl on the mean streets of Los Angeles. Besides, there's the matter of a large envelope containing pre-production material for Gordon's latest film. The envelope disappeared along with Laurie. Gordon is willing to pay fifty thousand dollars for



its return. The fact that Gordon seems more concerned about the missing envelope than about his missing daughter makes Vic all the more determined to find the handicapped child.

To help in the search, he hires Eddy Baskerville, a 270-pound unemployed actor who can eat his way through any situation and who provides the novel's comic relief. Together they comb the streets handing out photographs and roughing up toughs to obtain the information they require. In the meantime, Laurie's father comes to a bloody end. And a missing video of his sexual exploits with various and sundry partners–including several Hollywood starlets–replaces the girl as chief Macguffin.

The behind-the-scenes picture of Hollywood presented here is not a pretty one. It's a world of sleaze, sex and violence, of lust, power and betrayal. All of which–in the sure hands of author Richard Nehrbass–provides excellent background for a private eye in the classic mode.

–Edward Lodi

Spark
by John Lutz. New York: Henry Holt, 1993. $19.95

John Lutz has gained some notoriety even outside mystery circles as the author of *SWF Seeks Same*, which was the basis for the recent hit movie, *Single White Female* starring Bridget Fonda. However, he is also the writer of many other mysteries, including seven which feature disabled Florida P.I. Fred Carver.

The latest in the series is Spark in which Carver agrees to investigate the supposed heart attack death of Jerome Evans, a 70-year-old man who had been living in Solartown, a self-contained retirement community complete with golf courses, various other recreation facilities and a medical center. All indications, including the hospital records, are that Jerome's death was natural. All except, that is, the anonymous notes to the widow warning that her husband had been murdered. When Jerome's death is closely followed by the death of a woman he was having an affair with, Carver starts thinking that this may be too much of a coincidence. Then, there's the matter of the high death rate in Solartown when compared to other retirement communities. Carver's ex-mob, now journalist, girlfriend, Beth, also arrives in town to help Carver out.

Lutz puts out a competent product, although his work tends to be a bit on the formulaic side. There's some unnecessary violence, including torture by fingernail extraction and excessive

beatings, which seem to be in vogue these days. The story is very readable and moves along rather well, although there's some lapses, especially when Beth appears. Every time we see Beth, which is too often, she's in various states of undress, and you can count on a sex scene. Her contribution is rather contrived, and it's clear what her primary function in the story is. The only crucial thing that the story could use is some sort of feeling or passion which would incite the reader to care more about the mystery and the various goings-on.

–Lorrie K. Inagaki

The Cutting Room

by Robert Rosenberg. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993. $20.00

Avram Cohen, retired head of the Jerusalem District Criminal Investigation Department, finds himself flying first-class to Los Angeles to visit his oldest friend, Max Broder, who has just filmed the movie closest to his heart, *The Survivor's Secrets*, a film about his, and Avram's, experience as a survivor of the Nazi death camps. On his arrival in L.A., Avram finds Max dead, apparently a suicide, a survivor who did not survive after all. However, the detective in Avram will not let him accept the rather hasty verdict of the local police, a conclusion which is compromised by the fact that Max's film has disappeared.

The novel traces Cohen's investigation of his friend's death and his search for the missing film, which takes him from the executive suites of the movie colony to the rather tarnished underside of tinsel town. Along the route, the story is enlivened by a cast of characters worthy of a Hollywood novel: the dying movie queen, who lives in the mansion next door, heard strange sounds on the night of Max's death; Goldie Stein, "the tinseltown tattletale," dies digging for an exclusive on Max's death; the beautiful and young East German actress who has been living in Max's house disappears' an old camp survivor is shot by a high-powered rifle from a passing boat down by the docks where he lives as a street person; and Cohen is practically run down by a van load of neo-Nazi skinheads. And to top it all, Avram has to contend with a testy L.A. cop who is trying to protect himself so that he can retire with a pension. In this world of California loonies, it takes all of Avram's instincts to survive.

All the while, he has problems of his own. He pines for his unresolved love with Ahuva Meyerson, who is back in Israel; and while he delves deeper into the life of Max Bruder, Avram uncovers more of his own past, a past he would just as soon leave buried. Haunted by dreams of the camps and the retribution he exacted afterwards, Cohen stumbles through his search, sipping a little cognac here and there to keep going, catching some sleep to remain alert and a shower to stay presentable.

