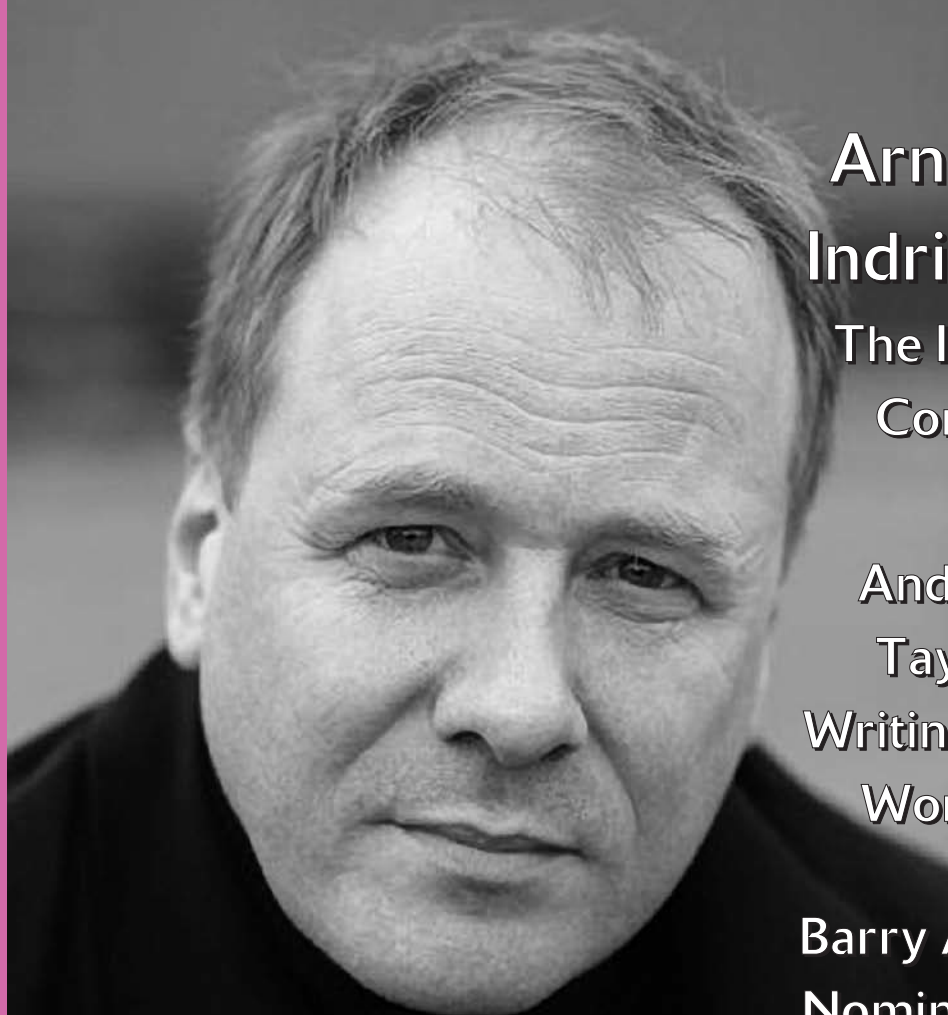


Deadly Pleasures *Mystery Magazine*



**Arnaldur
Indridason**
The Iceman
Cometh

**Andrew
Taylor**
Writing As A
Woman

**Barry Award
Nominations
2008**

**Scandinavian Crime Fiction
Is HOT!**

ARNALDUR INDRIDASON THE ICEMAN COMETH by George Easter y

Arnaldur Indriðason is quite a mouthful for us Americans to say, but I've said the name so many times over the last few years that it fairly trips off the tongue. It is said that he is hugely popular in his native Iceland, but that's like saying he's hugely popular in Aurora, Colorado or Toledo, Ohio, which all have about 300,000 people. Fortunately for us in the U.S., his name is now becoming well known not only here, but worldwide.

Back in 2005, when I was preparing the cover article on *The Globalization of Mystery Fiction* for **DP 43** (the publication in the U.S. and the U.K. of translated works from all over the world, but principally Europe), I came across Arnaldur Indriðason's name because his **JAR CITY** had been published in the U.K. to some fanfare. There were four other Scandinavian authors mentioned in that article: Henning Mankell, Helene Tursten, Karin Fossum and Liza Marklund. In a short three years since that cover article in **DP 43** the number of Scandinavian authors published in the U.S. and in the U.K. has skyrocketed (this article will tell you of 23 such writers). It seems that many publishers want a Nordic writer in their stable, and with good cause – there is some excellent writing being published in the North countries and a sizeable backlist just waiting for translation.

I like to alert you of publishing trends with some of our cover articles and this publishing phenomenon certainly would qualify as a trend (some have called it a tidal wave). And if Henning Mankell's popular series is credited as being the genesis for this trend, Arnaldur Indriðason's writing may just come to be considered the best of a very good bunch.

His first novel **JAR CITY** was uniformly and highly praised when it came out in English, but the whole world sat up and took a lot more notice of Arnaldur Indriðason when he won the CWA Gold Dagger for his second novel, **SILENCE OF THE GRAVE**. And it didn't hurt that he came all the way to Madison, Wisconsin for the 2006 Bouchercon to meet his American fans (I was glad to see that his signing line was quite long and that the word had gotten out about the excellence of his writing).

To date there have been four of his crime novels translated into English with another one coming later this year (**ARCTIC CHILL**). All of the novels are part of his Reyjavik Series featuring Erlendur, Sigurdur Óli and Elinborg.

JAR CITY (alternate title, **TAINTED BLOOD**) (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$21.95; Harvill, £10.99, 2004). **Rating: A** [Reviewed by George Easter] I read this going to and coming back from Bouchercon 2006, where I met

the laconic, Icelandic author. I'd been hearing so much about him from other **DPers** that I just had to see what all of the fuss was about. Well, he certainly lived up to the deserved praise. Indridason has a similar style and setting to those of Henning Mankell, but he uses about half the words, so his works are a lot easier to read.

When a lonely old man is found murdered in his Reykjavik apartment, the only clues are a cryptic note left by the killer and a photograph of a young girl's grave. Inspector Erlendur discovers that many years ago the victim was accused, but not convicted of a rape. Was this a revenge killing? As the sad-sack detective follows obscure clues and digs into old cases, he also confronts personal trials – in particular his drug-addicted, pregnant daughter's return to his home. Kudos to Indriðason for first-rate plotting and settings. His career in the States is taking off like a rocket and before long I expect that he will be the most popular of the Scandinavian crime writers here.

SILENCE OF THE GRAVE (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$22.95; Harvill, £10.99, 2005). **Rating: A** [Reviewed by Larry Gandle] A child's discovery of a human rib sets off the events in this superb mystery. In a building zone, decades-old human bones, are slowly and meticulously excavated from the soil. Detective Erlender of the Reykjavik Police and his team are assigned the case.

In order to investigate the origins of the bones, they must research and question people who lived in the area during World War II. Erlender also faces the personal tragedy of his estranged daughter on death's doorstep while in a coma after childbirth.

Interspersed with this plot is another, seemingly unrelated, story of a woman severely abused in a loveless marriage. The progression of this poor woman through all



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the classic signs of abuse and the effects it has on her family are both heart-wrenching and truly compelling.

The slow, inexorable progression downward of the poor abused family makes for addictive reading. The intertwining of the modern tale and the old is both clever and ingenious. In a sense, Indriðason has combined the modern British style detective novel minus needless complexity with the psychological suspense novel to create one of the finest books of the year. It is so good it demands to be read in a single sitting.

VOICES (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$22.95; Harvill, £12.99, 2006). **Rating: A** [Reviewed by Ali Karim] It should also be noted that Indriðason has won three years consecutively The Martin Beck Award [from Sweden] for best translated crime fiction novel for **VOICES** in 2005 and the two previous books, **SILENCE OF THE GRAVE** in 2004 and **JAR CITY / TAINTED BLOOD** in 2003. The latter two also won the Glass Key Award from the Crime Writers of Scandinavia.

The third in the Reyjavik series, **VOICES**, is a dark tale, set in a classy Reykjavik hotel, where Gudlauger Egilsson, the doorman-cum-handyman, is found stabbed viciously to death in his basement room. Summoned to investigate, Erlendur and his police colleagues Sigurdur Oli and Elinborg, converge on the bristling hotel. As the festive season approaches, Erlendur can not face spending Christmas alone in his flat, even though his daughter Eva Lind implores him to return, as she has successfully kicked her drug habit after the still-birth of her child. Despite this, the world-weary inspector takes a room in the hotel to blot out Christmas and focus on the murder investigation. He is not the only one lonely in this melancholic time, for his mentor [and former boss] Marion Briem calls him, wanting to help in the investigation.

Elinborg, as well as helping Erlendur and Sigurdur Oli, is still preoccupied with a concurrent case of a schoolboy who was badly beaten by a gang of school bullies, but she senses something sinister about the boys' father, a business man (facing bankruptcy). The theme of family conflict is again mined for the plot, as everyone in the world of Indriðason has fractured and dysfunctional relationships with those who share their genes. This includes Erlendur, who is reminded about the tragedy that lurked in his past, and shaped his world view.

VOICES, like the preceding books, virtually drips with sadness and melancholy. This makes the setting of a hotel at Christmas the perfect backdrop for this tale. As the Icelandic detectives delve into the case, they have to piece together the fragments of Gudlauger's tragic life. The hotel-staff closes ranks, but soon cracks in the wall of silence appear as talk of large scale thefts, as well as organized prostitution surface. Gudlauger's sinister relatives appear and they reveal just enough to pique Erlendur's suspicions.

At last Indriðason shows a little compassion for the lonely Erlendur by making him and one of the female forensic officers – the middle aged Valgerdur – start what appears to be a relationship of sorts. It is about time Erlendur had a little happiness.

I can not recommend **VOICES** highly enough, because to be uplifted in life we sometimes must drink from the well of the melancholic and fractured. If you crave more than a cursory glance at the lives of the damaged and dysfunctional, then head toward Indriðason's tales of contemporary Iceland

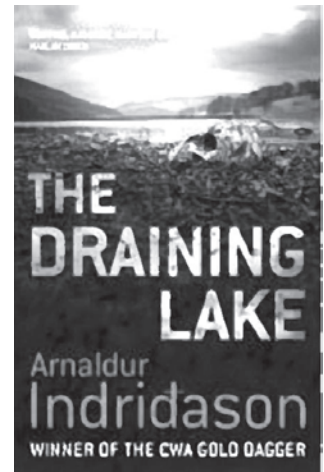
This is the best work in the police procedural genre currently being published.

THE DRAINING LAKE (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95, September, 2008; Harvill Secker, £12.99, 2007). **Rating: A** [Reviewed by George Easter] In the wake of an earthquake, the water level of an Icelandic lake drops suddenly, revealing the skeleton of a man, which has clearly been there for many years. There is a large hole in the skull. And even more mysteriously, a heavy communication device is attached to it, possibly some sort of radio transmitter, bearing inscriptions in Russian.

The police are called in and Erlendur, Elinborg and Sigurdur Oli begin their investigation, which gradually leads them back to the time of the Cold War when bright, left-wing students would be sent from Iceland to study in the "heavenly State" of Communist East Germany. The story line focuses on two star-crossed lovers and the tragic end of their relationship.

On the personal front, we see glimmers of rapprochement between Erlendur and his son and the beginnings of a romantic relationship for this damaged soul. Yes, it is about time Erlendur found a little happiness.

Indriðason writing is the epitome of excellence. I'm right in line behind Ali and Larry as a big, big fan of his work.



**Scandinavian
Crime Fiction
*The Frigid North is
Now Sizzling Hot!*
by George Easter**

A I Gore should use the popularity of Scandinavian writing as further evidence of global warming. I've never been to any of the countries covered in this survey, so I have included a little bit of information about each one for those of you who are likewise somewhat ignorant of things Scandinavian. The statistics I use will help one to compare the countries to each other and to places here in the United States. In my definition of Scandinavia, I've included five countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland. Some consider the first three to be Scandinavia and the other two to be Nordic countries, but I think that is quibbling, so I stick to my definition.

As relates to crime fiction, I think all would agree that Sweden is the Scandinavian King in terms of quality and volume produced, with Norway the clear Queen. But what is interesting is that every country has at least one or two writers (that we've been exposed to in English) who are top-tier, even the very small Iceland has Arnaldur Indridason, who may be the best of the whole lot.

Years ago I remember reading a number of the Per Wahloo/Maj Sjowall – Martin Beck novels and being quite impressed with their quality. And these have been reprinted several times over the years and remain in print to this day. And every once in awhile a Scandinavian crime writer would show up on our shores, Peter Hoeg (**SMILA'S SENSE OF SNOW**) being one that was memorable. But it wasn't until translations of Henning Mankell's works started to be published here and in the U.K. in the late 1990s and early 2000s that readers started sitting up and taking notice of the excellence of Scandinavian crime writing. He went on to be the first Scandinavian crime writer to win the prestigious CWA Gold Dagger.

English readers wanted more and when that became evident, publishers stepped up to fill that demand. And outside of having to get the books translated into English, the job of publishing houses was pretty easy because there already existed a rich reservoir of untranslated gems just waiting to be tapped. What we have been getting over the last five years or so has been, in effect, Scandinavia's Greatest Hits as far as crime fiction is concerned. Many of the major publishers here in the U.S. now have a Nordic crime writer on their lists: Delacorte, Doubleday, St. Martin's, Pantheon, Morrow, Viking, Harper, Grand Central (formerly Warner), Soho Press, and the little one that started it all with Henning

Mankell – The New Press. And in the U.K. kudos go to Harvill for publishing so many of these writers early on and bringing them to our attention.

Series books are not always published here in order (the Kurt Wallander books by Henning Mankell are an example). And often some books in the series are skipped over and only what are considered the best are translated into English.

Some random thoughts regarding Scandinavian Crime Fiction:

◆ **Dark, moody, brooding, melancholic, intense.** These are all adjectives used to describe Scandinavian Crime Fiction in general. And the descriptions are accurate. I haven't discovered a Swedish Carl Hiaasen or a Norwegian Donald E. Westlake as of yet. Perhaps they exist, but I'm unaware of much, if any, humor in Scandinavian mystery. Some readers may shy away from these newcomers because of that reputation for dourness. What a shame that would be, because they would be missing some terrific writing.

◆ **Predominant Police Detection.** Another characteristic is that most of these novels involve police detectives and detection although the styles of the detectives vary quite a bit. Also most are not straight procedurals, but a combination of psychological suspense and police detection. There are some notable exceptions, such as the work of Grieg Larsson, whose first book **THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO** was a "wow" book for me. The main characters are a computer hacker and an editor for an economic news magazine. Other popular exceptions are Liza Marklund's series featuring an investigative reporter and Asa Larson's series and Yrsa Sigurdardottir's one novel about attorney/amateur detectives. But the series by Henning Mankell, Arnaldur Indridason, Anne Holt, Jo Nesbo, K.O. Dahl, Hakan Nesser, Kjell Ericksson, Helene Tursten, Matti Joensuu, Mari Jungstedt and Ake Edwardson all involve police protagonists.

◆ **Balance Between Female and Male Writers of Note.** There seems to be about the same number of excellent Scandinavian female writers being published in English as there are male writers. That should cheer the Sisters in Crime members – or maybe not – there may be no need to have SinC chapters in Scandinavia.

◆ **Differences Between Crime Fiction Country to Country.** My unskilled eye sees very little difference in the writing from country to country, with the exception of Denmark, which seems to focus on stand-alone thrillers, rather than police procedurals and series work. I'm sure there are differences to the citizens of each country, but an outsider's view is that they are very similar.

◆ **Håkan Nesser.** He's very tall. If you ever meet him, you'll know what I mean.

What follows is a simple reader's guide to the most prominent Scandinavian writers and works being translated into English today. I've omitted plot descriptions of the works of Henning Mankell and Sjowall/Wahloo for space considerations. At the end of the piece I will recommend the five Scandinavian crime novels you should

read before you die (everyone seems to be making “before you die” bucket lists nowadays, so I’m going to jump right in and do the same).



NORWAY

Population: 4,627,000
(approx. population of Colorado,
22nd largest state)

Area: 125,181 square miles
(slightly larger than New Mexico)

Capital: Oslo

K.O. Dahl



Series Characters: **Oslo Police detectives Gunnarstranda and Frolich**

■ **THE FOURTH MAN** (St. Martin’s Minotaur, \$23.95, 2008; Faber, £10.99, 2007). In the course of a routine police raid Detective Inspector Frank Frolich of the Oslo Police saves Elizabeth Faremo from getting inadvertently caught in crossfire. By the time he learns that she is the sister of Jonny Faremo, wanted member of a larceny gang, it is already too late -- he is obsessed. Suspected, suspended and blindly in love, Frolich must find out if he is being used before his life unravels beyond repair.

■ **THE MAN IN THE WINDOW** (Faber, £6.99, May, 2008). It is Friday the thirteenth, and with the Norwegian capital enveloped in freezing cold, seventy-nine-year-old Reidar Folke Jespersen passes what will be the last day of his life. In the early hours of the following morning he is found stabbed to death in his shop, his naked body exposed in the shop’s window, a red string tied round his neck, and three crosses and a number - 195 - written across his chest. Police officers Gunnarstranda and Frolich - the team who were so deeply embroiled in the search for The Fourth Man — are called to the scene.

Karin Fossum



Series Character: **Inspector Sejer**

■ **DON’T LOOK BACK** (Harcourt, \$23.00, 2004; Harvill, 2002). **Rating: A** [Reviewed by George Easter] Fossum uses a child abduction in the first chapter to ramp up the reader’s heart rate. But we soon find that it is misdirection on her part and the real crime to be investigated is that of a murdered young girl who is found naked, lying at the side of a remote lake. The mild-mannered Inspector Sejer (a polar opposite of Reg Hill’s detective Dalziel) is assigned the case and very subtly uncovers possible motives for the crime. The pacing of the novel is slow, but the writing is so fine that it wasn’t a problem for me to keep my interest level high. There are a number of surprises along the way, especially at the end. I predict that Karin Fossum will accumulate a cult following of American fans in much the same way that Henning Mankell has done.

■ **HE WHO FEARS THE WOLF** (Harcourt, \$23.00, 2005; Harvill, £10.99, 2004). A boy arrives -- breathless and aghast -- at his police station, to report the discovery of a horribly maimed body outside an isolated house in the woods. Yet there was another person in the woods that day -- standing nearby, hidden within the trees, was the mysterious figure of the local misfit, Errki. The next morning a bank in the nearby town is robbed at gunpoint. The gunman takes a hostage and flees. As his plans begin to come apart he, unlike his passive hostage, rapidly loses control. Meanwhile the search for the killer has developed into a manhunt -- everyone is looking for the enigmatic Errki.

■ **WHEN THE DEVIL HOLDS THE CANDLE** (Harcourt, \$24.00, 2006; Harvill, £10.99, 2004). **Rating B** [Reviewed by Jeff Pople] Although this new novel by Norwegian author Karin Fossum is described as being an Inspector Sejer mystery, the Inspector does not appear until after page 40 and only fleetingly features in the book thereafter. The central focus is on Irma, an elderly woman who is the intended victim of a break-in by a pair of young teenage troublemakers. One of the boys, Andreas, enters her house armed with his trusty flick-knife, while the other, Zipp, waits nervously outside. When his friend never reappears Zipp does not know what to do and waits for Andreas to be reported missing. Unlike the police, the

reader is aware of what happened, and also of the link to the killing of a baby earlier in the day, and the main focus of the book is on the unravelling of the consequences of the crimes.

This book is reminiscent of Ruth Rendell's sinister psychological thrillers, especially in the way Fossum delves into the minds of her characters and toys with the roles of victim and killer. The casualness of some of the crimes is chilling and the internal monologues of her characters are used to good effect. The Norwegian locations and social issues are interesting and the book moves at a moderate pace, although there is little action.

Readers expecting a police procedural will probably be disappointed, as there is no real detection or mystery, although Fossum does deliver a couple of good surprises towards the end.

■ **CALLING OUT FOR YOU!** (U.S. title: **THE INDIAN BRIDE**) (Harcourt, \$23.00, 2007; Harvill, £10.99, 2005). **Rating: A** [Reviewed by Larry Gandle] Gunder Jomann, a simple salesman living in a small rural community in Norway, decides he wants to go to India to get a wife. To the amazement of his family and friends, he succeeds. His new wife, Poona, is due to arrive and he eagerly anticipates this happy event. Unfortunately, just as he is to set off for the airport to pick her up, he is called to the hospital because his sister was in an auto accident and lies in a coma. Poona disappears from the airport. The next day a body is found in a field. It is the body of an Indian woman. Could it be Poona? Inspector Konrad Sejer must investigate the horrific crime, which will prove to impact the entire community.

There is a certain stark simplicity in both the translation of this novel and the story itself. To me, nothing is more of a chore to read than a very long, complex, slow moving detective story filled with dozens of characters. This is definitely not that kind of book. In fact, the story is simple, the characters charming and the author plays fair with the solution- maybe!

■ **BLACK SECONDS** (Harcourt, \$24.00, June, 2008; HarvillSecker, £11.99, 2007). **Rating: B** [Reviewed by George Easter] Ida Joner is a sweet girl, adored by her mother Helga. One day she rides out on her yellow bike to buy some sweets. When she fails to return 35 minutes after she should have, Helga starts to worry. She phones around, but there is no word, and eventually she calls the police. Still no news the following day, a local search is organized, with hundreds of local volunteers. However, nothing comes of it. Ida Joner and her yellow bicycle seem to have vanished into thin air. Helga's worst nightmare seems to have come true. Inspector Sejer carefully and sensitively chips away at this case that seems to encompass only victims.

Karin Fossum is a master storyteller with a wordsmith's command of language and nuance. But **BLACK SECONDS** left me a bit flat with its resolution (well telegraphed) and sad at the lasting pain of its victims. There was no sense of the world being set right again by punishing the malfeasants that one gets in a typical police

procedural or detective story. But there is plenty of other issues raised by the story line to think about. And that is the key word here: "think." Karin Fossum's fiction causes the reader to think of the world in a different way.

Karin Fossum's next translated novel, **BROKEN** (Harvill Secker, £12.99, June, 2008) is a stand-alone.

Anne Holt



Series Characters: **Former FBI profiler Johanne Vik & Detective Inspector Adam Stubo**

■ **WHAT IS MINE** (in U.K., **PUNISHMENT**) (Warner Books, \$24.99, 2006; Little, Brown, £10.99, 2006). **Rating: A** [Reviewed by George Easter] Someone is kidnapping children in Norway. Police Inspector Adam Stubo joins forces with researcher Johanne Vik to try to track down the abductor. Each has strengths and together they become a powerful investigative team. And each comes to the case with lots of baggage, which make them real and interesting. At the same time, Johanne is investigating a very old case of injustice at the request of a dying woman.

The plot of this novel (children in danger) breaks no new ground although it is satisfyingly puzzling and complex. But the author really distinguishes herself with the depth of each of her characters and the fluidity of her prose (the translator is also to be credited here). I would have rated it A+ but for a very slight disappointment with the denouement

■ **WHAT NEVER HAPPENS** (in U.K., **THE FINAL MURDER**) (Grand Central, \$24, February, 2008; Sphere, £18.99, 2007). **Rating: A** [Reviewed by George Easter] In Oslo, celebrities are turning up dead in the most macabre of situations: a talk show host with her tongue cut out, a politician crucified with a copy of the Koran stuffed where the sun doesn't shine, and a literary critic stabbed in the eye. It's not clear if the deaths are all the work of one person, even though logic sends the police in that direction. What is very clear is that the killer or killers aren't leaving any clues behind." Adam Stubo is stumped by this case and his wife Johanna Vik, mother of a little baby, is reluctant to help because of her exhaustion. As Stubo's inquiry seems to be going nowhere, Johanna is haunted by a pattern she discovers from a time long ago when she was in the FBI, a time she has tried to forget .