The Cutting Room is Robert Rosenberg's second Avram Cohen mystery, following *Crimes of the City* (1991) which was set in Israel and introduced Cohen and his world. Rosenberg proves himself as comfortable in Hollywood as he does in Jerusalem and *The Cutting Room* is both a mystery and a "Hollywood"novel with a little bit of *What Makes Sammy Run*, a morsel of *Day of the Locusts,* some of *The Last Tycoon* running through the story. Avram is a likable detective, even if a bit prickly at times, and his worries and guilt give him a frailty that makes him a believable character. Rosenberg's writing is crisp and direct and moves the story along without leaving the reader breathless. The Avram Cohen series is off to a fine start; it will be interesting to see where it goes next.

–Charles L.P. Silet

Seven Kinds of Death

by Kate Wilhelm. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. $18.95

A sleuthing duo, a sculptress with a good figure, a condominium hanging, an artist colony, an electrical storm, a crating expert, and a detective who drinks Greek retsina wine are featured in this new novel. We meet many intriguing persons from the art world but have difficulty in identifying the murderer of a New York City woman editor.

An art colony in Maryland is the venue and a middle-aged sculptress is the heroine. In a subplot, the book also enables us to follow the work of a talented young sculptress who finds her talent only after some difficulty; her teacher says that Toni has skilled hands but has not yet developed skilled eyes.

Kate Wilhelm, an award-winning science-fiction writer, has turned to the mystery genre in the last decade and now gives us a new title starring the detective duo of married lovers, Constance Leidl and Charlie Meikeljohn. They first appeared in a short story in 1981.

All of this novel's leading characters, except Constance and Charlie, are connected to the art and sculpture world. The action centers in a large farmhouse in rural Maryland which serves as the headquarters for a small art school. A large and coarse sculptress with dirty feet named Marion (Tootles) Olson Buell presides over this menage of young students.

The Plot. A party is planned to celebrate the beginning of a 15 gallery tour for a collection of Tootle's best sculpture. Most of the novel's leading characters are invited to attend it and do so. This includes Victoria Leeds, a magazine editor, who wrangles a late invitation to accompany Paul there because she wants to interview David Musselman about an exposé article which he has written for publication. When her death is discovered, the party group asks Constance and Charlie to investigate.

We follow their investigation closely. The book's plot is conventional in enabling the reader to follow the two private eyes around as they collect evidence and consider it. They interview a couple of rich young women in the nearby District of Columbia, talk to several editors in New York City, investigate the condo thoroughly, experience a thunder and lightening storm, and learn the life of each character and where he/she was during the crucial afternoon hours of the murder. Near the end of the investigation, Constance carries out a séance. Much of the attention centers around the vulgar but perceptive sculptress Tootles, who is thought by

everyone but Constance and Charlie to the the chief suspect.

Meanwhile, the close relationship of Constance and Charlie is one of the book's highlights. The novel starts slowly but builds in interest level until the concluding chapter. The strength of the book is primarily in its concluding chapters, which hold the reader closely as they involve a motor car chase of the murderer and end in the condo where the crime is reenacted and the murderer revealed. In the end, also, Toni learns to see. Finally, we must conclude that Constance and Charlie are the most fascinating and fully fleshed out characters in the book. All readers will look forward to the next novel about this unusual and affectionate pair.

–John F. Harvey

Point of Impact
by Stephen Hunter. New York: Bantam Books, 1993. $21.95

Stephen Hunter has in Bob Lee Swagger the epitome of the master sniper. Bob Lee is fearless, solitary, and a Vietnam war hero who earned his reputation through being known as Bob the Nailer for his eighty-seven Vietnam kills. Now, twenty years later, all he really wants to do is stay home in his beloved Arkansas mountains, hunt, and take care of his dogs.

Bob Lee's Vietnam reputation leads to his being selected by RamDyne Security, an organization with ties to military intelligence and porbably to the CIA, to perform one last job for his country. Bob Lee performs too well in that he is not killed as RamDyne had planned and also in that he realizes that he was set up. Now he must avoid RamDyne Security's killers and virtually all the law enforcement agencies in the United States in order to prove that he is not a cold-blooded assassin.

Stephen Hunter is well know for his attention to detail and for his vast knowledge of military weaponery and political information and, once again, proves it in *Point of Impact*. The readers is treated not only to hair-raising suspense but to a wealth of detailed information about the world in which Bob Lee finds himself. Bob Lee must unravel political intrigue from the Vietnam War in order to prove his innocence as well as prove himself a knowledgeable and accurate marksman in order to perform the job required of him by RamDyne. Hunter's knowledge is certainly up to the requirements of creating a well-crafted tale, rich in description and information.