The crimes are horrific, but they are juxtaposed against the happy marriage of Stubo and Vik, who have their share of life's problems, but face them with great kindness to one another. The somewhat normal Inspector Stubo stands in stark contrast to the lonely, dysfunctional Swedish detectives Beck and Wallander and the Icelandic Elendur – so not all police detectives in Scandinavia are portrayed in the same way, even though some are similarly depicted.

The detection is excellent and Anne Holt's prose, even in translation, is clear and right up there with the best who write in their native English tongue. Don't be fooled by Anne Holt's seemingly common name. I predict great things for her and this series.

Jo Nesbo



Series Character: **Oslo, Norway Detective Harry Hole**

■ **THE REDBREAST** (Harper, \$24.95, November, 2007; Harvill Secker, £11.99, 2008). **Rating: B-** [Reviewed by Larry Gandle] In 1999, there is a report of a rare and expensive sniper rifle being sold to an old man in Norway. The fear of an assassination plot is, of course, heightened. Harry Hole, a detective who is involved in monitoring neo-Nazi activity must investigate the situation. Harry must not only discover if there is a definite threat but also who is being threatened. In alternate narrative form, there is a subplot that takes place during WWII in which Norwegians are fighting at the Eastern front. It is a bit of a love story and the result of a union will have something to do with the story taking place in 1999.

Harry Hole is a strong, sympathetic and realistic character. He is the major strength of this overlong and overwrought novel which aimlessly and endlessly examines the influence of WWII on the modern Norwegian society and the presence of modern day neo-Nazis. The book is well written but the length just completely wore me down. 3rd in the series.

■ **NEMESIS** (Harvill Secker, £12.99, March, 2008). Grainy CCTV footage shows a man walking into

Jo Nesbo's Harry Hole

According to his superiors, Harry is both the most competent detective of the Oslo Police and the worst civil servant. A periodic binge drinker seriously opposed to any type of authority, Hole roams the streets of Oslo like a lone ranger, doling out justice his way. At times suspended and generally considered a nuisance by his employers, Harry is nevertheless in some sense revered by his colleagues, for he is a good cop whose high moral standards and pronounced sense of justice often lead him in the right direction.

In his personal life, however, his famous 'inner compass' seems to have broken down completely. Harry is tormented by the complicated relationship with Rakel, the single mother whom he fell in love with in **The Redbreast** and who has since walked into and out of his life at regular intervals, due to Harry's workaholic and alcoholic tendencies. He cannot let go of the woman who has proved to be the love of his life. And the feelings are mutual.

a bank and putting a gun to a cashier's head. He tells her to count to twenty-five. When he doesn't get his money in time, she is executed. Detective Harry Hole is assigned to the case. While Harry's girlfriend is away in Russia, an old flame gets in touch. He goes to dinner at her house and wakes up at home with no memory of the past twelve hours. The same morning the girl is found shot dead in her bed. 4th in the series.

■ **DEVIL'S STAR** (Harvill Secker, £6.99, October, 2005). It's a sweltering summer in Oslo when a young woman is found murdered in her flat. One finger has been cut off, and beneath her eyelid is a tiny red diamond in the shape of a five pointed star. Detective Harry Hole is assigned to the case with Tom Waaler, a colleague Harry suspects of running an arms smuggling gang and of having murdered his partner, and initially he refuses to become involved. But he is already on notice to quit the force and is left with no choice but to drag himself out of his alcoholic stupor and get to work. 5th in the series.

This series is a prime example of how some Scandinavian works are being published out of order. The first two in the series have not been translated into English. The third book in the series, **THE REDBREAST**, was published first in the U.S. and is the only book published here so far. The order of publication in the U.K.: the 5th book in the series was published first, the 3rd book in the series second, and the 4th book third. I sure hope there isn't a continuing story line that we're supposed to make sense out of from book to book.



SWEDEN

Population: 9,031,000 (approx. population of Georgia, 9th largest state)

Area: 173,000 square miles (slightly larger than California)

Capital: Stockholm



Karin Alvtengen

This author writes more in the vein of a Minette Walters or a Ruth Rendell and stands out from many of her Swedish compatriots who opt for series and police detection.

■ **MISSING** (Canongate, 2003; in U.S., *Felony & Mayhem*, \$24.00). Sibylla's ambition is someday to have a sanctuary, a home of her own, and she is assiduously saving money to reach this goal. Her plans for the future are thrown into disarray when she is framed for a murder that she didn't commit. With the help of a schoolboy, Patrik, who becomes her friend when he discovers her sleeping in the attics of his school, Sibylla turns detective and solves the crimes.

■ **BETRAYAL** (Canongate, 2005) When Eva discovers her husband is having an affair, she plans her revenge. Having left home and sacrificed more than she knew she could lose, she finds solace in a friendship with Jonas, who for the past two years has been keeping vigil beside his girlfriend as she lies in a coma. Then Eva's own life comes under threat.

■ **SHAME** (Canongate, £6.99, 2006). **Rating: B** [Reviewed by Larry Gandle] Two psychologically damaged women lie at the heart of this compelling psychological thriller. They have really nothing in common and it takes most of the book before their lives become intertwined. Monica is a physician who survived her brother, Lars, and feels the guilt over being the surviving sibling. Lars was, after all, her mother's favorite. Maj-Britt is a morbidly obese woman who hates herself and all of humanity. Riddled with guilt, she has punished herself for her so-called religious transgressions that were set out for her by

her overzealous parents.

While leaving a conference, Monica opts out of driving with another participant. The man who took her place in the car is killed and Monica feels she should have been the one to die. She tries to befriend the man's widow in an effort to amend for her inadvertently placing her husband into harms way. Maj-Britt is contacted by an old friend who resides in prison after killing her child and abusive husband. This correspondence leads to a certain breakdown for the already damaged Maj-Britt. These two damaged souls, Monica and Maj-Britt eventually meet and, in a sense, change each other's lives.

Is **SHAME** a crime novel? I am not sure. There is no crime to speak of. The suspense rests in what will happen to these two as they slowly decompensate. Yet, the writing is swift and sure. Alternate chapter point of views maintains suspense and keeps the plot brisk. As with any successful psychological suspense novel, the characters are the most important element. In this case, the author succeeded in creating two interesting and complex women. Overall, **SHAME** is a very well written novel but again, a crime novel? Not really.

■ **GUILT** (Canongate, 2007) Peter Brodin's life is a mess. Heavily in debt, a failure in his business and personal life, he is one of life's nice-guy losers. Sitting alone in a cafe one day he is approached by a woman who obviously mistakes him for someone else. Before Peter can explain she has gone -- leaving behind a package that she wishes to be delivered to her husband. The package and its gruesome contents lure Peter into a nightmarish hunt for this insane, obsessed woman - a hunt which eventually forces Peter to face up to his own murky past.

Ake Edwardson



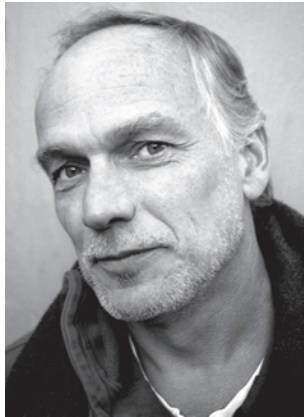
Chief Inspector Erik Winter, Gothenburg, Sweden

■ **SUN AND SHADOW** (Viking, \$23.95, 2005). Erik Winter is the youngest chief inspector in Sweden; he wears sharp suits, cooks gourmet meals, has a penchant for jazz, and is about to become a father. But he has his share of troubles too; a bloody double murder on his doorstep is only the beginning.

■ **NEVER END** (Viking, \$24.95, 2006). A heat wave is smothering the Swedish coastal city of Gothenburg. School is out, and parks and beaches are teeming with people. But a spate of unsolved rape/murders casts a disturbing shadow on this particular summer. Chief Inspector Erik Winter, now forty-one and a father, assembles the scant but grisly details of the crimes, and begins to see an eerie connection to a five-year-old unsolved rape/murder, a case he, in typically obsessive fashion, has refused to let go cold.

■ **FROZEN TRACKS** (Viking, \$25.95, 2007). The investigation of a series of assaults and a string of child abductions take Erik Winter to “the flats,” the barren prairies of rural Sweden whose wastelands conceal crimes as sinister as the land itself. Winter must deduce the labyrinthine connections between the cases before it is too late and his own family comes into danger.

Kjell Eriksson



Series Characters: **Detectives Ola Haver and Ann Lindell, Uppsala, Sweden**

■ **THE PRINCESS OF BURUNDI** (St. Martin's, \$23.95, 2006). Homicide detective Ola Haver and his colleague, Ann Lindell, investigate the murder of a well-liked working class man and tropical fish expert. This is a solid police procedural, winner of the Swedish Crime Academy Award for Best Crime Novel, and reminiscent of the Ed McBain's “87th Precinct” series, with its emphasis on the work and lives of the cops.

■ **THE CRUEL STARS OF THE NIGHT** (St. Martin's, \$23.95, 2007). Thirty-five-year-old Laura Hindersten goes to the police to report that her father, a local professor, is missing. Inspector Ann Lindell and her colleagues can find no motive for the man's disappearance. And when the corpses of two elderly men do turn up, neither of the dead men is the missing academic.

■ **THE DEMON FROM DAKAR** (St. Martin's, \$24.95, April 2008). **Rating B+** [Reviewed by Bev DeWeese] In some ways, Eriksson's Uppsala police department is reminiscent of Ed McBain's 87th precinct with its assortment of interesting cops with human frailties

and realistic procedural details. This department, with the focus on detective Anne Lindell, investigates the baffling death of a man found in a nearby river with no ID and a tattoo that has been partially removed. Naturally, their methodical investigation eventually leads them to a number of other crimes: a Mexican visitor who will do anything to rescue his brother from a Swedish prison; some nervous low-life criminals ineptly trying to sell drugs; and the owner of high-end restaurants who has some rather shady financial dealings and who is not honest about his taxes.

Though the cops are believable and generally likeable, the most fully developed characters are the suspects/victims. The love of the two Mexican brothers who come from a poor, isolated village is very touching, and their attempts to understand this strange new world of Uppsala are both sad and humorous. Slobodan Andersson, the sleazy restaurant owner, is not a totally bad character. He treats his staff well, He gives Eve, a stressed, single mom, the chance to make money and to investigate a new direction for her life. At the same time, she is dealing with two sons who may need more time and attention than she can give them. But everyone at the restaurant seems happy for her. Even the local drug dealers seem relatively low key, though murder is part of their career choice.

Part of the great appeal of these Scandinavian crime novels is the portrait of the Swedish policing that underlies all of the stories. Though the Swedish citizens expect their government and their police department to care for them, the cops don't always live up to these standards. Some cops are homophobic, even though they have been to seminars to be retrained. Others are very sympathetic to a young mother who still wants a loving sexual partner for herself. Some try to understand the teenage boys who show little judgment in their efforts to appear cool. The cops don't seem like enemies in Sweden.

This lively plot has many strands, but eventually all the loose ends are tied up. The characters, both cops and criminals, are engrossing and have emotional depth. This is a very readable crime novel.

Inger Frimansson

Series Character: **Justine Dalvik**

■ **GOOD NIGHT, MY DARLING** (Pleasure Boat Studio, \$16.00, 2007). Justine Dalvik is a wealthy woman approaching middle age, who, after a tormented childhood and a not-much-better adulthood, figures it's time to free herself of the horrible memories that are beating her down. This involves a considerable amount of revenge against the people who made her life so miserable, but rather than go the traditional slice-and-slash route, the author focuses more on what's happening inside Justine's head, the emotional toll that settling old scores takes on her.

■ **THE SHADOW IN THE WATER** (Pleasure Boat Studio, \$16.00, 2008). Justine Dalvik is still battling demons, both real and imagined, while living in her family home in Hässelby. The tall, forbidding manse was the last

place married, mother-of-two Berit Assarson was seen alive. Seven years have passed since Berit's disappearance, and her husband, Tor, and her best friend, Jill Kylén, are trying to move on with their lives. Both harbor lingering, foggy suspicions about Justine, as is young Micke, whose father, Nathan, vanished while traveling with Justine.

Mari Jungstedt



Series Character: **Inspector Anders Knutas, Gotland, Sweden**

■ **UNSEEN** (St. Martin's, \$23.95, 2006; Doubleday, £11.99, 2007). After a gathering of friends on the island of Gotland dissolves amid jealous accusations, the source of the conflict, Helena Hillerström, vanishes from her home, only to turn up the victim of a savage ax murder.

■ **UNSPOKEN** (St. Martin's, \$23.95, 2007; Doubleday, £11.99, 2008). Detective Superintendent Anders Knutas and his team look into the murder of the alcoholic former news photographer Henry Dahlström. In the course of their investigation, they discover evidence not only that the man maintained a good income doing illegal repair work for most of Gotland's leading citizens but that his death may somehow be linked to missing 14-year-old Fanny Jansson.

■ **THE INNER CIRCLE** (St. Martin's, \$24.95, November, 2008). No plot summary available yet.

Camilla Läckberg

■ **THE ICE PRINCESS** (HarperCollins, £17.99) 2008 The writer Erica Falck has returned to her home town on the death of her parents, but discovers the community in turmoil. A close childhood friend, Alex, has been found dead. Her wrists have been slashed, and her body is frozen solid in a bath that has turned to ice. Erica decides to write a memoir about the charismatic but withdrawn Alex, more as a means of overcoming her own writer's block than solving the mystery of Alex's death. But Erica finds that her interest in Alex is becoming almost

obsessive. She begins to work with local detective Patrik Hedstrom, and the duo soon find that some unpleasant secrets are buried beneath the comfortable surface of the town.

Åsa Larsson



Series Character: **Stockholm Attorney Rebecka Martinsson**

■ **SUN STORM** (Delacorte, \$22.00, 2006; **THE SAVAGE ALTAR** in the U.K., Viking, £12.99, 2007). **Rating: B-** [Reviewed by Larry Gandle] Viktor Strandgard, a preacher of a church in northern Sweden called The Source of All Strength, is found in the chapel viciously slaughtered. His sister, Sanna, discovers the body and is emotionally at a breaking point. She contacts her friend Rebecka Martinsson, a tax attorney in Stockholm, for her help. When Sanna is arrested for the murder, Rebecka seeks a solution to the crime in order to free her friend. Naturally, the killer does not want to be discovered and the closer Rebecka gets to the solution, the more danger she places herself in.

SUN STORM is a solid amateur-detective novel that is very strong on characterization. Rebecka must cope with many personal issues, including dealing with Sanna's daughter, as well as her own job which is threatened by her involvement in this case. Rebecka is a sympathetic character and a strong heroine. The plot is carefully laid out and the author plays fair with the reader who wants to solve the crime along with Rebecka. The setting is well described as the Aurora Borealis (the sun storm) flickers above the frigid landscape of the small town. The plot could have moved a bit quicker for my taste, but that is a minor criticism and shouldn't bother most readers. **SUN STORM** won Sweden's best first crime novel award when first published in Sweden in 2003.

■ **THE BLOOD SPILT** (Delacorte, \$22.00, 2007; Penguin, £6.99, 2008). **Rating A-** [Reviewed by Bev DeWeese] Stockholm attorney Rebecka Martinsson, having shot three people in an earlier book (**SUN STORM**), has returned to her home town, Kiruna, for rest and rehabilitation. However, a female priest, Mildred Nilsson has been discovered hanging in the church, murdered, and Rebecka is reluctantly pulled into the investigation. A likeable but aggressive feminist and militant environmen-

talist, Mildred has made lots of friends – and enemies. Husbands, the local hunting club, and even an assistant pastor have good reason to hate her.

All of Larsson's characters are complex and fully developed. Rebecka herself continues to struggle with two conflicting goals. She is proud of having become a well-paid Oslo lawyer, but her heart keeps dragging her back to the simple, innocent life she had had in northern Sweden. And she has already really suffered for her earlier investigative work. In fact, I am surprised she is still alive. So she is reluctant to become involved in this case. But she can't avoid it. The murder is intriguing, for the victim herself is clearly a passionate do-gooder, but she also hides some unpopular secrets. Even the eventual killer is extraordinarily sympathetic. And, though many of the men in this small rural town are stubborn, with rough edges, several of them, like restaurant owner Micke and ex-cop Lars Gunnar, show many flashes of kindness. Similarly, the Oslo cops sent to solve the murder are very likeable. For example, gentle Sven-Erik is very concerned about a missing cat. Anna-Maria Mella, who's just coming back from maternity leave, is a model of shrewd common sense. Lars Gunnar's retarded son, Nalle, captivates everyone with his joyful innocence. Even Yellow Legs, a she-wolf rejected from her pack, is a charmer. In fact, Larsson obviously has great love for and lots of knowledge of animals.

Kiruna, which is a small and relatively poor village, is carefully drawn. Larsson seems to know the woods, lakes, and fauna of Sweden very well. It sounds like a paradise for nature lovers and hunters, at least in the warmer months.

This well-paced plot has been carefully crafted. There are a number of provocative red herrings and mistaken motives. And the murderer really surprised me. Overall, an intense, absorbing mystery.

■ **THE BLACK PATH** (Delacorte, \$12.00, July, 2008). The dead woman was found on a frozen lake, her body riddled with the evidence of torture. Inspector Anna-Maria Mella teams up with attorney Rebecka Martinsson to uncover a tangled drama of secrets, perversion and criminality.

Stieg Larsson

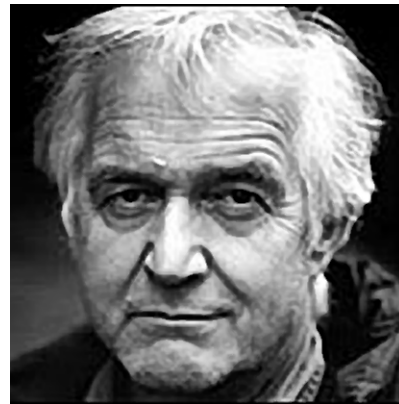
■ **THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO** (Knopf, \$24.95, September, 2008; Maclehorse Press, £14.99, January, 2008). **Rating: A+** [Reviewed by George Easter] This first novel in the Millennium trilogy is an exceptional tour de force. I didn't want this 533-page enjoyment to end. So how do I describe what was exceptional? Well, the character of Salander is like none other I've encountered in my reading (although some might make a superficial comparison to Carol O'Connell's Mallory). She is a brilliant researcher and computer hacker who hides her intelligence from almost everyone and has more odd behaviors and quirks than just about any character in mystery fiction that I can think of. All of which makes her supremely unpredictable and interesting.

The central mystery of the book — what happened to Harriet Vanger who disappeared several decades ago while attending a family gathering — is wonderfully complex. And not least of all is Stieg Larsson's clear and measured paced writing, which kept me interested without any soft spots.

If I read a better book in 2008 than this one, it will have to be one heck of a book. This is not only at the top of my list for best of the year, it is also on my short list of best of the decade. But cozy readers beware: there are some very unpleasant passages (rape and torture) that I admit to skimming over.

When the author died suddenly a few years ago, he had completed three books in the series, all of which have been published in Sweden. It seems that when he passed away, a draft of book #4 was in the computer, but is being withheld until his estate is settled and that might be awhile. It is said that he had planned ten books in the series. What a loss!

Henning Mankell



Series Character: **Inspector Wallander**

The books in the order that they were written:

- **FACELESS KILLER** 1997
- **THE DOGS OF RIGA** 2001
- **THE WHITE LIONESS** 1998
- **THE MAN WHO SMILED** 2005
- **SIDETRACKED** 1998
- **THE FIFTH WOMAN** 2000
- **ONE STEP BEHIND** 2002
- **FIREWALL** 2004
- **THE PYRAMID** (The Wallander Stories) 2008
- **BEFORE THE FROST** (Harvill, £14.99).

Rating: B+ [Reviewed by Bev DeWeese] Mankell strikes out in a new direction with Wallander's daughter, Linda, taking central stage as she prepares to join the police force and Wallander contemplates retirement. Although she has a week before she starts at the Ystad station, Linda

becomes involved in her first case when her friend Anna disappears in suspicious circumstances. Linda is convinced that the disappearance is connected to a sighting of Anna's estranged father, but Wallander is initially sceptical of his daughter's suspicions and is pre-occupied by a series of attacks on domestic animals. He changes his mind, however, when a violent murder occurs, which seems to have links to Linda's disappearance.

BEFORE THE FROST shares the strengths of Mankell's earlier books. It is intriguing, occasionally gripping, socially conscious and sufficiently different from most British and American crime novels to make it interesting. The descriptions of Sweden are also fascinating and Wallander and the other characters are appealingly quirky. On the other hand Linda is not as compelling and brilliant a character as her father and the pacing drags at times. Nevertheless it is sure to appeal to Mankell's ever growing fan base.

Liza Marklund



Series Character: **Journalist Annika Bengtson**

■ **THE BOMBER** (Pocket Books, 2001). When a bomb destroys Stockholm's new Olympic stadium just months before the summer games in Sweden, worries erupt about a terrorist on the loose, but when journalist Annika Bengtson begins to investigate, she uncovers a secret source that could reveal the truth behind the bombing and put her on the Bomber's hit list.

■ **STUDIO 69 (STUDIO SEX-** the number six is "sex" in Swedish) (Simon & Schuster, 2002). The discovery of a woman's body in a cemetery leads neophyte reporter Annika Bengtson deep into the investigation of the rape and murder case, which seems to reach into the halls of power in Sweden.

■ **PARADISE** (Simon & Schuster, 2004). A hurricane sweeps across southern Sweden, leaving chaos in its wake. Two men lie dead in Stockholm's Free Port, shot in the head at point-blank range. A young Bosnian woman, Aida, runs for her life. She finds refuge in Paradise, a foundation dedicated to people whose lives are in danger. Newspaper sub-editor, Annika Bengtson, is trying to piece her life together after the death of her fiancé. Covering

the story of Paradise is the opening she needs to get her personal life, and her career, back on track. But as Annika is about to find out, neither Paradise nor Aida are quite what they appear to be.

■ **PRIME TIME** (Pocket, £6.99, 2006). Thirteen people are spending the shortest night of the year together in an isolated manor house. On the morning of Midsummer's Eve, the brightest star in Swedish television, Michelle Carlsson, is found shot to death in a mobile control room. The murder turns Annika Bengtson's world upside down. One of the suspects is her best friend. Annika's boyfriend, Thomas, accuses her of letting the family down. Anders Schyman, her boss, involves her in a public power struggle. Meanwhile there's a killer on the loose -- and a tense drama about to unfold in the public eye.

I'm surprised that there haven't been any more Liza Marklund titles published in the U.S. after **THE BOMBER**, considering her huge popularity in Sweden and the recent interest in good Swedish crime writing. A publishing opportunity?

Håkan Nesser



Series Character: **Chief Inspector Van Veeteren**

■ **BORKMANN'S POINT** (Pantheon, \$22.95; Macmillan, £16.99, 2006). **Rating: A-** [Reviewed by George Easter]. Swept in on the tide of Scandinavian crime fiction being introduced into the United States, is this first of a series by one of Sweden's top writers.