The reader of this excellent novel will find ample satisfaction in the tale of Bob Lee Swagger and the only ally he can find, Nick Memphis, a down-and-out FBI agent who believes in Bob Lee's innocence. Their tale takes them from the hills of Arkansas to New Orleans, from Washington, D.C. to Maryland and ends with an absolutely riveting courtroom drama which will leave the reader on the edge of the chair. This is the novel to read if you are looking for a top-notch emotional experience.

–Christine E. Thompson

THRILLER

Cruel and Unusual
by Patricia D. Cornwall. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. $21.00

Dr. Kay Scarpetta performs an autopsy on Ronnie Joe Waddell, a convicted murderer executed by electric chair. The same night, a young boy is murdered and left in the same position as Waddell left his victim, ten years earlier. Shortly thereafter, a psychic with a connection to Ronnie Joe is murdered, and then, Scarpetta's assistant, Susan Story. Fingerprints from the sites lead back to the executed man.

To save her job and her reputation, Scarpetta enters a maze of scandal, intrigue, conspiracy, pay-offs, computer hacking, questionable identities and luminol. She is assisted by her teen-age niece, Lucy, her friends Lt. Marino and FBI agent Benton Wesley–and by one of her former professors, Nicholas Grueman, with whom she frequently locked horns in the past.

Although the references to the psychic's profession and possible connection to witchcraft are vague and not followed through, the book is a page-turner. Cornwall manages to build up the conspiracy against Kay as well, stopping short of an Oliver Stone-type of suffocation. Scarpetta's fight to retain her independence and integrity is beautifully handled. Also well drawn are her growing respect and understanding of both her niece's fight to retain her own independence and integrity, and for Grueman's belief in her capabilities and his way of forcing her to work to her top potential. Cornwall's clean, clear descriptions and crisp style can keep even the graphics of an autopsy from being queasily grotesque.

–Eva Schegulla

Miss Fitch doesn't
chafe in her fetters,
Though her stipend
depends on her betters;
In her governess trade,
She is handsomely paid–
By her blackmailing
poison-pen letters.

–Dixie Whitted

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Compiled by M.S. Cappadonna

Checklist of Mystery, Detective and Suspense Fiction Published in the United States.
October-December 1992

• Adams Round Table: *Missing in Manhattan*. Longmeadow, $17.95.
• Albert, Neil: *The February Trouble*. Walker, $18.95.
• Albert, Susan Wittig: *Thyme of Death*. Scribners, $19.00.
• Allen, Irene: *Quaker Silence*. Villard, $17.00.

• Andreae, Christine: *Trail of Murder*. St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Atherton, Nancy: *Aunt Dimity's Death*. Viking, $19.00.
• Baxt, George: *The Noel Coward Murder Case*. St. Martin's, $17.95
• Beaton, M.C.: *Agnes Raisin and the Quiche of Death*. St. Martin's, $17.95.
• Beck, K.K.: *The Body in the Cornflakes*. St. Martin's, $17.95.
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• Brett, Simon: *The Christmas Crimes at Puzzle Manor*. Delacorte, $15.00.
• Butler, Gwendoline: *Death Lives Next Door*. St. Martin's, $16.95.
• Cantrell, Lisa W.: *Boneman*. Tor, $17.95.
• Carter, Robert A.: *Casual Slaughter*. Mysterious, $17.95.
• Charles, Kate: *A Drink of Deadly Wine*. Mysterious, $17.95.
• Charnee, David: *To Kill a Clown*. St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Chastain, Thomas: *The Prosecutor*. Morrow, $20.00.
• Chin, Yien-lien C. and others: *The Stone Lion and Other Chinese Detective Stories*. East Gate, $24.95.
• Cohen, Martin Samuel: *The Truth About Martin Kalish*. Ben-Simon, 22.95, $13.50 pa.
• Conant, Susan: *Bloodlines*. Doubleday, $17.00.
• Cooper, Susan Rogers: *One, Two, What Did Daddy Do?* St. Martin's, $17.95.
• Cotler, Gordon: *Shooting Script*. Morrow, $20.00.
• Coughlin, William J.: *Death Penalty*. HarperCollins, $20.00.
• Cox, Michael, ed.: *Victorian Tales of Mystery and Detection*. Oxford, $25.00.
• Crider, Bill: *Booked for a Hanging*. Thomas Dunne/St. Martin's, $18.95
• Dalby, Richard, ed.: *Crimes for Christmas*. St. Martin's, $18.95.
• Dentinger, Jane: *Dead Pan*. Viking, $18.00.
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• Friedman, Philip: *Inadmissible Evidence*. D.I. Fine, $23.00.
• Geller, Michael: *Three Strikes, You're Dead*. St. Martin's, $17.95.
• Gibbs, Tony: *Landfall*. Morrow, $20.00.
• Glass, Leslie: *To Do No Harm*. Doubleday, $17.00.
• Glen, Allison: *Showcase*. Simon & Schuster, $19.00.
• Goldsborough, Robert: *Silver Spire*. Bantam, $19.50.
• Gores, Joe: *32 Cadillacs*. Mysterious Press, $18.95.
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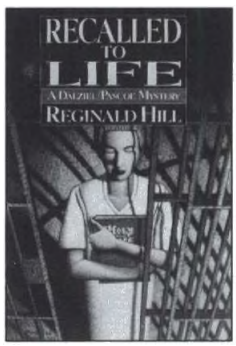
• Haining, Peter, ed.: *Murder on the*