A serial killer is on the loose seemingly picking his victims at random. Chief Inspector Van Veeteren is sent to the small town of Kaalbringen to help the local police force solve the crimes, but he is as puzzled by the lack of clues as they are. But eventually he gets there. *"Just as he suspected from the start, it was hardly the result of laborious routine investigations. Just as he'd thought, the solution had come to him more or less out of the blue. It felt a little odd, he had to concede; unfair almost, although there again, it was hardly the first time this kind of thing had happened. He'd seen it all before, and had realized long ago that if there was any profession in which virtue never got its due reward, it was that of police officer."*

Usually I don't care for police procedurals that solve the crimes by anything less than good detection, but I'll have to make an exception for **BORKMANN'S POINT**. The intriguing plot, interesting characters and boffo ending, make this one a winner.

Larry Gandle opines: The major strength of this work is the character of Van Veeteren. He is a likable and highly competent detective. The minor characters are also solid creations. This mystery is so character-driven that despite the somewhat simple solution, the book, as a whole, works remarkably well. **Rating: B+**

■ **THE RETURN** (Pantheon, \$22.95, 2007; Macmillan, £12.99, 2007). On a rainy April day, a body—or what is left of it—is found by a young girl. Wrapped in a blanket with no hands, feet, or head, it signals the work of a brutal, methodical killer. The victim, Leopold Verhaven, was a track star before he was convicted for killing two of his ex-lovers. He consistently proclaimed his innocence, however, and was killed on the day of his return to society. This latest murder is more than a little perplexing and Chief Inspector Van Veeteren is determined to discover the truth, even if it means taking the law into his own hands.

■ **THE MIND'S EYE** (Pantheon, \$22.95, June, 2008; Macmillan, £16.99, July, 2008). *'Don't you see, he'd have liked to ask her, 'don't you see, that if only you'd told me everything that first time we could have saved a life? Possibly two ...'* Janek Mitter stumbles into his bathroom one morning after a night of heavy drinking, to find his beautiful young wife, Eva, floating dead in the bath. She has been brutally murdered. Yet even during his trial Mitter cannot summon a single memory of attacking Eva, nor a clue as to who could have killed her if he had not. Only once he has been convicted and locked away in an asylum for the criminally insane does he have a snatch of insight -- but is it too late? Drawing a blank after exhaustive interviews, Chief Inspector Van Veeteren remains convinced that something, or someone, in the dead woman's life has caused these tragic events. And as he delves even deeper, Van Veeteren realizes that the past never stops haunting the present...

Maj Sjowall & Per Wahloo

Series Character: **Stockholm Detective Martin Beck**

- **ROSEANNA** 1965
- **THE MAN WHO WENT UP IN SMOKE** 1966
- **THE MAN ON THE BALCONY** 1967
- **THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN** 1968
- **THE FIRE ENGINE THAT DISAPPEARED** 1969
- **MURDER AT THE SAVOY** 1970
- **THE ABOMINABLE MAN** 1971
- **THE LOCKED ROOM** 1972
- **COP KILLER** 1974
- **THE TERRORISTS** 1975

Johan Theorin



■ **ECHOES FROM THE DEAD** (Doubleday, £17.99, July 2008). Can you ever come to terms with a missing child? Julia Davidsson has not. Her five-year-old son disappeared twenty years previously on the Swedish island of Oland. No trace of him has ever been found. Until his shoe arrives in the post. It has been sent to Julia's father, a retired sea-captain still living on the island. Soon he and Julia are piecing together fragments of the past -- fragments that point inexorably to a local man called Nils Kant, known to delight in the pain of others. But Nils Kant died during the 1960s. So who is the stranger seen wandering across the fields as darkness falls? It soon becomes clear that someone wants to stop Julia's search for the truth. And that he's much, much closer than she thinks.

Helene Tursten



Series Character: **Detective Inspector Irene Huss, Goteborg, Sweden**

■ **DETECTIVE INSPECTOR HUSS** (Soho Crime, \$25.00, 2003). Inspector Irene Huss, stationed in Gteborg, is called through the rain-drenched wintry streets to the scene of an apparent suicide. The dead man landed on the sidewalk in front of his luxurious duplex apartment. He was a wealthy financier connected, through an old-boys' network, with the first families of Sweden. But the "Society Suicide" turns out to have been a carefully plotted murder. As more murders ensue, she tangles with street gang members, skinheads, immigrants and neo-Nazis, a cross-section of Sweden's disaffected, in order to catch the killer.

■ **THE TORSO** (Soho Crime, \$24.00, 2006)
Rating A [Reviewed by Bev DeWeese] Detective Inspector Irene Huss and her fellow Swedish cops are appalled when an eviscerated, dismembered, headless torso washes ashore on one of the nearby beaches. They can't even tell at first if it is a man or a woman. But the torso does have a gorgeous dragon tattoo, a tattoo which leads Irene and her alcoholic partner Jonny Blom from Goteborg to Denmark, to an unusually vicious serial killer and a surprising resolution.

The plotting in **TORSO** is intricate, richly detailed, and fast moving, with lots of red herrings and ambiguous evidence. Even a subplot involving a missing Swedish teen is skillfully interwoven into the overall story. A fascinating aspect of the plot is the different approaches the Swedish and the Danes use in their murder investigations. Though the methodology is sometimes the same, the attitudes toward policing seem very different.

DI Irene Huss is a strong, multifaceted character. Though she is intense about her police work (too intense for some of her peers), she has a personal life too: an easy going chef husband, two difficult teenagers, and a dog. However, the details of her personal life do not impede the plot or take over the story. Irene is conscientious and caring, but she is not afraid to take risks and break a few rules to find killers. On the other hand, Irene brings a genuine sympathy and concern to the friends and family of the victims. More than the other cops, she seems to understand that gays are often rejected by their parents and that some gays have very passionate relationships that can lead to murder.

The Swedish setting, where Irene works and lives is well portrayed, with lots of passing references to good restaurants and the difficulties of a working mother. The Copenhagen setting is very noir. Much of the locale there seems dirty, smelly, brutal, and very scary.

Overall, meticulous plotting, carefully observed settings, good writing, a provocative ending, and very believable, often unusual characters make this a winner.

■ **THE GLASS DEVIL** (Soho Press, \$24.00, 2007). Pastor Sten Schyttelius, his wife, and his son, a school-teacher, have been shot dead. Could this be the work of a cult of Satanists, as the clues left by the murderer indicate?



FINLAND

Population: 5,238,000 (approximate population of Minnesota, 21st largest state)

Area: 130,558 square miles (slightly larger than Norway, hence a bit larger than New Mexico)

Capital: Helsinki

Matti Joensuu

Series Character: Detective Sergeant Timo Harjunpää

■ **THE STONE MURDERS** (St. Martin's, 1987). While investigating a series of murders and muggings in Helsinki, Detective Timo Harjunpää of the Finnish Police Service discovers that a vicious gang of teenagers may be responsible. The 4th book in series.

■ **THE PRIEST OF EVIL** (Arcadia, £11.99, 2006). There have been a strange succession of deaths at Helsinki tube stations. The police are baffled: nobody has seen anything and the tapes from the CCTV show nothing. Detective Sergeant Timo Harjunpää of the Helsinki Violent Crimes Unit is called in to solve the case. The 10th book in series.

■ **TO STEAL HER LOVE** (Eurocrime, £11.99, July, 2008). A strange nocturnal visitor tiptoes through apartments in Helsinki. Nothing is stolen, nothing is destroyed. Numerous women wake to an unknown presence in their bedroom, but in the light of morning, it all seems a dream. At first the police take little notice, and the women themselves begin to doubt their own sanity. But evidence accumulates, and the net closes — Tipi, a skilful picker of locks, falls in love with one of his night-time women. He shadows her, daring to approach her secretly only at night. But then Tipi's lock-picking skills are needed for a break-in by some of his professional criminal brothers. The results of falling in love and a life of crime are tragic for Tipi.



DENMARK

Population: 5,468,000 (approx. population of Wisconsin, the 20th largest state)

Area: 16,639 square feet (about half the size of Maine)

Capital: Copenhagen

Leif Davidsen

The author is known for his standalone international thrillers. I would call him the Danish Dan Fesperman. I read his **THE RUSSIAN SINGER** (1991) just before I started *Deadly Pleasures* and reviewed it quite favorably for *The Crime File*.

Here is his latest:

■ **THE SERBIAN DANE** (Arcadia, £11.99, 2006). A controversial female author with a *fatwa* hanging over her is due to visit Copenhagen. A Serbian Dane is hired to kill her for four millions dollars. Enter the policeman charged with protecting the author and a journalist who is to be her host. These twofall in love at an early stage!

Peter Hoeg

■ **THE QUIET GIRL** (Harvill, £16.99, 2007). Peter Hoeg's first novel in ten years takes the reader on a trip through an almost psychedelic world of circus clowns, children with mystical abilities, powerful nuns, evil financiers, mysterious security agencies, and bizarre foundations. Kasper Krone, a circus clown, has discovered that "SheAlmighty has tuned each person in a musical key," and he is able to hear the music that SheAlmighty has created for each person. By tapping into the music of people's psyches, he can understand their moods and thoughts.

Eventually, he learns that the nuns from the Rabia Institute have been protecting a group of children, including "the quiet girl," KlaraMaria, believing that "Some children are born with a gift for coming close to God faster than others." All are possessed of mystic gifts, and a group of evil men, wanting to use these children for their own unstated purposes, have kidnapped six of them from around the world. The nuns seek Kasper's help. "

Christian Jungersen

■ **THE EXCEPTION** (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.99). **Rating B+** [Reviewed by Jeff Popple] The novel contrasts the safety of an academic concern with genocide with the real personal terror of being stalked by a killer. When four women working at the Danish Centre for Genocide are sent death threats they suspect that they are being targeted by a Serbian war criminal. The threats gradually escalate and the women begin to turn on each other as it becomes clear that the person behind the threats is much closer than they expected.

This is an interesting and unusual thriller that twists its way through a few good surprises. The characterisations and the settings are interesting, but the story takes too long to unfold and the pace often lags. Nevertheless it is quite enjoyable for its European perspective and the fascinating background information.



ICELAND

Population: 301,931 (about 60% of the population of Wyoming, the smallest state)

Area: 39,968 square feet (about the size of Kentucky)

Capital: Reykjavik

Arnaldur Indridason

(See spotlight on this author at beginning of article)

Yrsa Sigurdardottir



■ **LAST RITUALS** (Morrow, \$23.95, October, 2007; Hodder, £19.99, January, 2008). After the body of a young German student—with his eyes cut out and strange symbols carved into his chest—is discovered at a university in Reykjavik, the police waste no time in making an arrest. The victim's family isn't convinced they have the right man, so they ask Thóra Gudmundsdóttir, attorney and single mother of two, to investigate. The fee is considerable—more than enough to make things a bit easier for the struggling lawyer and her children.

◆ Well, there you have it -- probably the highest quality list we've ever had in a cover article. Did you notice how many of the reviewed titles received an A rating? I know that I've got a short list of books that I now want to read -- starting with Jo Nesbo's works.

Sources for more information:

1. **Mystery Readers Journal** (The Journal of Mystery Readers International), Volume 23, Number 3, Fall 2007). Excellent collection of articles and reviews. I especially enjoyed the insight of the article about translation. This back issue can be ordered for \$10.00 in USA or \$15.00 foreign shipping on the magazine's website (www.mysteryreaders.org/)
2. www.eurocrime.co.uk -- contains the most complete list of Scandinavian crime writers published in English, as well as many reviews of same.

Five Scandinavian Crime Novels to Read Before You Die

THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN
by Per Wahloo and Maj Sjowall

JAR CITY by Arnaldur Indridason

THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO
by Stieg Larsson – not for everyone's tastes

WHAT IS MINE (in U.K., **PUNISHMENT**)
by Anne Holt

DON'T LOOK BACK by Karin Fossum

**BARRY AWARD
2008
Nominees**

We invite you to send in your vote so it is in our hands by **September 12, 2008**. You should have a loose ballot inserted into this magazine. See below on various methods of voting.

BEST NOVEL

(Published in the U.S. in 2007)

- SOUL PATCH**, Reed Farrel Coleman (Bleak House)
THE UNQUIET, John Connolly (Atria)
DOWN RIVER, John Hart (St Martin's Minotaur)
DIRTY MARTINI, J.A. Konrath (Hyperion)
WHAT THE DEAD KNOW, Laura Lippman
 (Morrow)
RED CAT, Peter Spiegelman (Knopf)

BEST FIRST NOVEL

(Published in the U.S. in 2007)

- MISSING WITNESS**, Gordon Campbell (Morrow)
BIG CITY, BAD BLOOD, Sean Chercover (Morrow)
IN THE WOODS, Tana French (Viking)
THE SPELLMAN FILES, Lisa Lutz
 (Simon & Schuster)
THE COLLABORATOR OF BETHLEHEM, Matt
 Beynon Rees (Soho Press)
THE BLADE ITSELF, Marcus Sakey (St. Martin's
 Minotaur)

BEST BRITISH CRIME NOVEL

(Published in the U.K. in 2007, not necessarily written by a British writer, nor set in the U.K.)

- A QUIET BELIEF IN ANGELS**, R.J. Ellory (Orion)
PIG ISLAND, Mo Hayder (Bantam Press)
ONE UNDER, Graham Hurley (Orion)
THE DEATH LIST, Paul Johnston (Mira)
THE 50/50 KILLER, Steve Mosby (Orion)
DAMNATION FALLS, Edward Wright (Orion)

BEST PAPERBACK ORIGINAL

- QUEENPIN**, Megan Abbott (Simon & Schuster)
BLACK WIDOW AGENCY, Felicia Donovan
 (Midnight Ink)
CHOKER POINT, Jay MacLarty (Pocket)
THE MARK, Jason Pinter (Mira)

- WASH THIS BLOOD CLEAN FROM MY HAND**,
 Fred Vargas (Penguin)
WHO IS CONRAD HIRST?, Kevin Wignall
 (Simon & Schuster)

BEST THRILLER

- NO TIME FOR GOODBYE**, Linwood Barclay
 (Bantam)
THE CLEANER, Brett Battles (Delacorte)
THE WATCHMAN, Robert Crais (Simon & Schuster)
VOLK'S GAME, Brent Ghelfi (Henry Holt)
SILENCE, Thomas Perry (Harcourt)
MIDNIGHT RAMBLER, Jim Swain (Ballantine)

BEST SHORT STORY

- Doug Allyn, "Dead As a Dog" (*EQMM* July 2007)
 Dale C. Andrews and Kurt Sercu, "The Book Case"
 (*EQMM* May 2007)
 Jon L. Breen, "The Missing Elevator Puzzle" (*EQMM*
 February 2007)
 Jeffrey Deaver, "Bump" (**DEAD MAN'S HAND**)
 Edward D. Hoch, "The Problem of the Summer
 Snowman" (*EQMM* November 2007)
 Gillian Roberts, "The Old Wife's Tale" (*EQMM* March-
 April 2007)
 Neil Schofield, "Murder: A User's Guide" (*AHMM* July-
 August 2007). The word "Guibe" is not a typo.

Many thanks to the nominating panels who came up with these excellent short lists. The panels consisted of the following well-read experts in the field: Maggie Mason, Larry Gandle, Barbara Peters, Sarah Weinman, Mike Bursaw, Marv Lachman, Steele Curry, Beth Fedyn, Ali Karim, Pat Frovarp, Gary Schulze, George Easter and the crew from *Mystery News*. This is a heck of a good list of books read and to-be-read. Enjoy!

I would like to congratulate all of the fine authors nominated this year. Thank you for the many enjoyable hours of reading you have given us and best of luck to all of you in the voting.

Who may vote: any subscriber or reader of *Deadly Pleasures Mystery Magazine* and/or *Mystery News*. If you subscribe to both publications, please only vote once. The nominated authors may also vote. Do not be intimidated if you haven't read all of the nominated novels and shorts stories -- none of us have.

How to send in votes (please include name and zip code will all votes) :

- ◆ Mail in the enclosed ballot to DP Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 969, Bountiful, UT 84011
- ◆ Fax the enclosed ballot to (801) 296-1993
- ◆ E-mail choices to george@deadlypleasures.com with subject line: Barry Award Vote

IT'S ABOUT CRIME by Marv Lachman



The Short Stop

HARDCORE HARDBOILED, edited by Todd Robinson (Kensington Books paperback, \$14.00), is not really as bad as its title makes it sound. It's just that who wants to spend as much time as it takes to finish 24 stories with characters as obnoxious as almost all of them are. A couple of stories are good, notably David Bareford's "Eden's Bodyguard," about a man who guards a pop singer, and Frank Zafiro's "Rescuing Isaac." Most stories are not worthwhile, having minimal plots and boring dialogue. Since these are stories from the online magazine Thuglit, they do not cause me to change my mind about the difference between fiction in a print and that on the web. Incidentally, many of the characters smoke cigarettes in these stories. Is that supposed to be a hardcore habit or one that is hardboiled?

For twenty years Edward D. Hoch edited the annual volume of the "best" mystery short stories. Since then, the closest thing to those volumes has been the yearly anthologies edited by Ed Gorman and Martin H. Greenberg. The latest in that series, **A PRISONER OF MEMORY** (Pegasus Books trade paperback, \$15.95), contains 25 stories published in 2007, Jon L. Breen's superb annual review of that year, and Hoch's listing of mystery writers who died in 2007. Ironically, Hoch died in January 2008, shortly after submitting his necrology. There is a heartfelt tribute to him by Francis M. "Mike" Nevins.

The average quality of the stories is quite good, with two stories that deserve to be on any list of the year's best. They are Doug Allyn's "Dead As a Dog" and Nancy Pickard's "I Killed." Allyn's, in particular, deserves to be shortlisted for the year's various prizes. There are also strong stories by some of today's best mystery authors, including Michael Connelly, Lawrence Sanders, Jeremiah Healy, and Clark Howard. The book's title is from a story by Robert S. Levinson, one of his typically enjoyable tales about show business and Hollywood. Four of the stories are from online magazines, introduced by Sarah Weinman, a big proponent of mysteries published in that format. Of

these, Patricia Abbott's "A Saving Grace," from *Thrilling Detective*, is certainly worth reading.

Novels Recently Read

Harrison Gradwell Slater's **NIGHT MUSIC** (2002) begins promisingly, especially for lovers of classical music. Matthew Pierce, a music scholar and pianist, finds what may be a lost Mozart diary at a Milan auction. Before he can have it authenticated, he is invited to a French estate to what will prove to be an almost endless round of parties given by a wealthy viscount. Among the guests are some of the leading lights of the music world, including the world's two leading Mozart scholars. Naturally, the Mozart diary creates a great deal of interest and eventually results in murder and attempted murder.

Unfortunately, Slater's book is so padded (it comes in at 493 pages in paperback) that my interest waned. Pierce visits virtually every major city in Europe, and they are described in excessive detail. There is a large cast of characters, and they are difficult to tell apart. Having characters named Andrei and Andreas doesn't help. Sexual scenes are often inserted, and while they are quite erotic, they don't move the plot forward. Slater's use of language is sometimes awkward. For example, we read on page 425: "Some event of unthinkable violence was about to take place." There are too many quotations inserted, a frequent fault of writers of first novels (as is Slater), as if they had been saving them up for years.

Taken individually, there are good elements in this book. The descriptions of Europe might be intriguing for would-be travelers, and Slater is adept at conveying the beauty of classical music. However, the book as a whole did not work for me, and it wasn't helped by a very long and not too convincing resolution at the end.

Those of you who read current mysteries exclusively may never have read a locked room detective story. I envy you the treat you have in store if you choose either or both of two terrific, impossible crime mysteries by John Dickson Carr, recently published by Rue Morgue Press at \$14.95 each. Both date from 1938, a golden year in the Golden Age, and they show how fertile was Carr's imagination to be able to devise two plots this good in the same year. His enthusiasm (he called detective fiction the "Grandest Game") clearly comes across.

In **THE CROOKED HINGE**, a seemingly impossible murder, in a locked room, follows a dispute over who is the legitimate claimant to the baronetcy of Mallingford and Sloane. (There are echoes here of the famous true crime involving the Tichborne claimant.) In 1912, allegedly, identities were switched aboard the Titanic as it went down. In 1937, when the book takes place, two possible claimants show up at Farnleigh Close. The murder involves the least likely person – to be murdered. Literary gravitas is supplied to the puzzle by references to witchcraft and an automaton similar to one written about by Poe and Ambrose Bierce. What could be science fiction or even fantasy is explained fairly and logically by Carr who, in the best detective tradition, issues a challenge to the reader.



THE JUDAS WINDOW was published under Carr's pseudonym "Carter Dickson." About 25 years later it was reprinted in the U.S. under the rather obvious, but logical, paperback title *The Crossbow Murder*. The victim was murdered in a locked room, and an arrow is in his body, but where is the crossbow that shot it? Certainly, it is not within the room that was locked from the inside.

This is also one of the best courtroom mysteries I've read. Dickson's series sleuth, Sir Henry Merrivale, acts as defense attorney because he believes the accused to be innocent. Faced with a locked room, he claims that there is always a "Judas Window," a way to get around it, but what it is will await his summation to the jury. Meanwhile, "the Old Man," as he calls himself, complains of "the blinkin' awful cussedness of things in general," while he proceeds to break the law to defend his client. The world's leading expert on impossible crime mysteries, Robert Adey, has called this book "perhaps the best locked room novel ever written." Right now, I can't think of a better one.

Rue Morgue Press has consistently reprinted humorous mysteries from the past. Recently, they have reprinted more "serious" writers such as Carr, Catherine Aird, and H. C. Bailey, but there are subtle touches of humor in all their work. Take Bailey, whose **SHADOW ON THE WALL** (1934), the first book about his most famous series detective, Doctor Reggie Fortune, has recently been reprinted by Rue Morgue at \$14.95. Fortune is an unofficial advisor to Scotland Yard and helps out in a case involving the wealthy and politically connected, one in which he is present at the first crime. Drug addiction among the rich, very prevalent in England between the World Wars, is important to the story. He is pitted against a group he playfully calls "the mischief makers unlimited." Fortune is an appealing character with his common sense and strong social awareness. It is too bad that his speech tends to be so annoying, with his dropping most g's and incessant exclaiming of phrases such as "My dear chap!" and "My only aunt!"

The mystery is a bit slow getting started, and Reggie's detective work is never totally plausible or entirely fair to the reader. I prefer him in short stories, a form in which he wrote for many years before essaying a novel. Still, the writing in **SHADOW ON THE WALL** is civilized, the ending is satisfactory, and the book introduces, in an inside joke, Bailey's other series detective, shady attorney Joshua Clunk.

John Laurence, the pen name of John Laurence Pritchard (1885-1968), is another of those worthwhile

writers almost completely forgotten now. Perhaps it is because of his 15 mysteries, only one was reprinted in the U.S. He was a versatile author, writing about science, airplane construction, and true crime in addition to his fiction.

MURDER IN THE STRATOSPHERE (1938) displays his knowledge of science with its tale of a balloon expedition into space to do what satellites do so much better now: forecasting the weather. One of the crew dies in the air, creating a sensation since the victim was broadcasting live from twenty miles up when stricken. The death might have been passed as due to natural causes were it not for Dr. Thomas Morton who claims that it was due to botulism poisoning.

Laurence makes the journey compelling since the balloon is due to go up 25 miles, "higher than any humans have ever gone," on "the greatest adventure the world had yet known." The trip is suspenseful, and the detection stimulating. Unfortunately, limning characters is not a particular Laurence strength. Of the five people in the balloon (not counting the victim), two are almost complete ciphers, so the number of legitimate suspects is small. There are a few good fair-play clues, though most of the detection and the motivation, are far from persuasive. Still, Laurence writes well and does a good job of creating additional interest by holding his solution until almost the very end.

Books About the Mystery

It's hard to think of anyone more important to the mystery field than Anthony Boucher, and finally he has his own biography. Better than that, **ANTHONY BOUCHER: A BIOBIBLIOGRAPHY** by Jeffrey Marks features a remarkably complete listing of all that the prolific Boucher wrote. A bonus is finding, in one place, all of Boucher's selections of the best mysteries of each year, as he published them each December, from 1951 through 1967, in his "Criminals at Large" column in the New York Times Book Review. This book is published in trade paperback, for \$35, by McFarland (phone 800-253-2187 or on the web at www.mcfarlandpub.com).

Other pluses in this book include discussion of how far ahead of his time Boucher was on social issues and his translations of Latin American mysteries, including the first by Jorge Luis Borges to appear in English. We get a good picture of the various illnesses that beset Boucher, who appears not to have had a truly healthy day in his life. His mother was a doctor and accompanied him when, as an adult, his chronic asthma forced him to go away for periods to the desert. I wish there was more information on their relationship.

With all that is good in this book, there are also distractions. There are grammatical errors and some awkward word usage. "Typos" are many, as is repetition. The biographical portion of the book is divided into Boucher as respectively man, author, editor, and critic. His radio work is repeated in two places, as is discussion of his

speed reading and the short hand notes he took for the books he reviewed.

More serious are errors of omission or fact. Marks says that Boucher was unpopular as a college student but provides no documentation. Similarly, there is reference to the Baker Street Irregulars not liking the Sherlockian musical Baker Street, but no reasons are given. The **EQMM** contests of the 1940s and 1950s were not “readers’ contests.” The magazine’s readers contests did not begin until 1985. Marks says that there was no United Nations edition of **EQMM**; there was, the August 1948 number. It is not true that only the U.S. and Britain have held Bouchercons; Canada held two of them. Basil Rathbone did 14 feature films as Sherlock Holmes, not 16. “Rache” is scrawled in blood on a wall in **A Study in Scarlet**, not in **The Sign of the Four**.

All of these errors are easily correctable in a second edition of this book, and make no mistake, this is an important book and one that deserves to have a long shelf life. Meanwhile, read it and learn about the Boucher who was so important to the mystery well before there was a Bouchercon named after him.

Doom with a View

Those of an age (well, my age) may remember Ernie Kovacs, one of the great innovators of the 1950s, the Golden Age of television. His imaginative use of the camera in an age of live television was remarkable. Less well known is Kovacs’s connection to the mystery.



Ernie Kovacs

Kovacs started as an announcer and radio personality for a Trenton, New Jersey, station in the 1940s. One of his continuing series was as private eye Paris Greene in “The Last Time I Saw Paris.” Think of Garrison Keilor’s private eye series Guy Noir on Prairie Home Companion.

In the early 1950s, on CBS’s TV program Kovacs Unlimited, Ernie and his second wife Edie Adams played “Mr. and Mrs. South,” a take-off on the Lockridges’ characters who were then featured in a popular television series. Kovacs also played “Martin Krutch, Public Eye” in a take-off on another series, Martin Kane, Private Eye.

Two of Kovacs’s best roles had a tangential connection to crime fiction. On September 26, 1957 on Playhouse 90 he played in Marcel Pagnol’s *Topaze* as a simple school teacher taken in by a con man. Henry Slesar’s short story “Symbol of Authority” was televised on the Desilu Playhouse on February 2, 1959; it had been published in **EQMM** in May 1957. Kovacs played a mild-mannered man who wears a stethoscope and walks the corridors of a hospital. He never pretends to practice medicine, but the recognition he receives from strangers gives him great satisfaction.

About two weeks later, on February 15, 1959, Kovacs returned as a private eye, on G.E. Theater, in “I Was a Bloodhound.” He played private eye Barney Colby who is attempting to find a kidnaped elephant using his well-developed powers of smell. Kovacs was Maximilian Krob, a mystery writer accused of murder, in “Author at Work,” which aired April 11, 1960 on Alcoa/Goodyear Theater. It was adapted from a Friedrich Duerrenmatt story.

Kovacs’s last crime-related television appearance was in “Private Eye, Private Eye” on the U.S. Steel Hour on March 8, 1961. This consisted of three sketches, all crime-related. The first was called “The Case of the Nairobi Safe Robbery.” (Fans of Kovacs with long memories will recall the very funny ape group, the Nairobi Trio, playing music on his programs.) Second was “The Private Eye.” It was set in 1901 and featured his effete poet Percy Dovetonsils as a detective. The third sketch was called “The Cavendish Pilferage.”

Private detectives played a part of Kovacs’s real life in the 1950s when, after he had been given custody of his two little girls following a divorce, his first wife kidnaped them. The detectives helped find them in Florida where she had taken them.

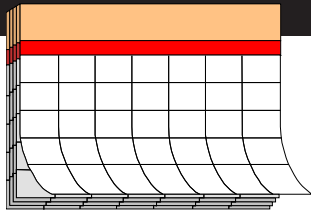
Kovacs had always driven cars too fast. He died at age 43, on January 12, 1962 in an auto crash that was believed to be due to a combination of slick roads, alcohol, and apparent inattention because he was attempting to light one of his trademark cigars as he drove.

One of the best mystery novels I ever read, Edgar Lustgarten’s **A CASE TO ANSWER** (1947; U.S. title: **ONE MORE UNFORTUNATE**), could have been an equally good film. This is the story of Arthur Groome, a husband and father, on trial for his life on a charge of killing a prostitute. I can recall few more dramatic handlings of a criminal trial in a mystery. Never having visited Old Bailey, I can only say that the setting seemed authentic to me. (Perhaps **DP** contributors – and attorneys – Martin Edwards and Philip Scowcroft can better address the issue of authenticity.)

Lustgarten’s book was filmed in 1951 as *The Long, Dark Corridor*, not a very good change of title. The courtroom scenes – and those outside it – are atmospherically filmed, and they prove that black and white photography is usually best for crime films. The cast is consistently good. Rex Harrison is well cast, from his own life experience, as an unfaithful husband. Lilli Palmer, whose lovely picture graced my last “Doom with a View,” is excellent as the wife who sticks by her roving husband. Especially noteworthy is the performance as a fanatical killer by Anthony Dawson, known for his role in the original Broadway production of *Dial “M” for Murder*. (No, I haven’t given any surprises away.)

Why does *The Long, Dark Corridor* disappoint, in addition to having a meaningless title? I can’t recall a worse change of the ending of a mystery novel. I can’t say too much, for fear of revealing too much about the novel, but “sappy” is the best I can say about the movie’s ending.

THE DP CALENDAR



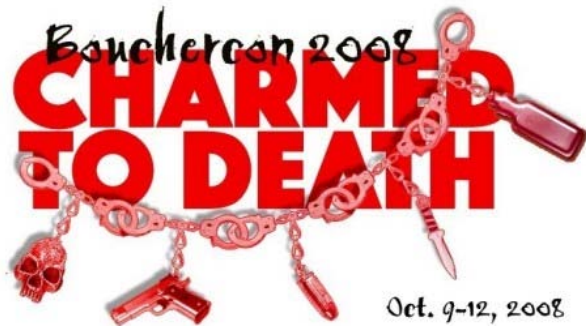
HARROWGATE CRIME FESTIVAL

July 17-20, 2008

Harrowgate, Yorkshire, England

Guests include Andy McNab, Peter Robinson, Robert Crais, Jeffery Deaver and Tess Gerritsen

Website: harrogate-festival.org.uk/crime/



BOUCHERCON 2008

CHARMED TO DEATH

October 9-12, 2008

Baltimore, Maryland

US Guest of Honor: Laura Lippman

International Guest of Honor: John Harvey

Toastmaster: Mark Billingham

GoH - Contribution to the Genre: Barbara Peters

GoH - Contribution to the Genre: Rob Rosenwald

E-mail: ruth@crimspreemag.com

Blog: bouchercon2008.blogspot.com

MAGNA CUM MURDER

October 24-26, 2008

Muncie, Indiana

Guest of Honor: Louise Penny

One Festival, One Book: **Brat Farrar** by Josephine Tey

Registration: \$215 (includes several meals)

Email: magnacummurder@yahoo.com

Website: www.magnacummurder.com

NEW ENGLAND CRIME BAKE

November 14-16, 2008

Hilton Hotel, Dedham, Massachusetts

Boston, Massachusetts Area

Guest of Honor: Harlan Coben

Email: contact@crimebake.org

Website: crimebake.org/index.htm

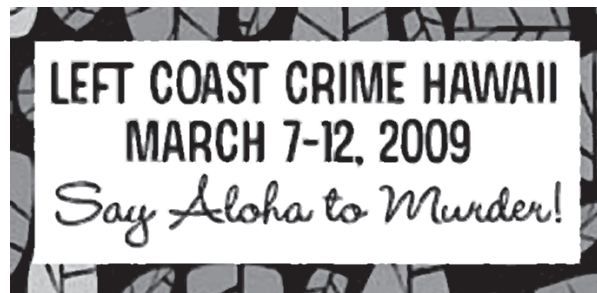
LOVE IS MURDER

February 6-8, 2009

Chicago, Illinois

Guests of Honor: Jeffrey Deaver, Alex Kava, Steve Berry, Sharan Newman and Raymond Benson

Website: www.loveismurder.net



LEFT COAST CRIME

SAY ALOHA TO CRIME

March 7-12, 2009

Waikoloa Beach Resort (Marriott) The Big Island, Hawaii

Toastmaster: Lee Goldberg

Guests of Honor: Rhys Bowen & Barry Eisler

Fan Guests of Honor: Vallery Feldman & Pam Dehnke

Ghost of Honor: Earl Derr Biggers

Fee: \$175 until end of this year's Bouchercon

Website: www.leftcoastcrime.org/2009

MALICE DOMESTIC XXI

May 1-3, 2009

Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel

Arlington, Virginia

Guests of Honor: Not announced yet

Email: info@malicedomestic.org

Website: www.malicedomestic.org



BOUCHERCON 2009

October 15-18, 2009

Indianapolis, Indiana

Guest of Honor: Michael Connelly

Toastmaster: S.J. Rozan

Fan Guest of Honor: Kathryn Kennison

Co-chairs: Jim Huang and Mike Bursaw

E-mail: jim@themysterycompany.com

Website: www.bouchercon2009.com

Fee: Early Bird Rate for first 200 registrants: \$125.00

CHILD 44 by Tom Rob Smith (Grand Central, \$24.99, April, 2008)

REVIEWED TO DEATH

Bev DeWeese

From the first page, **CHILD 44** is a brutal, mesmerizing story. In 1953, a young boy is found dead in Moscow with dirt in his mouth and part of his stomach removed. However, Leo Demidov, an extremely loyal member of the State Security Force, is terribly annoyed when he is ordered to investigate this incident. After all, the murder of anyone, especially a child, is not a crime that officially exists, and Leo has important dissidents to arrest. But then he stumbles over another murdered child, and he reluctantly begins to think that “murder,” as opposed to lawful state executions, might actually exist. Of course, no one else accepts his idea, and Leo quickly realizes how difficult it is to investigate something that simply does not exist. But, as other similar murders occur, Leo risks his career and his life because he must know who is killing these children.

Russians in the 1930s endured incredible starvation and hardship. So, in the 1950s, Leo, like many other citizens, is blindingly loyal to a government that, though cruel, has generally helped a lot of Russians. Now they have some food, and housing is available, though there are 6-10 people in a 2-room apartment. Of course, the state does arrest people rather capriciously, and no one trusts anyone. At one point, Leo even suspects his own wife, and he legitimately mistrusts his superiors and co-workers. So, when he investigates a “murder,” he is putting himself and his family in grave danger, for he too could be accused of treason.

In some ways, this is a difficult book to read because Smith often shows that people are forced to do despicable things so they and their children can survive. The near starvation, the casual cruelty, the loss of hope, and the constant fear of the government are pervasive. (Pet warning, a cat is killed for food.)

Still, Smith tells a fascinating story of a damaged, sometimes sympathetic serial killer. Totally unfamiliar with homicide investigation and without any forensics equipment, Leo doggedly persists in tracking down his suspect. With no training, he relies on observation and common sense. And, because of his search for the murderer, he almost loses his wife, his job, and his life. Finally, Leo’s inner struggle to believe that “murder” exists is a very unique, interesting part of the book.

Though the serial killer plot is not terribly original, it is powerful and we want to see Leo face the killer. Actually, some readers may guess the killer’s identity before Leo, but it is still a chilling denouement. Because of the unusual hook (crime does not exist) and because of the vivid writing, I would definitely recommend this book. **Rating: A-**

Maggie Mason

I really enjoyed this book. Though it started out well, during the first third or so, I was easily distracted. The last two-thirds of the book were much more compelling. I felt as if I were really living the life of a Cold-War Russian citizen. There was some brutality in the book, but it was very necessary to the story and in keeping with the time being portrayed. A truly impressive debut novel. Unique. **Rating: A**

Marv Lachman

The first two-thirds of **CHILD 44** certainly lived up to all its advance praise. Besides being a story of a serial killer of children, it presented a harrowing picture of the starvation wrought by Stalin’s campaign against peasants not ready to give their land to the state. It also presents a sobering picture of the kind of thought control and fear present in the Soviet regime. Such is the paranoia that almost any activity or even thoughts can lead to someone being called a traitor and tortured. (This history is worth remembering currently when ex-KGB agent Vladimir Putin is considered just another world leader). Even basically decent security agent

Leo Demidov operates under the idea of “Better to let ten innocent men suffer than one spy escape.” A fundamental principle of his work is the presumption of guilt. We read of him thinking, “It was four in the morning, arresting hour – the best time to seize a person, to grab them from their sleep.” What causes Leo finally to question the system is one of the fascinating aspects of this book.

Tom Rob Smith’s use of italics for conversation was distracting. More often, italics in books are used to denote inner thoughts. Still, that was not cause for the book to drop from great to merely very good. The flaws started at page 294 of a 436 page book when Smith suddenly discloses the identity of the killer. Furthermore, the motivation for killing 44 children is not convincing. If we can’t accept that motivation, we are left with one of the biggest coincidences I can recall in fiction. Perhaps I had been naive in thinking this would be a strong detective story in addition to being so powerful a novel. The book changes from a political detective story to a thriller. Still, it is a powerful thriller with the scenes of Leo and his wife on the run and certainly a very worthwhile book. **Rating: A**

Donus Roberts

CHILD 44 is the best crime novel that I have read in the last half dozen years, and I have read my share of good crime novels. I view the novel as a seamless combination of the thriller and the mystery. My experience is that most thrillers have little mystery to them, and most traditional mysteries shy away from one spine-chilling challenge after another. That a twenty eight year old wrote this novel, his first, is mind-boggling. What a future!

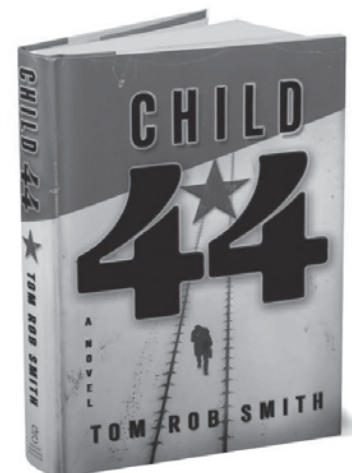
Without a doubt, Tom Rob Smith found a historical niche in which to set his novel: Post World War II USSR, with flashbacks to pre-World War II civilian purges. Stalin, of course is the dictator and no one does it better; he dies in the course of the book which does make a big difference. This period of time has been successfully mined by a cadre of authors, but always in Germany or its allies or Western Europe. Until recently little was known about social conditions in 1950’s Russia.

This is a very dark novel. In fact, riveting as the story was, I occasionally had to pause and take a deep breath. As the novel chugged its way through 436 pages, I wondered how this train wreck was ever going to end with anyone left standing. However, the ending is brilliant and uplifting.

Leo Stepanovich Demidov and his wife Raisa are the main characters. Leo has a middle-level job in the MGB, the State Security Force. Essentially, his job is to make sure all those who do not toe the State line 100% are either killed or sent to a Gulag. Because of his job, he and Raisa have enough to eat, a decent place to live, and benefits for his parents. It is an acceptable life so long as one plays the Kremlin game and forgets about old-fashioned ideas such as right and wrong.

The novel takes its name from a murder spree that claims the lives of 44 children along the railroad that runs between Moscow and Rostov. Although more than 44

children are ultimately killed and gutted, the book’s title comes when Leo figures out that at least 44 children have been killed along the rail line without any town connecting the murders. There are no police, only secret police. The Russians only know what goes on in their communities; they understand that survival is possible only if no one raises a question about anything, including their children being murdered. The MGB authorities early on decided that one person (totally innocent) committed the crimes so a further investigation could only contradict earlier mistakes, and mistakes are unacceptable.



One of Smith’s writing characteristics that is particularly effective is a personal omniscient voice, particularly in dialogue that is real and that which occurs in the mind only. It does take a while to adjust to Smith’s style.

The real puzzle in the novel is how the lives of the characters are connected. From the opening chapter we know information that seems irrelevant until later in the novel. In this way Tom Rob Smith plays very fair with his readers.

This novel has it all: a plot that is relentless, a backdrop of fascinating history, a great love story, one man and one woman against the overwhelming State, a villain, self-discovery and redemption. **Rating: A**

Jay Waggoner

It’s too bad the set up on this one is so long. Persisting for 200 pages before the meat of the story begins is something most casual readers won’t do. Once the story heats up it almost becomes a page-turner. Smith’s Russian detective and his wife are human enough, they work to overcome insurmountable odds, a lot can be learned about the repression and the police-state environment of an early 1950’s Russia, and Smith writes well. I’m sure the movie that is to be made will pick up the early pace considerably. Let’s hope so. Tom Rob Smith shows a lot of promise. But I’ve got a strong feeling that many readers who buy the book based on the hype it’s getting are going to be left wondering “Where’s the beef?” **Rating: B-**

Ted Hertel, Jr.

My first impressions of **CHILD 44** were twofold: First, Tom Rob Smith was using a hundred words where one would have done just fine. Second, after about thirty pages the story seemed to drift well away from the child murders I had thought were the centerpiece of the book.

Further, all conversation was done without attribution and in italics without use of quotation marks.

So much for first impressions. Smith has told a remarkable story here, one that deserves every word he was using to give us the background necessary to get the story to its gripping conclusion. This is a compelling (a word I do not use all that often) tale that moves along in such a suspenseful fashion that it is truly difficult to believe this is a first novel. Furthermore, Smith does this with such well developed characters that the reader's emotions are tossed from side to side as the protagonist, Leo Stepanovich Demidov, is at first reviled as a tool of the Soviet State in 1953 and then as the only one with the courage to stand up and fight for the truth to be known. This, in an era of Stalinist oppression and persecution, where the State can do no wrong and an individual can do no right.

The insight into the Soviet Union under Stalin, with its torture and wholesale murder of innocents who dare speak a word against the government, is frightening, to say the least. Smith evokes this era with a sure hand, showing a dictator without mercy and a populace wrapped in fear of family and neighbors turning them in for the slightest offense. For many there is simply no hope while Stalin lives. For others, they try to take advantage of opportunities to rid themselves of hated enemies.

Meanwhile, Smith keeps the surprises coming as no one is who he or she appears to be, and events turn on themselves and morph into something more dangerous than first believed. While there are some pretty amazing coincidences, for once they do not actually mar the story, but rather enhance it. So for a book this engrossing, this thrilling, this dynamic, this energetic and fast-paced, I guess I can easily overlook some missing quotation marks.

Rating: A

Larry Gandle

Leo Demidov is a member of the feared MGB or State Security force in Stalin's Soviet Union. He is a very competent, ruthless and powerful inspector with an aptitude for solving crimes. He is also a well-respected military hero and married to a beautiful woman. With the perks that go with his job, life for Leo is as good as it gets in Soviet Russia. It is this well structured and enviable life that comes crashing down when his wife is declared a spy and Leo is asked to investigate her activities. Anything short of proof of her guilt will not go well for Leo and his parents. Adding to the pressure of his current situation, Leo is haunted by the deaths of young children, who appear to have been killed by a serial killer. Problem: the strict party line is that there are no serial killers in the worker's paradise. If the party were to be proved wrong, party officials would not be happy. Nevertheless, Leo feels compelled to solve these crimes no matter the cost.

Tom Rob Smith, in his debut effort, has given us a vivid glimpse into the lives of the Soviet people under the Stalinist regime. It is a world based on fear and suspicion, where members of the society are almost always doomed to failure. Thankfully, it is now only of historical interest.



Tom Rob Smith

Yet, there is a sense of originality to the novel despite the setting, which most of us are familiar with, having lived through the Cold War. The story is absorbing and the characters well fleshed out. Some of the printing and writing techniques are a bit unorthodox, such as dialogue written in italics without quotation marks, and points of view changing from one paragraph to another. These are not necessarily problems in that they were done intentionally and result in something of a unique style. In future works I would hope that Smith tightens up the plot and leaves out some or all of the lengthy, descriptive segments of the book that were pointless and only served to bulk up the number of pages. We may not learn as much about the background of the story, but the pacing would be greatly improved. In my world, pacing trumps boring description every day.

There is a lot of buzz in the publishing world about this book and much of it is warranted. It is a worthwhile read, not only for thriller fans, but for those who love a solid, all-encompassing historical novel that seems to nail an era that is thankfully long gone.

Rating: A-

NEXT REVIEWED TO DEATH TITLE



LETTERS



Marv Lachman, Santa Fe, New Mexico

There was much to disagree with in the *Daily Telegraph's* "50 Great Crime Writers You Should Read Before You Die." Certainly, the omission of Michael Connelly is inexplicable, as is not including Ellery Queen. Also missing are Cornell Woolrich, Edward D. Hoch, Anthony Berkeley, R. Austin Freeman, Freeman Wills Crofts, Margaret Millar, and, as Mike Ripley pointed out, Ross Macdonald, Rex Stout, and John D. MacDonald. Being addicted to making lists, I found that I agreed with the choices of 30 of the 50 as being worth reading before death or other permanent disability. There were 8 whom I had never read. Finally, I disagreed with the choice of 12, namely: Ellroy, van der Wetering, Fyfield, Mankell, Highsmith, Burke, Thompson, Mosley, Mina, McIlvanney, Higgins, and Pelecanos.

I was glad to see Mike Ripley praise the reprinting of Reginald Hill's **THERE ARE NO GHOSTS IN THE SOVIET UNION**, as I recall it being an excellent volume. Especially noteworthy was the Dalziel-Pascoe short story "Auteur Theory."

Jeff Meyerson, Brooklyn, New York

George, as per your request in the latest *DP*, here are some authors I would include on my top 50 list who were left off the *Telegraph's* list: Michael Connelly, Bill Pronzini, Marcia Muller, Ross Thomas, John D. MacDonald, Peter Robinson, Ken Bruen, Thomas H. Cook, Lee Child, James Sallis

If I had to remove 10 to make room they would be: James Grady, John Lawton (don't know him, sorry), Benjamin Black (too new, as a crime writer), Dan Kavanagh (though I like his books), Stieg Larsson (only 3 books, with only one published in English), Colin Bateman, Friedrich Durrenmatt, Kyril Bonfiglioli, William McIlvanney, Denise Mina

[Editor's Note: *the problem that I have with any list like this: the top 50 Crime Writers, is that there are more than 50 great crime writers, so one will always be leaving very deserving writers off such a list. And there will always be included on such a list a few quirky favorites of the person or people who compile the list – much to the dismay of knowledgeable readers.*]

Gayle Lynds, Santa Barbara, California

I just wanted to congratulate you, and thank you, for the wonderful roundup of female thriller authors. Some of them I'd not heard of and will now definitely check out. I particularly liked the piece because it didn't pander,

wasn't PC, and was your usual straight-ahead this-is-what-we-think approach.