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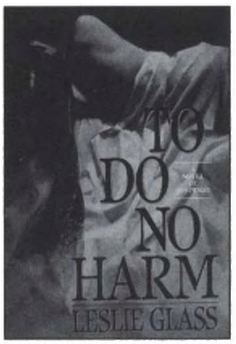

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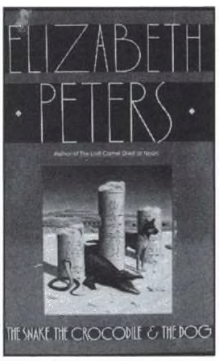

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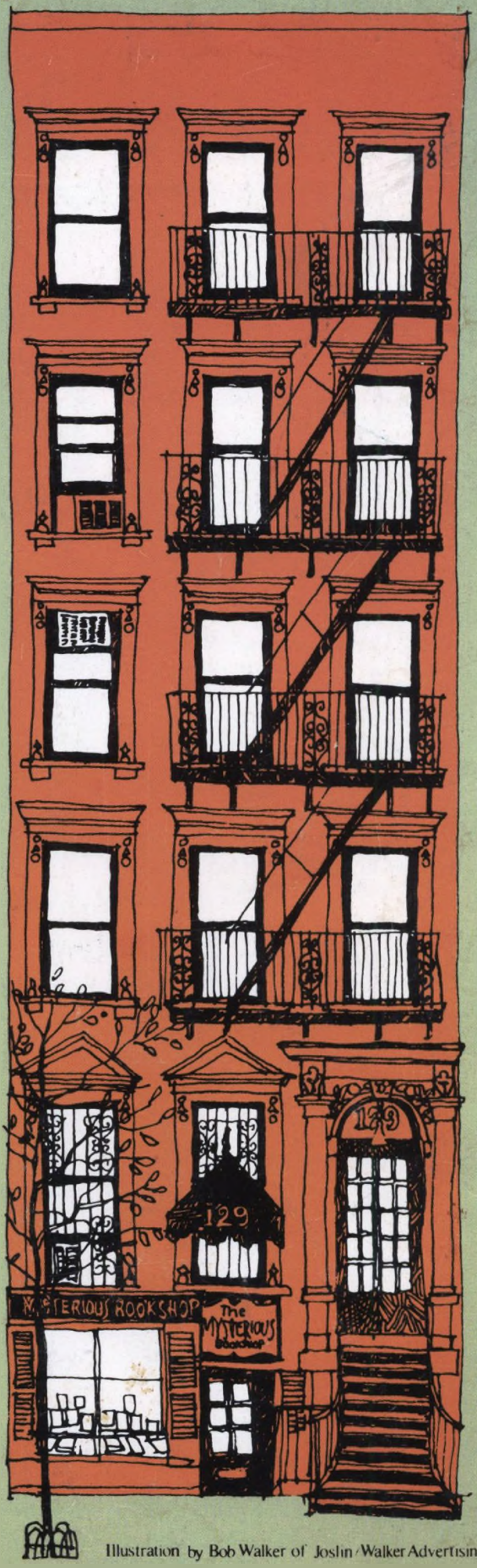

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