I'm truly astounded at how long it's taken women to enter the field. It was one hell of a struggle for me, but I always figured it was because I was first, and that it was during the doldrums of the 1990s. But it seems to me that women are still having a rough time – otherwise there would've been more for you to list. My take about thriller readers is that most don't care whether a man, woman, or monkey wrote the book. They have one simple (well, not so simple to write) demand – a rousing good tale, and that includes fine characterization, a certain thoughtfulness of theme and content, and, of course, terrific action. I love thriller readers! And I wanted to thank you, too, for your kind mentions of me. I appreciate it.

Mike Galbraith, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Was pleased to grab **DP53** out of the mailbox yesterday and spend some time with it. It's another good issue. I was glad to see Zoé Sharp on the cover; I met her last September at Jim Huang's The Mystery Company in Carmel, Ind., where she gave a fine talk, and I later read and liked a good deal **FIRST SHOT**. I'll have to spend more time with the issue in the coming days.

But I didn't want to wait any longer to tell you that I'm surprised that Larry Gandle gave David Corbett's **BLOOD OF PARADISE** an "F" in his Edgar roundup. I've read Larry's *DP* reviews for some time, and I generally agree with him. In fact, I'll go along with most of his ratings of the other books in this issue that I've also read. But, I can't agree with the slam he puts on the Corbett book (which he failed to finish reading). Certainly, this is a complex, challenging novel that deeply delves into El Salvador's politics, living conditions, violence, government, economics, corruption and relations with the United States (the human relationships Corbett presents are also complex). And, I suspect, many readers won't like the conclusions that Corbett reaches. But, this is a serious, ambitious, well-written book that rises above genre and has earned praise from many other reviewers, including Patrick Anderson, and writers (Pelecanos, Michael Connelly, John Connolly and Dan Fesperman). I only haul in those folks for defense of "what the hell does Galbreath know." By the way, Corbett's **DONE FOR A DIME** is also a superb book (I've yet to read his **THE DEVIL'S REDHEAD**).

Corbett and **BLOOD OF PARADISE** deserve better from *DP*. And I think your readers deserve better, too. Many will disregard **BLOOD OF PARADISE** because of the review. And that would be a shame because the book, easily the most ambitious of the five Edgar BPO nominees, deserves a wide readership.

Larry Gandle replies: "Mike, I fully understand how you feel about my review of David Corbett's book. I can only call it as I see it. Obviously, others disagree with me in that it was nominated for an Edgar. I know full well I miss the mark completely at times according to a lot of readers. However, I can only review books based on my own reaction. Remember, reviews are fully subjective and can

be dependant on not only the book itself, but the state of mind of the reviewer. By the time I read the Corbett, I was not at all up for a long complex political diatribe. So it might well be my problem. I attempted to apologize in advance with my assistant editor's column. I am sorry I disappointed you with my review and I hope readers will still give the Corbett book a chance."

Carl Melton, Nashville, Tennessee

Just wanted to let you know that I enjoyed the reviews of **THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO** in the recent **DP** issues. Also the positive buzz at the Stieg Larsson website. Two things I noticed about the American edition coming out by Knopf in September. 1. The cover art is 100% better than the British cover art. 2. The British edition is 572 pages. The American edition will be 480 pages. (92 pages less if I'm doing my math correctly). I did

read a while back maybe on your website or another mystery site that the translator was not pleased with what the British publishers did with his work. Maybe Knopf is taking note of this and using the original translation. [Ed. Note: I read the British edition. It was long, but I loved every moment of the reading experience.]

Michelle Duff, Severn House Publicity

I wanted to mention that we read your article entitled 'How to buy "cheap" British books' with interest, and just wanted to let you know that Severn House titles can all be ordered through our US distributor, for maximum US\$28.95, which is far less than your average price quoted of \$40-\$50. [Ed. Note: I mentioned the U.S. distribution of Severn House, but failed to point out that the prices were far less than when ordering directly from England. Thanks for the clarification.]

The Anthony Award Nominees 2008

Best Novel

James Lee Burke, **TIN ROOF BLOWDOWN** Simon and Schuster
Lee Child, **BAD LUCK AND TROUBLE** Delacorte Press
Robert Crais, **THE WATCHMAN** Simon and Schuster
William Kent Krueger, **THUNDER BAY** Atria
Laura Lippman, **WHAT THE DEAD KNOW** William Morrow

Best First Novel

Sean Chercover, **BIG CITY, BAD BLOOD** William Morrow
Tana French, **IN THE WOODS** Viking
Lisa Lutz, **THE SPELLMAN FILES** Simon and Schuster
Craig McDonald, **HEAD GAMES** Bleak House Books
Marcus Sakey, **THE BLADE ITSELF** St. Martin Minotaur

Best Paperback Original

Megan Abbott, **QUEENPIN** Simon and Schuster
Ken Bruen and Jason Starr, **SLIDE** Hard Case Crime
David Corbett, **BLOOD OF PARADISE** Ballantine Books
Robert Fate, **BABY SHARK'S BEAUMONT BLUES** Capital Crime Press
P.J. Parrish, **A THOUSAND BONES** Pocket

Best Short Story

Rhys Bowen, "Please Watch Your Step" (*The Strand Magazine* – Spring 07)
Steve Hockensmith, "Dear Dr. Watson" (*EQMM*)
Toni L. P. Kelner, "How Stella Got her Grave Back" (*Many Bloody Returns*)
Laura Lippman, "Hardly Knew Her" (*Dead Man's Hand* edited by Otto Penzler) Harcourt
Daniel Woodrell "Uncle" (*A Hell of A Woman: An Anthology of Female Noir* edited by Megan Abbott) Busted Flush Press

Best Critical Work

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE: A LIFE IN LETTERS by Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower & Charles Foley
THE ESSENTIAL MYSTERY LISTS Compiled by Roger Sobin Poisoned Pen Press
THE TRIUMPH OF THE THRILLER: How Cops, Crooks and Cannibals Captured Popular Fiction -- Patrick Anderson
DEVIANCE IN CONTEMPORARY CRIME FICTION -- Christiana Gregoriou Palgrave

Special Services

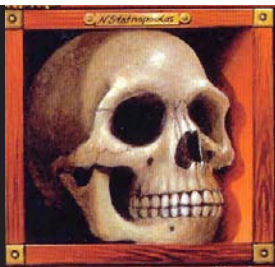
Jon and Ruth Jordan -- *Crime Spree Magazine*
Ali Karim -- *Shots Magazine*
Maddy Van Hertbruggen -- *4MA*
Sarah Weinman -- Confessions of an Idiosyncratic Mind
Judy Bobalik

Best Web Site

Confessions of an Idiosyncratic Mind -- Sarah Weinman
Rap sheet/January Magazine -- J Kingston Pierce
Murderati -- A Writer's Blog
Stop You're Killing Me -- Stan Ulrich & Lucinda Surber
Crime Fiction Dossier -- David Montgomery

THE DP LIST

Best Mystery-Crime Novels of 2008



BEST NOVEL

****WILD INFERNO**, Ault, Sandi (Berkley, \$23.95). Wild Indigo introduced rough-and-ready Bureau of Land Management agent Jamaica Wild. Now she returns, deployed to a wildfire on the Southern Ute reservation, where a puzzling plea whispered by a burning man points to a mystery more menacing than murder. **PW & LJ**

****A FLAW IN THE BLOOD**, Barron, Stephanie (Bantam, \$24.00). An enquiry into the death of Queen Victoria's beloved Prince Consort. **DP**

****THE SILVER SWAN**, Black, Benjamin (Holt, \$25.00). The inimitable Quirke—the irascible, formerly hard-drinking Dublin pathologist—returns in another spellbinding crime novel, in which a young woman's dubious suicide sets off a new string of hazards and deceptions. **PW, BL & LJ**

****BLUE HEAVEN**, Box, C.J. (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). With true-to-life, unforgettable characters, Box has created a thriller that delves into issues close to the heart—the pervasiveness of greed, the banality of evil, and the truth about what constitutes a family. **BL, Kirkus & DP**

****BLOOD TRAIL**, Box, C.J. (Putnam, \$24.95). When an elk hunter is shot and gruesomely gutted, Wyoming governor Spencer Rulon assigns Joe to the investigative team headed by Joe's nemesis, game and fish director Randy Pope. **BL & LJ**

****CROSS**, Bruen, Ken (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$23.95). Jack Taylor investigates a gruesome crucifixion in Galway, in the fifth entry in this critically acclaimed, award-winning series. **BL, PW & DP**

****PALACE COUNCIL**, Carter, Stephen H. (Random House, \$26.95). Philmont Castle is a man who has it all: wealth, respect, and connections. He's the last person you'd expect to fall prey to a murderer, but when his body is found on the grounds of a Harlem mansion, the young writer Eddie Wesley, along with the woman he loves, Aurelia Treene, are pulled into a twenty-year search for the truth. **PW, BL & Kirkus**

****A PERSON OF INTEREST**, Choi, Susan (Viking, \$24.95). Intricately plotted and emotionally riveting, **A Person of Interest** asks how far one man can run from his past, and explores the impact of scrutiny and suspicion in an age of terror. **BL & PW**

****HOLD TIGHT**, Coben, Harlan (Dutton, \$26.95). Coben asks the provocative and terrifying question: How much do parents really want to know about their kids and how far will they go to find out? **PW, LJ & BL**

****THE BRASS VERDICT**, Connelly, Michael (Little, Brown, \$26.99). When Hollywood lawyer Jerry Vincent is murdered, Haller inherits his biggest case yet: the defense of Walter Elliott, a prominent studio executive accused of murdering his wife and her lover. But as Haller prepares for the case that could launch him into the big time, he learns that Vincent's killer may be coming for him next. Enter Harry Bosch. Determined to find Vincent's killer, he is not opposed

to using Haller as bait. **DP**

****MASTER OF THE DELTA**, Cook, Thomas H. (Harcourt, \$24.00). June, 2008. 1954 Mississippi. Jack Branch teaches a class in historical evil and encourages a student (who happens to be the son of a notorious killer) to investigate his father's crimes. But the investigation starts getting uncomfortably close to Jack's own family. **BL, PW & DP**

****BLACKMAN'S COFFIN**, De Castrique, Mark (Poisoned Pen, \$24.95). Sam Blackman is an angry man. A Chief Warrant Officer in the Criminal Investigation Detachment of the U.S. military, he lost a leg in Iraq. His outspoken criticism of his medical treatment resulted in his transfer to the Veteran's Hospital in Asheville, NC. Then an ex-marine and fellow amputee named Tikima Robertson walks into his hospital room. Tikima hints that she has an opportunity for Sam to use his investigative skills—if he can stop feeling sorry for himself. But before she can return, Tikima is murdered, her body found floating in the river. **LJ & PW**

****THE POISONER OF PTAH**, Doherty, Paul (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). A new novel of murder in the reign of Pharaoh Hatusu featuring Judge Amerotkeas the crime solver. **PW & LJ**

****TERRA INCOGNITA**, Downie, Ruth (Bloomsbury, \$23.95). Army doctor Gaius Petreius Ruso strikes out for the uncivilized borders of Roman Britain in this highly anticipated sequel to Downie's debut, **Medicus**. **Kirkus & PW**

****GAS CITY**, Estleman, Loren D. (Forge, \$25.95). Setting this drama in a blue-collar metropolis dominated by an oil company, Estleman crafts a fascinating, deadly tapestry of love, ambition, revenge, and redemption—in all, a stunning portrait of the human condition. **PW, Booklist, PW & Kirkus**

****PLUM LUCKY**, Evanovich, Janet (St. Martin's, \$17.95). Diesel's back and hot on the trail of a little man in green pants who's lost a giant bag of money. Problem is, the money isn't exactly lost. Stephanie Plum's Grandma Mazur has found it, and like any good Jersey senior citizen, she's hightailed it in a Winnebago to Atlantic City and hit the slots. **DP**

****THE SERPENT'S TALE**, Franklin, Ariana (Putnam, \$25.95). Franklin combines the best of modern forensic thrillers with the drama of historical fiction in the enthralling second novel in the Mistress of the Art of Death series, featuring medieval heroine Adelia Aguilar. **Kirkus & DP**

****THE LIKENESS**, French, Tana (Penguin, \$24.95). Six months after the events of **In the Woods**, Detective

Cassie Maddox is still trying to recover. Another gripping psychological thriller featuring the headstrong protagonist. **PW & BL**

****THE DIRTY SECRETS CLUB**, Gardiner, Meg (Dutton, \$24.95). Dr. Jo Beckett, a forensic psychiatrist (or deadshrinker), performs psychological autopsies to uncover the truths behind grisly crimes. Recruited to consult on the possible suicide of prosecutor Callie Harding, who drove her BMW off a San Francisco bridge and struck an airport minivan on the road below, Jo discovers this accident is the latest in a string of high profile murder-suicides. **DP**

****CARELESS IN RED**, George, Elizabeth (HarperCollins, \$27.95). Scotland Yard's Thomas Lynley is caught in the middle of a seemingly perfect crime. **PW & LJ**

****THE FORGERY OF VENUS**, Gruber, Michael (Morrow, \$24.95). Gruber creates a fascinating world of secrets, genius, and conspiracies and combines it with brilliant storytelling, complex characterizations, and sterling prose to produce this spellbinding novel. **Kirkus, PW & BL**

****CHEATING AT SOLITAIRE**, Haddam, Jane (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). Former FBI agent Gregor Demarkian, fleeing from his own wedding preparations, is hired to review a case--one that he finds has little evidence and twisted by an out-of-control media--in what may be the most compelling case of his entire career. **PW, BL, Kirkus & LJ**

****GAME OVER**, Harrod-Eagles, Cynthia (Severn House, \$28.95). A Bill Slider Mystery -- When ex-BBC correspondent Ed Stonax is found dead, the last thing Detective Inspector Slider needs to complicate his life is the reappearance of an

old enemy issuing death threats. Trevor Bates, aka The Needle, is on the loose and trying to kill him, and with a high-profile murder to solve, Slider must try to find a spare moment to marry Joanna before their baby is born and stay alive long enough to do it. **BL & DP**

****GONE TO GROUND**, Harvey, John (Harcourt, \$25.00). When police detective Will Grayson and his partner, Helen Walker, investigate the violent death of Stephen Bryan, a gay academic, their first thoughts are of an ill-judged sexual encounter or a fatal lovers quarrel. But they soon shift focus to the book Bryan was writing about a film stars mysterious death. **Kirkus & Booklist**

****MUMMY DEAREST**, Hess, Joan (St. Martin's, \$24.95). After a somewhat long and, at times, strange courtship, Claire Malloy -- a single, widowed mother of a teenage daughter and a bookseller in Farberville, Arkansas - has finally said 'I do' to her swain, Lt. Peter Rosen of the Farberville Police Department. Now they are on their honeymoon in Luxor, Egypt. Then things go bad. **DP**

****WHAT NEVER HAPPENS**, Holt, Anne (Grand Central, \$24.99). All over Oslo, celebrities are turning up dead in the most macabre of situations. Its clear that the killer seeks some sort of retribution, but for what? New parents

Adam Stubo and Johanna Vik are reluctantly drawn into the investigation. **BL & DP**

****GOODBYE SISTER DISCO**, Hunt, James Patrick (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$23.95). In **The Betrayers**, Hunt introduced George Hastings, an even-handed St. Louis police detective who caught a dirty FBI agent. Now Hastings is back on the case when the daughter of a wealthy businessman is kidnapped and her boyfriend killed. **LJ & BL**

****THE DRAINING LAKE**, Indridason, Arnaldur (St. Martin's Minotaur). The declining water level of lake reveal human remains tied to Russian-made spy equipment. **DP**

****THE NIGHT FOLLOWING**, Joss, Morag (Dell, \$22.00). The quiet wife of a doctor discovers that her husband has been having an affair. Moments later, driving along a winding country road and distracted perhaps by her own thoughts, perhaps blinded by sunlight, she fails to see sixty-one-year-old Ruth Mitchell up ahead, riding her bicycle.

She hits her, killing her instantly. And drives away. **DP**

****THE WATER'S EDGE**, Judson, Daniel (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). When Jake "Payday" Bechet hears that two men have been murdered a few miles from where he lives in the Hamptons--hanged from the Shinnecock Bridge, their hands severed--he knows that trouble is coming. Trouble for him, for everyone, because it means that someone has betrayed the Castello crime family. Whether it's someone trying to move in on their drug operation or the cops making their own statement, he doesn't know, but he wants to stay far away from it all. **DP**

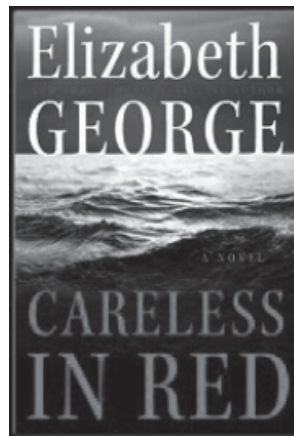
****TOUCHSTONE**, King, Laurie R. (Bantam, \$24.00). Laurie R. King takes us to a

remote cottage in Cornwall where a gripping tale of intrigue, terrorism, and explosive passions begins with a visit to a recluse upon whom the fate of an entire nation may rest. **Booklist, LJ & DP**

****HEAD WOUNDS**, Knopf, Chris (Permanent Press, \$28.00). Part-time carpenter, full-time drinker and co-conspirator with an existential mutt named Eddie Van Halen, Sam Aquino tries to lead the simple life. But as always, fate intervenes, this time in the form of Robbie Milhouser, local builder and blundering bully who shares at least one thing with Sam; an irresistible attraction to the beautiful Amanda Anselma. **PW & DP**

****THE HEADHUNTERS**, Lovesey, Peter (Soho Press, \$24.00). Gemma loathes her sleazy boss, which she confides in her friend Jo. On a double date with Rick and Jake, they discuss forming a mutual murder society, in jest of course. When three of Gemma's coworkers go missing, is it just a coincidence, or has the joke gone too far? **PW & DP**

****CURSE OF THE SPELLMANS**, Lutz, Lisa (Simon & Schuster, \$25.00). The "parental unit" started a private investigation business when Dad retired from police work. His wife assists him and their two daughters, Isabel, (Izzy) a



30-year-old with a habit of being arrested, and Rae, a 15-year-old Cheetos-loving teen, would like to think that they help out in the family business. Especially where Izzy is concerned, this is a stretch. This is the second adventure of this humorously dysfunctional family. **PW & DP**

****DEATH'S HALF ACRE**, Maron, Margaret (Grand Central, \$24.99). In the shadows, corrupt county commissioners use their political leverage to make profitable deals with new developers. A murder will pull Judge Deborah Knott and Sheriff's Deputy Dwight Bryant into the middle of this bitter dispute and force them to confront some dark realities. **PW & DP**

****THE KILLING ROOM**, May, Peter (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). After the mutilated bodies of 18 women are discovered in a mass grave in Shanghai, detective Li Yan and American pathologist Margaret Campbell arrive and are met by Mei-Ling, deputy head of the city's serious crime squad. The closer they get to the killer, the closer they come to realizing their own personal nightmares. **LJ, BL & DP**

****STILL WATERS**, McCrery, Nigel (Pantheon, \$23.95). When the badly decayed body of an elderly woman is unearthed, Detective Chief Inspector Mark Lapslie and his sergeant, Emma Bradbury, are called in on the case. **Kirkus & LJ**

****DEVIL'S PEAK**, Meyer, Deon (LittleBrown, \$24.99). From rising South African thriller writer Meyer comes a gripping suspense novel about revenge, forgiveness, and the race to catch a trained killer. **PW & DP**

****SLIP OF THE KNIFE**, Mina, Denise (LittleBrown, \$24.99). Paddy Meehan is no stranger to murder—as a reporter she lives at crime scenes—but nothing has prepared her for this visit from the police. Her former boyfriend and fellow journalist Terry Patterson has been found hooded and shot through the head. **Booklist & PW**

****L.A. OUTLAWS**, Parker, T. Jefferson (Dutton, \$24.95). Allison Murietta is a modern-day Jesse James with the compulsion to steal beautiful things, the vanity to invite the media along, and the conscience to donate much of her bounty to charity. Nobody ever gets hurt—until a job ends with ten gangsters lying dead and a half-million dollars worth of glittering diamonds missing. **Booklist & PW**

****BONE RATTLER**, Pattison, Eliot (Shoemaker & Hoard, \$26.00). Aboard a British convict ship bound for the New World, Duncan McCallum witnesses a series of murders and seeming suicides among his fellow Scottish prisoners that thrusts him into the bloody maw of the French and Indian War. As the only man aboard with any medical training, Duncan is ordered to assemble evidence to hold another prisoner accountable for the deaths—or face a lethal punishment. **PW, DP & LJ**

****THE TURNAROUND**, Pelecanos, George (LittleBrown, \$24.99). On a hot summer afternoon in 1972, three teenagers drove into an unfamiliar neighborhood and six lives were altered forever. Thirty five years later, one

survivor of that day reaches out to another, opening a door that could lead to salvation. But another survivor is now out of prison, looking for reparation in any form he can find it. **BL & Kirkus**

****THE CRUELEST MONTH**, Penny, Louise (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$23.95). The cozy, seemingly idyllic town of Three Pines is thrown into chaos when an impromptu sance turns deadly. In this complex, accomplished mystery, Chief Inspector Armand Gamache must confront a myriad of baffling questions surrounding the case. **Kirkus, LJ & PW**

****FEVER**, Pronzini, Bill (Forge, \$24.95). Nameless told Mitchell Krochek that he'd do whatever he could to find his missing wife, Janice, who is in the "fever" of her gambling addiction. She is found, but soon disappears again. **Kirkus & DP**

****THE CRAZY SCHOOL**, Read, Cornelia (Grand Central, \$23.99). From the acclaimed author of **A Field of Darkness** comes another compelling novel featuring the acerbic and memorable voice of ex-debutante Madeline Dare. **Booklist & LJ**

****A GRAVE IN GAZA**, Rees, Matt Beynon (Soho, \$24.00). Omar Yussef is chosen to go on an inspection tour of the Gaza Strip and becomes embroiled in an attempt to release an imprisoned teacher. **Booklist, LJ & DP**

****AT THE RIVER'S EDGE**, Sakey, Markus (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). Home from Iraq and still reeling from his discharge, Jason Palmer plans to spend his summer drinking and chasing girls. But when his brother is brutally murdered, Jason is all that stands between his eight-year-old nephew and a pair of ruthless killers. **LJ & DP**

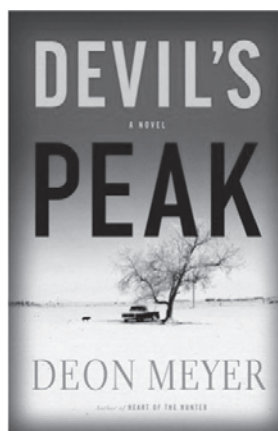
****SALT RIVER**, Sallis, James (Walker, \$23.95). The poignant and surprising new

thriller by one of America's most acclaimed writers follows ex-cop, ex-con, and war veteran John Turner as he goes in search of a truth he's not sure he can live with. **Kirkus, Booklist & PW**

****THE TRIUMPH OF CAESAR**, Saylor, Steven (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). Gordianus, recently returned from Egypt with his wife Bethesda, is essentially retired from his previous profession of 'Finder', but even he cannot refuse the call of Calpurnia, Caesar's wife. Troubled by dreams foretelling disaster and fearing a conspiracy against the life of Caesar, she had hired someone to investigate the rumors. But that person, a close friend of Gordianus, has just turned up dead – murdered – on her doorstep. **PW, BL & DP**

****JUDAS HORSE**, Smith, April (Knopf, \$23.95). Maverick FBI Special Agent Ana Grey goes undercover to infiltrate the volatile core of a domestic terrorist cell, where she must negotiate a minefield of loyalty and betrayal under constant threat of discovery. **PW, Booklist, LJ & Kirkus**

****I SHALL NOT WANT**, Spencer-Fleming, Julia (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). Award-winning author Spencer-Fleming shows that it is possible to escape danger—but



not desire—in her most suspenseful, passionate novel yet.

LJ & BL

****A PALE HORSE**, Todd, Charles (Morrow, \$23.95). A body found in the ruins of an ancient abbey sends Scotland Yard Inspector Ian Rutledge after a brutal killer in another superb atmospheric mystery by the author of **A False Mirror**. **PW & BL**

****THE FAULT TREE**, Ure, Louise (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). Arizona auto mechanic Cadence Moran was blinded in a horrific car accident eight years ago. When she is almost run down by a speeding car on the way home from work, Cadence at first thinks that she is the victim of road rage or a bad driver. But that's not the case. In fact, she is the only witness to the murder of her elderly neighbor, and now the killer believes that she's seen the getaway car. **Kirkus, Booklist & LJ**

****THE CHAMELEON'S SHADOW**, Walters, Minette (Knopf, \$24.95). British lieutenant Charles Acland returns home from Iraq, but his serious head injuries are only the outward manifestation of a profound inner change. **Booklist & LJ**

****AN INCOMPLETE REVENGE**, Winspear, Jacqueline (Holt, \$24.00). Maisie Dobbs, the extraordinary psychologist and investigator, delves into a strange series of crimes in a small rural community. **LJ & DP**

****THE CALLING**, Wolfe, Inger (Harcourt, \$24.00). When terminally ill patients are found gruesomely murdered in Port Dundas, Detective Inspector Hazel Micallef finds herself tracking a truly terrifying serial killer across the country, while everything she had been barely holding together begins to spin out of control. **LJ & PW**

BEST FIRST NOVEL

****SINGULARITY**, Casey, Kathryn (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). When wealthy businessman Edward Lucas III is found murdered along with his mistress, their bodies posed in grotesque ways, Texas Ranger/profiler Sarah Armstrong quickly senses that this will be the deadliest case of her career. While others focus the investigation on Lucas's estranged wife, Sarah disagrees and hunts a suspect only she believes in. Yet nothing in her career could have prepared her for the horror of a young man who believes he has been sent from heaven to massacre innocent people. **PW & BL**

****THE KILLER'S WIFE**, Floyd, Bill (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$23.95). A story driven by psychological insight and harrowing revelations, asking how well you can ever "really" know the person sleeping beside you. **LJ & DP**

****THE ANATOMY OF DECEPTION**, Goldstone, Lawrence (Delacorte, \$24.00). A forensic thriller that thrusts the reader into the operating rooms, drawing rooms, and back alleys of 1889 Philadelphia, this novel follows a young doctor as he grapples with the principles of scientific process to track a daring killer. **PW**

****MOONLIGHT DOWNS**, Hyland, Adrian (Soho Press, \$24.00). Emily Tempest, a feisty part-aboriginal woman, left home to get an education and has since traveled

abroad. She returns to visit the Moonlight Downs "mob," still uncertain if she belongs in the aboriginal world or that of the whitefellers. Within hours of her arrival, an old friend is murdered and mutilated. The police suspect a rogue aborigine, but Emily starts asking questions.

****CHILD 44**, Smith, Tom Rob (Grand Central, \$24.99). In Stalin's Russia no law officer is more courageous, conscientious, or idealistic than Leo Demidov. A war hero with a beautiful wife, Leo's only ambition has been to serve his country. A different kind of criminal – a murderer – is on the loose. At the same time, Leo finds himself demoted and denounced by his enemies, his world turned upside down, and every belief he's ever held shattered. The only way to save his life and the lives of his family is to uncover this criminal. **BL, PW, Kirkus & DP**

****A CARRION DEATH**, Stanley, Michael (HarperCollins, \$23.95). Detective Kubu makes his debut in a gritty and evocative new series set amid the beauty and darkness of contemporary Africa. **PW & DP**

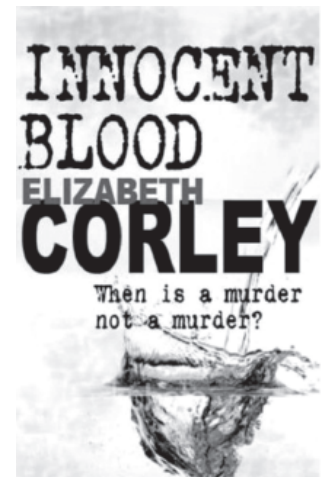
BEST BRITISH NOVEL

****LAST POST**, Barnard, Robert. (Allison & Busby, £19.99). After the funeral of her widowed mother, only child May McNabb is going through her mother's things and runs across a recent letter with some puzzling and disturbing information that indicates that her mother may have had secrets of which May was unaware. So she goes snooping into her mother's life and what she uncovers may not only prove dangerous to her but to others.

****INNOCENT BLOOD**, Corley, Elizabeth (Allison & Busby, £18.99, trade £10.99). Major Jeremy Maidment only wants to help when his neighbour Mrs Pennysmith is robbed by local con man Luke Chalfont. Appealing to DI Bob Cooper, Maidment is on a mission to help police trap the subject. But the arrest goes rapidly awry when Chalfont threatens Bob with a knife and Maidment's 'shoot first, ask questions later' policy lands him in deep water.

With a suspect near death and Maidment's possession of an unlicensed gun raising questions it's time for the Sussex force to draft in their Secret Weapon, Sergeant Nightingale; young, dynamic and determined to find answers...DCI Andrew Fenwick is also up against a tough case. The Choir Boy investigation, a project outside of ordinary police jurisdiction, aims to expose an infamous and increasingly powerful paedophile ring.

****COLD IN HAND**, Harvey, John (William Heinemann, £12.99). The romance of Valentine's Day is shattered



when a dispute between two rival teenage gangs escalates into violence and a female police detective becomes caught in the middle. DI Lynn Kellogg was merely trying to stop the fight, but when she recovers consciousness she finds that one girl is dead and that she is blamed by the girl's father for the killing. Charlie Resnick investigates.

****A CURE FOR ALL DISEASES**, Hill, Reginald (HarperCollins, £17.99). Some say that Andy Dalziel wasn't ready for God, others that God wasn't ready for Dalziel. Either way, despite his recent proximity to a terrorist blast, the Superintendent remains firmly of this world. And, while Death may be the cure for all diseases, Dalziel is happy to settle for a few weeks' care under a tender nurse. Convalescing in Sandytown, a quiet seaside resort devoted to healing, Dalziel befriends Charlotte Heywood, a fellow newcomer and psychologist, who is researching the benefits of alternative therapy. With much in common, the two soon find themselves in league when trouble comes to town. Sandytown's principal landowners have grandiose plans for the resort -- none of which they can agree on. One of them has to go, and when one of them does, in spectacularly gruesome fashion, DCI Peter Pascoe is called in to investigate -- with Dalziel and Charlotte providing unwelcome support.

****A QUIET FLAME**, Kerr, Philip (Quercus, £14.99). The fifth novel in the Bernie Gunther series. 1950 Argentina. Bernie is on the trail of a missing wife and daughter of a prominent German banker. Nazi war criminals people this well-told tale.

****THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO**, Larsson, Stieg (Quercus, £14.99). This worldwide publishing phenomenon tells the story of Salander, a freelancer with a security company who is the girl with the dragon tattoo. She is asked to look into why a business journalist folded without a fight when he was convicted of libel and sent to jail for three months. First of a trilogy.

****THE HEADHUNTERS**, Lovesey, Peter (Sphere, £19.99). See description under Best Novel

****SHATTER** by Michael Robotham (Sphere, £9.99). **SHATTER** features the return of the clinical psychologist Joseph O'Loughlin. Summoned by the police to help with a potential suicide, O'Loughlin arrives at the Clifton Suspension Bridge in time to witness a naked woman in red high-heeled shoes whisper "You don't understand", before jumping to her death. Like the police, O'Loughlin is quick to dismiss it as a tragic suicide until the woman's teenage daughter convinces him otherwise, and he finds himself engaged in a deadly duel with a deranged killer.

****A KILLING FROST**, Wingfield, R.D. (Bantam Press, \$14.99). The discovery of two young girls' bodies leaves Detective Inspector Jack Frost in a race to hunt down the killer before he, or she, can strike again. At the same time he faces a crisis at Denton police station which could result in him being sacked.

BEST THRILLER

****COLLISION**, Abbott, Jeff (Penguin, \$24.95). This is the story of two men living very different lives -- one, a successful corporate consultant who is mourning the murder of his new bride; the other, a former CIA agent known only as Pilgrim, a whose current assignment for a fringe espionage agency is so treacherous he doesn't trust even his own boss. When they are thrown together in a violent, unexpected event, the two men realize that they have been framed in an elaborate setup. **LJ & DP**

****THE DECEIVED**, Battles, Brett (Delacorte Press, \$24.00). In his world, Jonathan Quinn has a few rules. He'll get rid of bodies that have to disappear; nothing ever gets traced back to him. But when Quinn is called to a busy Los Angeles port where a shipping container has just come in from the sea, it's clear his rules have been violated. Inside the crate is a dead man—a man who once saved Quinn's life. And while no one knows how CIA agent Steven Markoff died, Quinn has to do more than clean. He has to find Markoff's girlfriend, Jenny. To tell her that Markoff is dead. To find out why—and why someone sent Markoff's body to him. **DP**

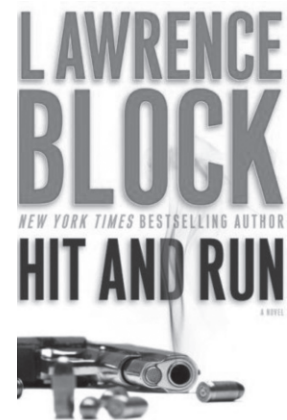
****HIT AND RUN**, Block, Lawrence (HarperCollins, \$24.95). Doing one more hit before his retirement, assassin Keller is on the run from authorities, while he plans revenge on those who set him up. **LJ & DP**

****CHASING DARKNESS**, Crais, Robert (Simon & Schuster, \$25.95). Did Elvis Cole make a mistake that sprung a killer? Some think so. **DP**

****THE SPIES OF WAR-SAW**, Furst, Alan (Random House, \$25.95). Set in Warsaw, Selsia, and Paris, Furst's action-packed new thriller combines espionage with deadly romance, all happening during the rearing threat of Hitler's gathering war against Europe. **PW, BL & LJ**

****THE FINDER**, Harrison, Colin (Farrar, Strauss, \$25.00). Jin-Li is a young, beautiful, secretive Chinese woman who gets involved in a brilliant scheme to steal valuable information from corporations in New York City. When the plan is discovered by powerful New Yorkers who stand to lose enormous sums of money, Jin-Li goes on the run. Meanwhile, her former lover, Ray Grant, a man who was out of the country for years but has recently returned, is caught up in the search for her. **DP & PW**

****HOUSE RULES**, Lawson, Mike (Atlantic Monthly Press, \$22.00). An atmosphere of fear and panic overruns the country because of several thwarted terrorist attacks, and when the junior senator from Virginia proposes to deport all non-citizen Muslims and run extensive background checks on all Muslim Americans, his bill gains surprising traction. Speaker of the House John Mahoney is not



pleased. He knows it is the kind of knee-jerk response people will come to regret, like Japanese internment camps, and he needs to find a way to kill the bill before it exposes a secret he wants to keep. So Mahoney calls his man DeMarco. **DP**

****FIDELITY**, Perry, Thomas (Harcourt, \$25.00). When Phil Kramer is shot dead on a deserted suburban street in the middle of the night, his wife, Emily, is left with an emptied bank account and a lot of questions. How could Phil leave her penniless? What was he going to do with the money? And, most of all, who was he if he wasn't the man she thought she married? **DP, BL & LJ**

****DON'T TELL A SOUL**, Rosenfelt, David (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95). Tim Wallace's wife died in a boating accident several months ago. Tim was the only eye witness, and one New Jersey cop is sure he killed her. He didn't and the police eventually clear his name, On New Year's Eve, his two best friends and business partners finally convince him to go out for the first time since Maggie's death, and at their neighborhood pub. "Can you keep a secret? A really big one?" a drunken stranger asks him. Before Tim can say anything or turn away, the man confesses to a months-old murder, even offering as proof the location of the woman's body. "Now it's your problem," he says and walks away. **LJ, PW, BL & DP**

****TIMEBOMB**, Seymour, Gerald (Bantam, £14.99). A disgruntled KGB security man steals a suitcase bomb, smuggles it out and buries it in his backyard. Sixteen years later the ageing former security agent decides to put it on the market to the highest bidder. **DP**

BEST PAPERBACK ORIGINAL

****OSCAR WILDE AND A DEATH OF NO IMPORTANCE**, Brandeth, Gyles (Touchstone, \$14.00). One of Britains premier royal biographers pens the first in a series of fiendishly clever historical murder mysteries, featuring Oscar Wilde as the detective. **Booklist & DP**

****THE PRINCE OF BAGRAM PRISON**, Carr, Alex (Mortalis/Random House, \$14.00). Jamal is a CIA informant on the run from his former bosses. Little does he know that he holds the key to expose a CIA dirty secret. Some of his former handlers risk their lives and careers to help him. **DP**

****THE FIRST QUARRY**, Collins, Max Allan (HardCaseCrime, \$6.99). The never-before-told story of Quarry's first job: infiltrating a college campus and eliminating a professor whose affair with one of his students is the least of his sins. **PBO DP**

****CALUMET CITY**, Newton, Charlie (Touchstone, \$14.00). Among the most self-assured and sharply crafted debuts in recent years, Calumet City detonates a hard-nosed cocktail of character-driven suspense and Chicago-ghetto intrigue. **BL & LJ**

****VIENNA BLOOD**, Tallis, Frank (Random House, \$15.00). In 1902, a serial killer in Vienna embarks upon a bizarre campaign of murder. Detective Inspector Oskar Rheinhardt summons Dr. Max Liebermann to assist him

with the case. The investigation draws them into the sphere of Vienna's secret societies, in this second novel to feature literatures first psychoanalytic detective.

Booklist, PW & Kirkus



CWA Dagger Award Winners

Duncan Lawrie Dagger

Frances Fyfield -- **BLOOD FROM STONE**
(Little, Brown)

Duncan Lawrie International Dagger

Dominique Mannotti -- **LORRAINE CONNECTION** (Arcadia)

The CWA Ian Fleming Steel Dagger

Tom Rob Smith -- **CHILD 44** (Simon & Schuster)

The CWA New Blood Dagger

Matt Reys -- **THE BETHLEHEM MURDERS**
(Atlantic)

The CWA Dagger in the Library

Craig Russell

The Debut Dagger

Amer Anwar -- **WESTERN FRINGES**

The Short Story Dagger

Martin Edwards --

"The Bookbinder's Apprentice"

The Mammoth Book of Best British Mysteries

In the next issue, Larry Gandle will critique all of the nominees and winners. Congratulations to DP contributor Martin Edwards on his Dagger win!



READING PATRICIA WENTWORTH By Norma Dancis

Reading Patricia Wentworth is an exercise in time travel. Writing in the 1930s through the 1950s, Wentworth portrays Miss Silver, her detective, as a living fossil, a remainder from the past. Today, Wentworth's "now" is as far away as Miss Silver's "then". Miss Silver is a woman from her readers' grandparents' generation, living in our grandparents'/parents' time. Yet she is not just a curiosity but a bona fide detective who detects from examining human behavior rather than more material clues. Wentworth pokes some fun at Miss Silver, but with great affection.

Wentworth wrote of her own time, of behavior and things her readers would find ordinary. Probably, like many writers of the late forties and early fifties, despite talking about rationing and post-war laws, she set her stories with characters acting with pre-war assumptions. Some of this is quite as surprising to us as Miss Silver was to them. "Certainly no one who did not know would have taken Miss Maggie for the hostess. It is true she was not wearing a hat, but after the first few minutes, this failed to distinguish her, since ... quite a number of the other ladies has preferred to remove their headgear" (**POISON IN THE PEN**) The custom that only guests wear a hat at a party appears in other books from the twenties and thirties, but I have never seen it as late as 1954, when this was written. At that time, my mother owned two hats, for summer and winter, both of which she kept for funerals.

Other signs to us of the past: Everyone keeps servants, although they can't hire enough to do all the work. The social support net does not exist. (One woman kills herself because she has lived too long and run out of money). Quite a number of individuals did not go to school but had governesses, even then a very old-fashioned trait.

Miss Silver was one of those governesses. She was successful because of her ability to recognize and arrange facts in a comprehensible manner and because of her deep understanding of human nature. She has no illusions about people. Her strong personality surprises and impresses people. In **THROUGH THE WALL** (1950), a famous actress "had been thinking that Miss Silver was a scream, and so was her room . . . then with a cough . . . this governessy little old maid was making her feel snubbed, uncertain."

Miss Silver is not actually portrayed as a living person but as a collection of traits. She is the sum of her clothes, her abilities, her cough, her furniture, her love for Tennyson, her continual knitting. The same is true for Randal Marsh and Frank Abbott, the police officers she most often assists. Actual characterization is reserved for those caught up in the mystery. Among those are always the woman through whose eyes the story is seen, also usually the participant in the obligatory love story.

One theme Wentworth explores several times is the married couple falling in love again. In **DANGER POINT** (1942), Lisle Jerningham hears damaging gossip about her husband and leaves him on the honeymoon. A year later, in the midst of a murder investigation, she realizes that she loves him. In **THE CASE OF WILLIAM SMITH** (1950), the hero is a victim of amnesia. His wife, aware of his true identity, goes to work with him to make him fall in love with her again, and thus perhaps remember who he is and why someone tried to kill him.

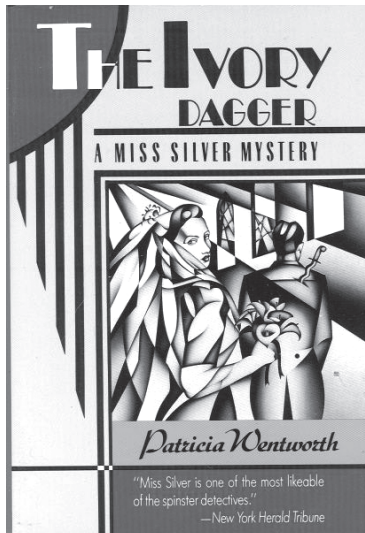
Miss Silver is partly successful because she detects from within. Either she already on

the scene, dealing with a situation that the client rightly fears will blow up, or she is called in later to detect and does so while living among the suspects. The circle of suspects is as small as the residents of a house or as large as a village. Miss Silver's true success, Wentworth tells us, is that she listens deeply to people because she is truly interested in what they have to say. No matter how good people are at keeping secrets, they cannot keep them forever from such a discerning listener.

Wentworth wrote 32 Miss Silvers and 34 other mysteries. They are cozy not only because they belong to the cozy genre (limited circle of suspects, isolated location, relatively bloodless), but because the elements are so familiar. As with most other classic age

mystery, Miss Silver is the same in every book. Other elements also repeat. In two books, a much disliked woman gives a distinctive coat to someone else who is then murdered. In countless books, houses of ill-assorted people who hate each other live together because the owner feels responsible for them. At least one servant in every book is named Gladys.

Reading a Wentworth book is comforting and familiar. Yet she can surprise as well. **ANNA WHERE ARE YOU?** (1951), my favorite, overturns several mystery conventions that can't be described without giving away the plot. In addition, Miss Silver actually goes undercover as a governess and the book contains a good deal of humor. If the books are superior comfort food, it makes me wonder just how good they could have been if Wentworth had put as much imagination into them as she did into **ANNA WHERE ARE YOU?**



An Unsuitable Job For a Man by Andrew Taylor



Here are a few traveller's tips from the exciting world of literary transexuality. Readers who are men will find lots of handy hints. Readers who are women will be able to contemplate some of the many things men don't understand about women.

One thing I've learned the hard way is that if you're a man who wants to write women characters who are even halfway plausible, you have to listen to what women say. Real women. This is true in two senses. First, and most obviously, you have to listen to how women talk among themselves, when men either aren't there or are somehow part of scenery. At my Pilates class, for example, I am sometimes the only man among ten women. At first they were a bit wary of me, then I became a sort of token male, then a mascot like Paddington Bear, and now they don't really notice me as long as I keep my mouth shut. Just shut up and listen. One evening, I was sitting in the Senior Common Room of an Oxford college, listening to the conversation of three highly qualified, high achieving women. Were they talking about Wittgenstein? The third law of thermodynamics? No. They were having an animated discussion about painting their toenails. Real men, on the other hand, generally chat about manly things such as last night's football on the telly, lawn-mowers you can actually sit on, transferring memos to your iPhone via Bluetooth, etc.

Incidentally, the differences between the sexes are often discernible in dialogue -- and not just in what they talk about, but how: many women speak in the conditional mode, as if cautiously advancing a suggestion or intention in a manner which will allow it to be withdrawn. Men blunder in. Men grunt. Men tend to speak only when they feel they have something to say, not that it's always worth listening to.

But there's another way in which I've found it's useful -- well, to be brutally frank, vital -- to listen to what women say. This is when they mention something concerning one of my women characters. A female member of my family or friends clears her throat and says "Well, Andrew, just a small query about that woman character, but have you ever thought of..." Now if you translate that into Standard English Manspeak that would come out as "I just cannot understand how you can be so stupid as to think that a woman would..." Fortunately, many women have to a fine art the technique of the tactful suggestion, so essential to preserving the fragile shell of masculine self-respect. (Women know instinctively how vulnerable we men are: even Arnold Schwarzenegger is crying somewhere deep inside.)

So, now for a few general observations on writing from the point of view of a sex other than your own. First, it's often much harder than we anticipate. It's easy to make the fatal mistake of assuming that because you know individuals of the opposite sex reasonably well, you actually understand how they work. But that's simply not the case. Men and women live in parallel universes: they overlap, of course, and the degree of overlap varies enormously. But it's frighteningly easy in fiction to make women behave as men.

The second point is that it's not just men who suffer from this problem dealing with the other sex's viewpoint. Women are equally prone to what is either a failure of the imagination or a bit of wishful thinking or both. It's noticeable that when women write from a man's point of view, the man in question tends to be sensitive, agonised and frightfully articulate about his feelings. In the world of crime fiction think of Tey's Allan Grant, Ngaio Marsh's Alleyn, Sayer's Lord Peter. Two out of three have nervous breakdowns, which is significant, because it allows them to talk about their feelings, which men, especially the British with their Stiff Upper Lips, don't usually do in public or even in private. Champion is the most lifelike of those Golden Age heroes, if only because Allingham scrupulously guards his emotional privacy, which is exactly what a public school-educated chap like Albert would have wanted; alternatively perhaps she merely knew her limitations.

Nor is it just the Golden Age authors who give their men those womanly characteristics. Patricia Highsmith's Ripley, for example, is preternaturally alert to other people, how they act, what they wear. Often you have the sense that a woman is looking out of Ripley's eyes.

Women often forget that in physical terms the majority of men are only really sensitive about one small area of their body. No prizes for guessing which. Another common source of error is how a character responds to his or her physical appearance. When a real man looks at his reflection in the mirror he tends to like what he sees - that beer belly is [a] sign of maturity, and gosh look at those rippling muscles, not bad, eh? - he tells himself, and after all he knows that women like a man of experience (probably because his mother told him so when she was trying to cheer him up after his first girlfriend dumped him). On the other hand, when a man-created-by-woman is in front of a mirror, there's none of this glow of confidence. Instead he's a mass of insecurities: have I cut myself shaving? Is that a spot coming? Is my tie straight?

When men write about women, they often concentrate on externals to remind you of the femininity of their characters: thus breasts, which are invariably large, will bounce; periods flow; you get a lot of information about the inconvenience of wearing tights and having to wax legs. As you'd expect, men are also big on wishful thinking when the women they create are involved in sex. (Women should always remember that it's hard to overestimate the amount of wishful thinking that men bring to the subject of sex.) The

sex itself, when a man's describing it from the woman's viewpoint, is generally devoid of humour or tenderness. Emotions of that sort are instantly zapped by the white-hot heat of carnal passion. A man's women characters tend to admire the sexual organs of their male partners to such an extent that at the moment of penetration an instantaneous orgasm is almost inevitable.

But, as my wife observed when we were talking about how men so often write about women, "But women just don't think that way." That's the key, perhaps: you have to try to find out how the other sex thinks. It's partly a question of empathy, partly one of research. And of liking. It can be very hard to write well about people you dislike or despise or are scared of. One day I'd like to write two stories, the same one: a set of events seen by a woman who was involved in them, and seen by a man. Finally, in

fairness I must say that some of my colleagues approach this whole vexed question from another angle. For sake of completeness and objectivity, I include a useful tip which allegedly comes from another male crime writer. I'm informed that when he wishes to write from a woman's viewpoint he sits down at his computer wearing women's underwear, and it puts him in the right frame of mind. I've not tried this myself – and it may be one of those things that it's best not to try at home – but who knows, a man reading these notes may find this simple technique opens the door to a whole new world. I suppose it's a bit like acupuncture: a bit of pressure here has a miraculous result elsewhere.

Andrew Taylor's latest novel is **BLEEDING HEART SQUARE** (Michael Joseph, £16.99). This will be published in the U.S. by Hyperion in January, 2009. www.andrew-taylor.co.uk

From the Editor

Mysteries in Far-Away Places. In this issue we visit two areas of the world that I've never been to, but hope to visit someday: Scandinavia and South Africa. I'm always on the lookout for something new and different in crime fiction and one of the ways I satisfy this yearning is to sample books either written by unknown-to-me foreign writers or books set in far-away places I may never have a chance to experience. The cover article of this issue will serve as a simple reader's guide to most of what is available in English from some exceptionally good practitioners of the craft who live and work in the Northlands of Europe.

And then Jeff Popple has alerted us to the recent popularity of books set in South Africa and its environs as well as a burgeoning group of South African crime/thriller writers. The next issue of *DP* will feature a cover article on Australian Crime Fiction and then we will be done with the geography lessons for awhile.

We, in the English-speaking world, have so much to be grateful for in terms of the plethora of good writing that is at our fingertips for our reading pleasure. It is wonderful to witness the United States getting out of its self-absorbed insularity and reaching out to other lands for the good things they have to offer. We've long been able to cherry-pick the best from the U.K. Now we are replicating that pattern in lesser-known locales.

Rex Stout in Reprint. There are a few classic series that seem to never go out of print and Rex Stout's works are one of those few – and deservedly so. With the trend towards trade paperback and away from mass market paperback, Bantam is releasing Nero Wolfe Mysteries in two-for-one jumbo trade paperbacks. The first volume, which contains **FER-DE-LANCE** and **THE LEAGUE OF FRIGHTENED MEN**, the first two novels in the Nero Wolfe series, will sell for \$15.00 (or \$7.50 per

book), which is not too far away from mass market prices nowadays. A big plus is large, very readable type, much larger than would be found in a mass market paperback. I applaud this development.

The Book of the Decade of the 1990s. As a rash, "young" editor, I proclaimed **TRIAL OF PASSION** by William Deverell (1997, winner of the Hammett Prize and the Arthur Ellis Award) as the best crime novel of the 1990s. It is a phenomenal novel by an author not known for his series fiction. But he relented after years of pleading by his fans and published a sequel, **APRIL FOOL**, which won the Arthur Ellis Award for Best Canadian Crime Novel in 2006. A third in the series was just published in Canada – **KILL ALL THE JUDGES** (I guess they've killed all the lawyers, so now they are moving on to the judges). I got my copy from that excellent Toronto bookstore, Sleuth of Baker Street. Unfortunately, these books haven't gotten wide circulation in the U.S. and some may consider them "cult" favorites, but I assure you that they are worth seeking out.

The Book of the Decade of the 2000s. For purposes of deciding what decade we are in, I'm going to say it is from January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2009. Some may say it goes from 2001 through 2010, but it doesn't seem right to put the year 2000 in the 20th Century. So we have about 1-1/2 years left in this decade, by my count. My plan is to give out a Barry Award in 2010 for the Best Crime Novel of the Decade (I haven't run this by Lynn and Chris at *Mystery News*, my co-sponsors of the Barry Awards, but I think they will go along with it.). So, I want you to start thinking about what books would be on your short list for such an award. Here is my list – off the top of my head – I may come up with more, upon reflection. **DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD** by Reginald Hill, **MYSTIC RIVER** by Dennis Lehane, **THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO** by Stieg Larsson, and **THE LINCOLN LAWYER** by Michael Connelly. Hmm. Going to have to come up with some female authors (Laura Lippman?). My favorite female writer, Mary Willis Walker, hasn't written anything for ten years! I'll be asking for your

input near the end of next year, so be mulling this over. I hope to do something similar with the Mystery Series of the Decade, although perhaps not in a Barry Award fashion.

Reginald Hill's Latest. Reginald Hill continues to impress with his wide array of talent and style. In 2008 he published the latest in the Dalziel & Pascoe series (which, in my opinion, represents the best of his writing) **A CURE FOR ALL DISEASES**, and the sixth in the lighter, more humorous Joe Sixsmith series, **THE ROAR OF**

BUTTERFLIES (in this case, a golfing mystery – if that is of any interest).

There are some unusual aspects to the publication of **THE ROAR OF BUTTERFLIES**. In the U.K. it is published in hardcover, but the hardcover has no dustjacket (the boards themselves are illustrated). In the U.S., it is published in mass market paperback (that recently hit the bookstores) and there will be no hardcover edition.

From the Assistant Editor

As a reviewer, I do, at times, write negative reviews. For me, this usually occurs when I am assigned to read books I normally would not pick up. For example, the Reviewed to Death books for DP (although I have liked several of them – the current **CHILD 44** being an example of that) and the Edgar/ CWA nominees, which I volunteer to read and review each year. These selections and short lists often include many books not to my liking.

In my regular review column, I tend to write favorable reviews because I choose to read what I think I will like. This is quite common with all fan reviewers. But given that I attend mystery conventions with many, many authors in attendance, any negative reviews I may have written can lead to awkward situations in that I sometimes encounter the authors of books I have panned. My first experience with this phenomenon was at my first Bouchercon in Milwaukee. I remember witnessing George and Russ being verbally chastised by an otherwise very nice female author whose book they gave mixed reviews to (she had the room right across the hall from them and the “nightmare” continued – with some humorous encounters – throughout the convention). I don't see her books around any longer, so perhaps George and Russ knew what they were writing about.

This year I had an especially difficult time reading the Edgar nominees. To me, it was overall an uninteresting list and, hence, proved difficult to get through. After weeks and weeks of struggling with these nominees, the last book I picked up was **BLOOD OF PARADISE** by David Corbett. This is a very long book, well written, but full of political background on San Salvador (a subject of no interest to me) and it had what I considered a stagnant pace. This novel was way more than I wanted to take on at that point of the process and I put it down part way through. My mistake was giving it an “F,” meaning failure. **BLOOD OF PARADISE** certainly does not deserve that rating and I want all readers to know that David Corbett is an excellent and very talented writer. I remember reading and enjoying his first book, **THE DEVIL'S REDHEAD**. The problem with my review of his latest book resides

more with me than with David Corbett's work – especially the frame of mind I had when I picked it up. I tried to explain this in the review, but didn't do a very good job of it. My apologies to David and to those who liked his latest.

Every year I attend the Edgar Awards in New York City. For the last few years, the night before the banquet, after the MWA Agents and Editors Party, I go out to dinner with Otto Penzler and one or two others whom we might ask to join us. Unbeknownst to me, Otto invited David Corbett. David, being none too happy with me, declined the invite, citing the fact that I hated his last book and that I thought he was a left-wing radical. (This is not true. I never thought he was a left-wing radical – I never got that far into the book to make a judgment call on that – and even if he were a left-wing radical, that wouldn't affect how I judged the book's quality.) I apologized to David with the above explanation.

This is an unintended consequence of trying to give you my honest opinion as a reviewer – I may make some enemies. But let me assure you that when I write a negative review, it has nothing to do with whether I like or dislike an author as a person – it is not personal – yet some writers may take it that way.

Recently, on DorothyL, the online mystery digest, a woman bemoaned the fact that there are too many bad reviews being written by fan reviewers, who don't know or understand the writing process and how difficult it can be, because they are not novelists. Only authors should review. Her whole argument was quite silly and she was roundly taken to task by the others on the list. From my standpoint, I don't really care how difficult it is to write a book. I understand how hard it may be, but to me, the end product is all that matters. Who better to review a book than the readers and consumers of the product? Other authors may love a book's complexity and appreciate how technically difficult it was to create. Yet, if nobody buys it and reads it, the book might as well not exist. No, leave the reviewing to those of us who buy and read them (which includes some knowledgeable author-fans) and the writing to those who create them. It works fine that way.

www.eurocrime.co.uk

Excellent website that focuses purely on British and other European crime fiction writers (that have been published in English). Contains a lot of information about authors (with links to author websites) and lots of reviews of current crime novels.

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A BEVY OF MYSTERIES by Bev DeWeese



WINTER STUDY by Nevada Barr. (Penguin Group, \$24.95, April 2008). **Rating A** Park Ranger Anna Pigeon had voluntarily signed up for the Winter Study Project on moose and wolves at the Isle Royale Park on Lake Superior; but, once there, she is immediately uneasy. It's bone-chilling cold and the six people she will be working with don't seem to be overly friendly. As she approaches the main cabin to settle in, she thinks she sees the dark shapes and tracks of a giant animal. And on the window are the words: "Help me." Later, when timid wolf researcher, Dr. Katherine Huff, is found dead, possibly mauled by a wolf, Anna is really on edge. And this is just the beginning of a series of deadly encounters.

Since the characters are snowed in, with minimal outside contacts, this story is reminiscent of a locked room puzzle mystery, but with lots of physical action. There's hiking and camping in below zero weather with almost constant snow, avoiding wolf traps and cracking ice, and believing a very big animal with claws and teeth may be stalking you. Of course, readers know that Anna has proved she is a competent, fearless, can-do woman in the first 12 books in this series. But, in a couple of these suspenseful scenes, Anna is desperately fighting for her life, and you are not sure she is going to make it.

Though Anna normally doesn't get close to her fellow researchers, she is soon convinced that four of the six are hiding something dangerous. Actually, she eventually finds out all six have secrets. However, Anna immediately decides she likes the attractive, intelligent, athletic woman called Robin. And project head Ridley seems to be an okay guy. However, Dr. Kathy Huff is very withdrawn and obviously afraid of Bob from Homeland Security. Later, we discover she has good reason for her fear. Incidentally, Bob acts very macho until he is in the woods. There, real danger turns him into a wimp. Barr does seem to enjoy sliding in occasional, sarcastic comments about some of her characters. Jacob, another researcher, also seems harmless, but he puzzles Anna. Is he teasing her or coming onto her? He doesn't have much luck. And why is young Adam, who's always dressed in worn-out, raggedy clothing even on the island? Supposedly, he's a handyman, but Anna does not trust him. The characters are certainly believable and colorful. Still, as more accidents happen, Anna knows someone is trying to kill this project and maybe her.

This action-packed plot, filled with surprises and tense situations, combined with an unfriendly, scary setting and some secretive characters, make this a very entertaining read.

A CARRION DEATH by Michael Stanley. (HarperCollins, \$23.95, April 2008). **Rating: A** Attention mystery readers. Botswana has delivered another wonderful detective, Assistant Superintendent David Bengu, called Kubu. We first meet Kubu, which is Setswana for hippopotamus, driving down a dusty road bellowing operatic arias at the top of his voice and thinking about food. Kubu, a very large black detective, often thinks of food. A mutilated, partially eaten body, minus an arm and teeth, has been found at a dry waterhole on the edge of the Kalahari. The victim can't be immediately identified, even after preliminary interviews etc. But Kubu is persistent, and some special satellite data finally indicates that a yellow Land Rover, traditionally used by the Botswana Cattle and Mining Company (BCMC) was in the area. This naturally leads Kubu to question the Hofmeyr family, the BCMC owners. From this point on, there is a kidnapping, BCMC is burgled, a pimp has his throat slashed, a geologist disappears, a mysterious red-bearded man kills a man in the alley, and an arm shows up on a faraway beach. And that's just the beginning of the action.

A CARRION DEATH is peopled by many marvelous characters, besides Kubu. Dr. Silisi, a geologist who looks like a young, black John Lennon, found the first body, and he and Kubu immediately hit it off. Kubu thinks he would be a fine detective, and Kubu's wife, Joy, thinks he would be a wonderful husband for her sister. However, the most colorful characters are members of the Hofmeyr family. Cecil, an affable man who had taken over BCMC after his brother's death, insists he is just a hardworking man keeping the company together until his twin niece and nephew come of age. He knows nothing about this body. But Kubu is not so sure. He believes Cecil may have secrets. Angus and Dianne Hofmeyr are quite a pair. Angus is a handsome playboy who just wants to have fun. His sister Dianne is smart, sexy, cold, and calculating, though she tries to hide that. Then there is Jason, a savvy, muscular mining engineer who knows everything about the company and who is Dianne's boy toy, or more properly, man toy. A blackmailing pimp and a murdering red-bearded man also make a number of significant appearances.

However, the reason readers will come back to this series is Kubu. He is a very competent, successful detective. He has been taught how "to see things that others don't" by a wise old Bushman. Moreover, a kind neighbor had enabled Kubu to attend excellent schools and colleges, where he performed very well. Now, he still visits his parents every week, and he adores his wife. As I mentioned earlier, he really enjoys his food and cannot investigate too long without frequent feedings. Furthermore, Kubu never travels without his opera tapes, which he always accompanies in a loud baritone. It relieves his stress, but not his wife's. Like most good cops, he does challenge his superiors and he is not afraid to use his intuition, but he

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is a friendly sort, generally liked by most people. And his natural kindness and constant curiosity are great assets in his work.

Stanley uses the landscape and culture of Botswana very effectively. Both Silisi and Kubu accept the powers of Bushman shamans, though they may have alternate explanations for them. Stanley also includes wealthy boardrooms, fancy country clubs, desolate back-country roads, and the mean back alleys of Botswana as part of his exotic locale. Furthermore, he explains diamond fingerprints, kimberlite, and other aspects of diamond mining that were quite fascinating. The barren “outback” is indeed a major part of the mystery. In fact, Stanley’s Africa seems like that of Deon Meyer or Richard Kunzmann, but with a slightly lighter tone.

Though this is a debut novel by a writing team (Michael Sears and Stanley Trollip), it is quite well done. The series character is extremely appealing, the unfamiliar setting holds our attention, the plot entertains, and it was lots of fun to read. Recommended.

SCARED TO LIVE by Stephen Booth. (Bantam, \$25.00, May 2008). **Rating B+** In the English Peaks District, ambitious, dissatisfied DS Diane Fry and easy going, local boy DC Ben Cooper find themselves with a couple of challenging cases. Rose Shepherd, a recluse in her 60’s who may be agoraphobic and who often can’t sleep, is found dead, shot through her bedroom window. Not too far away, a man tries unsuccessfully to rescue his wife and two sons from a burning house. Fortunately, his beautiful baby girl is staying with his parents.

Both cases have some puzzling aspects. It seems no one in this small village really knew Rose Shepherd, a recent resident. After all, she rarely went out or spoke to anyone. But the coppers do wonder why her house has an awesome security system. On the other hand, the destruction of Lindsay and Brian Mullen’s house seems like a tragic accident, but a neighbor finally admits the couple fought a lot and someone even reports seeing an unknown car leaving the area that night. To add to the mystery, DC Cooper thinks the fire ignition points in Mullen’s house are odd. The dual investigations of these crimes are thorough, complex, and connected. Eventually they both extend far outside this picturesque English village.

Throughout this series, DS Fry and DC Cooper have developed into complex, fully fleshed characters. Cooper makes good use of his intimate knowledge of the locals to figure out the best course of investigation, and he’s usually successful. At the same time, though, Ben has to cope with his brother’s fears that their mother’s schizophrenia may be hereditary and might affect his children. However, DS Fry’s investigations have led to Bulgaria and a handsome Bulgarian cop. In fact, Fry thinks she may have found her next goal in life, both personally and professionally. Finally, victim Rosa Shepherd is a particularly intriguing character, definitely a cipher, and much of the tension of the book arises from the search for her real identity.

This lively plot is competently handled, though the eventual connection between the two cases stretches credulity a bit. As a plus, the book is filled with some perceptive observations on the bonds between child and parent, and on the lengths to which a parent will go to keep a child safe. At times, the villains become very sympathetic.

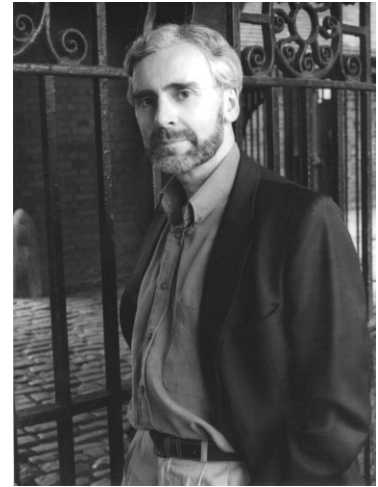
As usual, the Peak District setting is beautifully described. For example, Booth’s description of the annual parade of boats, which are outfitted with lights portraying various famous buildings etc, is a nice piece of local color.

I would strongly recommend this for the clever plot, solid characterizations, and the lovely English setting.

THE SILVER SWAN by Benjamin Black. (Henry Holt, \$25.00, March 2008). **Rating A-** Gloomy Dublin pathologist Garret Quirke is rather bemused when a barely remembered acquaintance, Billy Hunt, begs him not to perform an autopsy on his wife. She had apparently jumped into the sea, a suicide. Well, it’s 1950’s Dublin and lots of rules are bent to keep secrets, so Quirke agrees. However, Quirke is so obsessive about his work he can’t resist doing his job, and he quickly discovers she has been murdered. He doesn’t tell anyone, but he visits another old acquaintance, D.I. Hackett, and simply insinuates he may have discovered a murder, and the two of them initiate a rather covert investigation. Along the way, they uncover a number of other loathsome crimes, in addition to murder.

Though technically this is a police procedural, the reader rarely sees Quirke or Hackett at work. Instead, for much of the time, the victim and the suspects tell their stories. For example, the beautiful victim, Deirdre Hunt, is a sexy, ambitious businesswoman whose abusive childhood has taught her to please men, no matter what she wants. Leslie White, who’s equally “hot,” is an educated, witty con man who’s gone into business with Deirdre and has taught her all sorts of wonderful sexual shenanigans. Unfortunately, Leslie is married to another woman and a dangerous drug addict. There is also a colorful portrait of a fake Indian healer who almost makes you believe him. Finally, Kate, Leslie’s wife, is definitely not a hurt, cowering spouse. She’s smart, calculating, and often cold, and she adds a lot of interest to the plot. Overall, this somewhat unique storytelling approach works just fine.

Series character Quirke is both aggravating and sympathetic. A former alcoholic, he lives for his work. Recently, death had taken both his wife and his sister-in-



Stephen Booth

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law, who is the mother of his daughter Phoebe. However, his daughter does not want anything to do with him, though he is constantly trying to protect her. After all, Quirke waited until she was a young woman to acknowledge he was her father. But Quirke's biggest problem is that, under stress, he craves alcohol, especially when he is trying to "dry" himself out. The result is that he's become a depressed, morose character who is not close to anyone.

The murder plot is clever and has some unexpected surprises. And who knew how much illicit sex and drugs were available in Ireland. The characters are well drawn with relevant details. But the greatest pleasure is the language. Black, who is really John Banville, creates wonderfully vivid word paintings of both Dublin and its denizens. Though he uses internal monologues to advance the story, the plot is quite suspenseful. Recommended.

TELL NO LIES by Julie Compton. (St. Martin's Press, \$24.95, May 2008). **Rating B.** Jack Hilliard, assistant DA, thought he had the perfect life: a job he liked, a beautiful wife, and two lovely sons. However, political ambition and obsessive sex have ruined more than one man. First, Jack gives in to pressure to run for district attorney, even though he realizes his strong objections to the death penalty will cause problems. Secondly, Jack finds himself strongly attracted to the gorgeous Jenny Dodson, a fellow lawyer. He tries to fight his lust/passion, but one night he just gives in to his urges. And then Jenny is accused of murder-- on the one night Jack was with her. He is now her alibi for a capital crime. Obviously, neither of them wants this made public. Suddenly, everything is screwed up.

This mystery could be described as a competent legal thriller with some chick-lit tendencies. But Compton has also made Jack an ethical man, and his concerns about hurting this family and his dislike of the death penalty are deftly handled. Some readers may find it difficult to accept his infidelity, though he certainly suffers for his lapse in judgment. His wife's anger and hurt are well presented. At the end, he does become more sympathetic.

Undoubtedly, the most vivid character is the sexy, smart Jenny, who carries a lot of childhood emotional baggage with her. She is so beautiful and smart it is easy to see why Jack fell so hard for her. But Jenny's life has been scarred too. There is also some sibling rivalry over Jenny, between Jack and his brother Mark, that seems very believable.

Overall, a decent, if not very original plot, realistic characters, and clever legal tricks make this a good read.

THE CHILDREN OF BLACK VALLEY by Evan Kilgore. (Big Earth Publishing, \$24.95, June 2008). **Rating B.** Sam Mackie's young son, Daniel, is rushed to the hospital with a mysterious illness. After a series of tests, the doctors tell Sam that Daniel has low-level radiation poisoning and that they noticed a puncture wound on his neck. But then Daniel disappears from the hospital! Daniel and wife Ann are panic stricken. Their first son, Riley, had also mysteriously disappeared over a decade

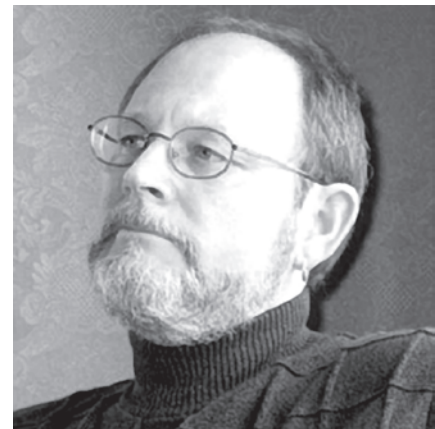
ago, causing Ann to become an alcoholic and the marriage to dissolve. Fortunately, the investigating cop is very sympathetic to their dilemma and is even willing to bend a few rules to help them find Daniel. From that point on, the investigation and the plot move like speeding trains all the way to Africa, where they may be answers.

The strong appeal of this suspenseful thriller is the plot. It is filled with baffling situations. How did Daniel get sick? Is his disappearance linked to that of his brother? Why does Sam have weird dreams about a dark, looming shape? And why do father and son both keep drawing an almost alien landscape they have never seen? Why is Sam's employer so interested and helpful -- or is he? It is difficult to give many plot details without being a spoiler. But, even if some readers might question the believability of the plot, the story keeps drawing us in.

Kilgore has also created some empathetic, likeable characters. Sam feels guilty about not paying more attention to his son than to his work. He and his wife finally realize that Riley's disappearance has not only ruined their marriage, but it has made second son Daniel believe he's not as good as Riley. Of course, now Sam and Ann are prepared to take incredibly dangerous risks to find Daniel. And they do.

Abandoned houses, secret rooms, frightening dreams, and mysterious recluses -- they all add up to an entertaining read, if you can suspend disbelief occasionally. A fun thriller.

RED KNIFE by William Kent Krueger. (Atria Books, \$24.00, Sep 2008). **Rating: A-** It seems that even an isolated Ojibwe reservation and a small Michigan town (Aurora) are not safe from drugs and gangs. A young Aurora girl has died from a drug overdose, presumably given to her by Lonnie Thunder, a member of the local Red Boyz gang. Everyone is very angry. But the girl's father, Buck Reinhard, also blames Alex Kingbird, a Native American who has preached "red pride" and is the reputed leader of the Red Boyz. And now Kingbird and his wife have been found dead -- executed. Because P.I. Cork Corcoran is part Indian, he's called in to investigate the murders. Using his network of Indian friends, he discovers the Red Boyz are not what they seem and are probably not the murderers. Furthermore, he soon discovers both Alex Kingbird and Buck Reinhard have their own troubling family se-



William Kent Krueger

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crets. To complicate matters further, Alex Kingbird's younger brother, Ulysses, is a close friend of Cork's daughter. Can he keep her out of this?

Cork's persona has been carefully developed during the earlier 7 books in this series. And now Cork has become a complex character with strong principles and a lot of empathy with the Indians. He is a devoted family man, though his work routinely takes him into dangerous situations and often puts his own family in danger. For example, he and son Steve get shot at as a warning to drop this case. Now his daughter Annie's relationship with Ulysses Kingbird, who is withdrawn and just wants to play guitar, is potentially dangerous too. And he and his wife often disagree about his work. To save his family, he has had to bend rules and his lawyer wife disapproves of this. But, along the way, Cork has also developed a lot of respect for the Indian ways, which don't always mesh with white justice.

This particular case also illustrates ways in which crime and Native American culture can get intertwined. A returned vet has become a drunkard, since he still does not have a place in the white world. Some young Indians are ready to make money any way they can, even drug dealing, for the reservation is very poor and has no work. Will Kingbird, father of Alex and Ulysses, is a tough, demanding father who seems successful, though he has his own dark secrets.

RED KNIFE is chock full of exciting action, the identity of the killer is a surprise, and the ending scene is an absolute stunner. At first the ending is so surprising the reader may think it comes out of left field. But the setup is there, and the reader has been shown the psychological and sociological problems existing on and off the reservation that could lead to such an incident.

Krueger does an outstanding job recreating the dramatic scenery of upper Michigan, the crime is properly puzzling, the characters are colorful, and the complexities of life on an Indian reservation for both Cork and the Ojibwe are perceptively discussed. Definitely recommended.

GIRL OF HIS DREAMS by Donna Leon. (Grove/Atlantic, \$24.00, May 2008). **Rating B+** The very delightful Venetian Commissario, Guido Brunetti, has a couple of troubling cases on his desk. First, Father Atonin, who had just blessed the grave of Brunetti's mother, asks him to investigate the charismatic leader of a local offbeat cult, Brother Leonardo. It seems Brother Leonardo frequently asks for money from his followers, even encouraging them to sell their homes for the requested donation. This setup does look fishy, but Brunetti thinks something is a little odd about Father Antonin too, and he's inclined to check them both out. However, Brunetti is primarily upset about his second case. A young girl, maybe 10, is found drowned in the canal. She is clutching some small items, probably stolen. But he is shocked when the doctor tells him she also has gonorrhea. And he is very puzzled when no one reports her missing.

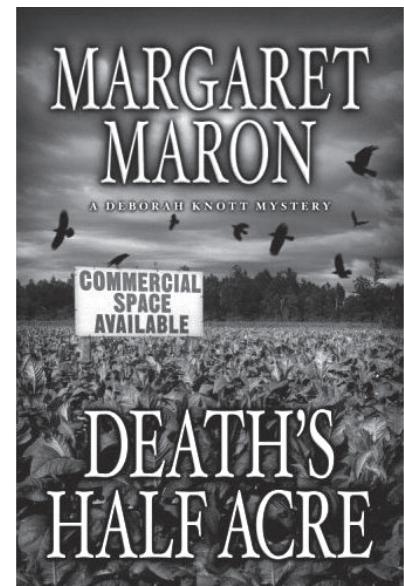
The inquiry into the suspect priests means that Brunetti has to call in lots of favors from his wide circle of friends and even ask his wife to go undercover. Networking is a big part of Venetian police work. Of course, the search for a possible criminal cleric also gives Brunetti the opportunity to verbally attack many religious institutions and procedures. Though the tone is gentle, the sarcasm is sharp.

The investigation of the more poignant case of the young girl leads to a frightening confrontation at a Rom (Gypsy) camp, where the Rom not only antagonize the cops, but they also seem to care nothing for the young girl. Naturally, Brunetti realizes the Rom rarely reveal the truth about anything to the authorities, but he is still angry. Of course, like the rest of the force, he has attended enforced seminars on political correctness when dealing with minorities. But he still uses this opportunity to make some scathing comments about it. Basically, Brunetti wants justice, and he is not afraid to break a few rules and upset superiors to get it.

Some of Leon's recurring characters are beguiling. Within the police department, the enchanting Signorina Ellectra, secretary to the chief, can break into any data base and has many powerful contacts. She is like a spider at the center of her web- controlling everything. Fortunately, she and Brunetti like and respect one another, and she is often his secret weapon. However, Brunetti's real love is not the police department. His true passions are his beautiful wife and her fabulous cooking, his two precocious children, and his beloved Venice.

Though there is not a lot of suspenseful action, this is an entertaining read because of the charming Brunetti, the vividly described byways of Venice, some eccentric Venetians, and his always ironic comments about life in general.

DEATH'S HALF ACRE by Margaret Maron. (Grand Central Publishing, \$24.99, August 2008). **Rating B** When Colleton County Commissioner Candace Bradshaw is found murdered, people are shocked, but not surprised. Sexy, ambitious Candy was an aggressive businesswoman, even though she came from a "trailer trash" background. She was also a powerful, maybe corrupt commissioner who could charm



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anyone, both at the official meetings and in bed. Still, Deputy Dwight Bryant, husband of Judge Deborah Knott, intends to investigate and find the killer. At the same time, Judge Deborah is trying to figure out another mystery. Her powerful, ex-bootlegger father, Kezzie Knott, seems unusually interested in land titles and in a certain fundamentalist, misogynist minister. Kezzie is even talking about heaven!

As usual, in this 14th book in the series, the murder investigation shares equal time with the domestic life and politics in a small North Carolina town. This time, Maron makes the clash of the newly arrived city folk with the longtime local resident farmers a major storyline. Conning farmers out of farmland they have owned for ages and then building shopping malls and tacky houses on a small lot is a setup ripe for graft. The commission, of course, favors the new development, which means more money and more taxes. However, old Kezzie Knot may have his own ideas about this.

Judge Deborah also has some amusing court scenes featuring city folk who want to sue farmers because their roosters crow too early and too loud. Another complaint involves the Judge trying to tell newcomers their children's ATV's are not welcome in the farmers' planted fields. And, unlike her husband, Deborah also wonders about the obsessive concern Candy Bradshaw had for her miniature dollhouse. Did it represent something she never had?

Deborah Knott's close-knit, extended family is always another very appealing part of this series. The family celebrations and frequent get-togethers offer comfort reading to many Maron fans. Certainly, it would be difficult to solve any local murders etc without involving the Knott family network.

This cozy tale has a competent plotted mystery, a surprise killer, and a warm-hearted, believable background that takes you away from the really mean streets.

I'm spending as much of today writing as possible, and I got to a place where I want my character to put some music on. One of my friends is the manager of a popular Scottish folk/rock band so I thought I would use one of their tracks. So I sent him a text asking for suggestions. Unfortunately, I never told him what it was for. I sent him a text that said "I need one of the band's tracks that would have a calming effect on a woman with PMT (a.k.a. PMS) who has just been interviewed by the police based on the word of her slimy ex-boyfriend."

Seconds later I got a frantic phone call asking me if I was OK and why I had been interviewed by the police. Whoops!

-- Donna Moore, author of **GO TO**

I COVER THE LAKEFRONT by Ted Hertel



DEADLY BELOVED by Max Allan Collins (\$6.99, Hard Case Crime, December, 2007). **Rating: B** When Marcy Addwatter breaks into her husband's hotel room and shoots him and the blonde hooker he's with, her attorney calls on the services of private investigator Michael Tree. That's Ms. Michael Tree to you, as she makes clear to everyone who gets it wrong. Ms. Tree's husband, also named Michael, was shot and killed on their wedding night a year earlier. She comes to believe that there may be a connection between those two killings and a half-dozen others in between and that the connection may lead back to her old enemy, the Muerta family. When several attempts are made on her life and the lives of those around her, she comes in, guns blazing, to find the mastermind behind it all.

This is the first prose novel involving Ms. Tree. However, it is based on the longest-running private-eye comic book series of all time. That series, written by Collins and drawn by Terry Beatty (who contributes a beautiful cover here), ran for about sixty issues over fifteen years in the 1980s and '90s. It was based on a "what if" proposition: what if Mike Hammer had married Velma and he was killed on their wedding night? Readers, as I was, of the comic series will notice a few updates (a "contemporary reboot," to use Collins' words) and a revised origin. But essentially this is a new tale from Ms. Tree's casebook.

The reader will feel the graphic novel origins of this, at times, over-the-top, blood and thunder-shoot first and ask questions later story. While it does not have the reality-based feel of many of Collins' novels, it is not intended to achieve that result. It is exactly what it purports to be: a hard-boiled tale told with considerable violence, some sex, a solid back-story, a straightforward plot, and some fine black humor. Of the four colors used in the old comic book world, the main one on display here is red. It's fast, it's furious, and it's fun.

EASY INNOCENCE by Libby Fischer Hellmann (\$24.95, Bleak House, April 2008). **Rating: B** Beautiful and smart Sara Long is beaten to death during a hazing ritual among high school girls. The suspect is a registered sex offender whose fingerprints are found on the murder weapon, a baseball bat. Her blood is on his clothes, as well. When the State's Attorney rushes the case toward trial, the suspect's sister hires former cop and recently minted private investigator Georgia Davis to find evidence that could exonerate her brother. What Davis discovers are shocking secrets that threaten to expose the wealthy of Chicago's North Shore area to a nightmare they could

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never have dreamed of, while a killer strikes again and Davis is next on the murder list.

Libby Fischer Hellmann, author of the award-winning Ellie Forman series, uses this novel to spin-off Georgia Davis, a minor character in that series. Forman and her daughter Rachel return the favor, making a brief appearance here, as well. However, this tale is really Davis's alone. Hellmann has created a considerably darker story here than in her earlier series. The author has matured over time as a writer, creating a substantially more complex plot for her protagonist to resolve. She has also taken the real life incident from a few years ago of high school senior girls hazing younger ones and let it run to the extreme result of the death of one of the unwilling participants.

The weakness in the book, if indeed it is a weakness since it seems common in many private eye novels, is the constant questioning of witnesses who do not want to talk, with Davis getting little information out of them. Just chalk this up to the genre and do not let it get in the way of this otherwise fast-moving and entertaining story.

This story is about much more than a simple murder. Hellmann examines the problems even rich young people think they face and what they do to achieve their own ends in the face of unloving and uncaring parents and so-called friends. She shows us the lengths that some people, adults as well as teenagers, will go to in order to accomplish their goals. Further, her characters, especially Davis, are well drawn, given both strengths and weaknesses to bring them to life. The author gets into the mindsets of these young women and their rationalizations for the courses in life they choose to take. Hellmann lives in the Chicago area, adding authenticity to the setting.

This is a very different kind of mystery from Hellmann and she has succeeded very well at it.

NAMELESS NIGHT by G. M. Ford (\$23.95, William Morrow, February, 2008). **Rating: B-** About seven years before the story opens, a man is found in a railroad car, face horribly bashed in, but still alive. Mentally impaired and given the name Paul Hardy, he spends those years living in a group home for disabled adults until he is once again seriously injured, this time in an automobile accident. Following surgery Hardy regains many of his thought and speech processes, discovering that he can remember small glimpses of his life before he was found in the railroad car. As soon as the only name he can remember from the past is put into a computer search engine, some not very nice government agents (is there any other kind in these stories?) begin a violent nationwide search for him.

Okay, we've all seen this sort of story before. Man get amnesia, there's some big horrible secret in his past, the government doesn't want it known, so they try to hunt him down, all the while shouting "national security," and he does his best to stay one step ahead of them even though he has no idea what is going on. That alone does not make it a bad story. It is what the author does with that basic tale that will make the difference between a solid, suspenseful tale and an average, predictable one. And G. M. Ford has come up with a pretty interesting tale of one man on the run from an unscrupulous government.

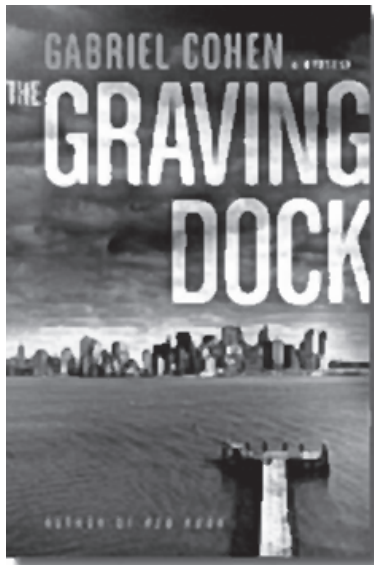
For the most part Ford puts the reader into the shoes of his protagonist, telling us only what other information we might need to know to build the confusion felt by the man on the run. Why is he running? What does he know? What is so important that others around him are arrested ("national security" again) or dying? Ford slowly pulls back the layers, letting both Hardy and the reader in on the secrets that have lain hidden for years.

Along the way the book has a lot of padding, with a number of what could be considered human-interest stories of people Hardy meets along the path to the return of his memory. This is sort of like the old *Fugitive* television series but in the case of this book it is like substantial padding that through a series of pretty unbelievable coincidences keeps Hardy pointed in the right direction. A little of that goes a long way and there is a lot of it here.

Still the story moves along swiftly in spite of these many detours as the truth behind the conspiracy at the heart of the novel is revealed. In this day and age of conspiracy theories and para-

noia about the enhanced "national security" powers of the government, this novel does not seem so far off the mark.

THE GRAVING DOCK by Gabriel Cohen (\$23.95, Thomas Dunne Books /St. Martin's Minotaur, November 2007). **Rating: A** It's the frigid winter days of 2001 in the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center. Brooklyn South Homicide Detective Jack Leightner is called upon to solve the death of a young boy whose body was found in a small coffin floating in a bay off New York Harbor. The dead boy has the letters "G.I."



"I believe it was Natasha Cooper who said that crime fiction writers deal with the dregs of society so, as a result, everyone they meet in real life is an absolute delight. Romance novelists, on the other hand, write about idealised characters and everyone **they** meet is a hideous disappointment." Donna Moore

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written on his forehead. The relatively gentle handling by the person who put the boy in the box leads Leightner to at first believe this may have been some kind of mercy killing. But when another body shows up, also bearing the mysterious letters, Leightner knows there is more to the case. Meanwhile, he's partnered with a cop who is obviously in some sort of trouble and has a girlfriend to whom he wants to propose but cannot find the right time or way to do it.

This is the sequel to Gabriel Cohen's Edgar-nominated first novel, **RED HOOK**, and there is no sophomore slump here. This is a tensely written tale of police investigation, coupled with a well delineated cast of characters. In particular the relationship between Jack and his hoped-to-be fiancée is touching and tender, while at the same time realistic in light of Jack's gruesome job.

This is an atmospheric book, with a gritty feel for the poor areas of Brooklyn, but leavened with some dark humor to hone the edge of the story to a fine point. Cohen writes in such a believable fashion that the reader is caught up from the opening page through to the suspenseful resolution and enigmatic denouement.

But a minor word of caution. Dust jacket comments often give away too much information. In this case the solution to one of the major puzzles of the book will leap out from the jacket copy at the careful reader. It is difficult to understand why publishers are not more careful in what they do. After all, one of the reasons people read mysteries is for the explanation of the events. Not all readers want the solution handed to them before they even get to page one.

THE FAULT TREE by Louise Ure (\$23.95, St. Martin's Minotaur, January, 2008). **Rating: C** Walking home from work Tuscan auto mechanic Cadence Moran hears some sounds that catch her attention. But seconds later she is almost run over by a car. What she heard was the aftermath of the murder of a neighbor. When Cadence's face is splashed across the pages of the newspaper, the killers believe that there is a witness who could identify him. So they decide that she must die, too. However, what the killers do not know at first is that Cadence is blind and as a result could not have seen anything. But what she heard, and what her other heightened senses became aware of, could bring justice for the victim anyway.

Louise Ure has created a rare protagonist: one who must outwit murderers without being able to visually identify them. Cadence is a remarkable heroine. She can tell what kind of car she must fix at her job just by its sound and then has to correct the problem without sight. She is taking flying lessons from a relative. She is feisty and not one to be put off. Ure's descriptions of Cadence's daily life, her struggles, and her triumphs are remarkably well written and believable. In fact Ure tried some of these tasks herself, from changing a tire while blindfolded to flying a single engine plane with her eyes closed.

However, the plot itself is not as absorbing as Cadence's life. The villains are just vicious, violent dopes who, if they had half a brain between them, would have been better off just leaving town rather than sticking around trying to kill someone who couldn't identify them. They can't even succeed at running over a blind woman (though they try it twice!) and even attempt to kill the wrong person thinking it is Cadence. Fortunately, Cadence is up to the task put in front of her, but I doubt that she would be able to hold her own against even a partially competent killer. Still, Ure can be applauded for giving us a story that departs sufficiently from the norm to hold our attention and a seriously handicapped (though I suspect Cadence would not think of herself in that fashion) protagonist for whom the reader will want to root.

THE INNS (AND OUTS) OF COURT

THE DARK OF DAY by Barbara Parker (\$25.95, Vanguard Press, June, 2008). **Rating:**

C Celebrity attorney C. J. Dunn has just finished getting a not guilty verdict on behalf of a high-profile client when she is approached by an old friend of hers to represent an employee of a congressman. Rick Slater, the employee, attended a party where a beautiful young woman disappeared. Several witnesses claim to have seen him with her just before she vanished. Of course the real object is to deflect any bad light being shined toward the congressman, who was also in attendance at the party. Meanwhile, Dunn struggles with her alcoholism, deals with a runaway child of some acquaintances, and is hot on the trail of an on-air position at CNN, a position which the congressman could help her land.



This book has everything one might expect from this sort of novel. We have the obligatory sexy and brilliant female attorney. There is the obligatory sexy and lying client. There's the obligatory sexy and tough female private investigator. What is new and different here is that C. J. Dunn takes this case only for expense money and not for the fees she would normally earn (in that regard she sounds more like a private eye than a lawyer!). This turns it from legal fiction into legal fantasy.

Unfortunately, there is little in the way of either actual suspense or thrills in this legal thriller. It is rife with coincidence, mostly unbelievable, and characters that could use a bit more development. Dunn herself is nicely drawn, battling with alcoholism and other problems that are slowly revealed over the course of the novel. But most of the other characters run together with little to distinguish them.

In the past I've enjoyed the author's "Suspicion" series with attorneys Gail Conner and Anthony Quintana. But this book missed the mark for me.

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MAGGIE'S MYSTERY CAFE'

by Mary Mason

Focusing on the
Cozy Mystery



DEATH'S HALF ACRE by Margaret Maron (Grand Central, \$24.99). Fourteenth in the award winning Deborah Knott series. **Rating: A** Judge Deborah Knott is lucky to have been brought up in a large, loving family in the North Carolina countryside. The flavor of the area is changing as farmers and other landowners are selling out to developers. McMansions are cropping up all over, and the county commissioners seem to be willing to sell out the charm of the area for money, money, money.

Candace Bradshaw is one of the most controversial of the commissioners. Born to a poor, trashy family, she worked hard, married well, and became successful after a fashion. She was found dead in the new home she bought with cash. Initially thought to be a suicide, her death is found to be murder. When the police are unable to find the records she kept on her dirty dealings, narrowing the list of suspects gets more difficult. When her daughter is also found murdered, the investigation heats up.

I was truly surprised by the culprit's identity, though the author played fair with the clues. The Knott family is such a warm clan, you just know you'd fit right in and be welcomed with open arms if you moved to the area with the right attitude. Keeping the land from developers is a scene that is being played out with various rates of success throughout the world. Thankfully the Knotts take care of Colleton County, North Carolina. The next book in the series can't come quickly enough for me..

ZAPPED by Carol Higgins Clark. (Scribner, \$24.00). Eleventh in the Regan Reilly series. **Rating: B** Regan Reilly and her husband Jack are renovating their loft in Tribeca after buying the apartment next door. The Reilly's aren't aware that the seller, Conrad Spreckles is in the process of divorcing his second, younger wife and hadn't told her about the sale. It was his due to the prenuptial agreement. Conrad isn't aware that his wife had a safe installed in the closet and if the contents are ever revealed, Lorraine's career as an actress would be dead in the water. No one is aware that a construction worker found the safe and has plans to break into it, sure there is a treasure inside.

Regan and Jack return from a trip to Cape Cod and find themselves in the midst of a black out. Jack is at

work and Regan thought she was alone in the apartment, until she discovers an intruder. Luckily he leaves without doing any harm.

Sadly, Regan finds out from her visiting friend Kit that there is a female predator on the loose. Kit had gone to a comedy club with a woman who was also attending an insurance conference. Kit is on crutches due to a recent surgery, and can't believe that Georgina went off and left her. Luckily there are nice people around to help her, but she finds out Georgina is truly disturbed. She had a bad breakup years ago, and now picks up men who resemble her ex, drugs them, and brands them with a homemade snake tattoo.

If this wasn't enough action during a black out, a gallery specializing in glass works has been robbed, and the investigations converge to a climatic finale. The Reilly's make a great team, and all's well that ends well.

While I enjoyed this book, as the others in the series, I did wonder about the ease that the rather large cast of characters moved about New York City in a blackout. Having been lucky enough to never be in that situation, I would have thought traffic would have been more of a nightmare. But things do seem to work out when Regan is around.

DRINK TO YESTERDAY by Manning Coles. (Rue Morgue Press, \$14.95). Trade paperback, reissue. First in the Tommy Hambleon series. **Rating: A** This review is going to be a bit hard to write, as there is a definite spoiler for the second book. I'm just going to say that it takes place during World War I, and shows the life of a pair of British intelligence agents who are living in Cologne, Germany.

This is one of the few books I have made the time to re-read. I have long been a fan of Manning Coles. I discovered Coles one day at work when my lunch time card game was cancelled. I was left without a book, and saw **THE BASLE EXPRESS** on the book swap shelf. I began reading it and was instantly hooked.

Reading this was almost like reading it for the first time, I had forgotten so much, so I was able to enjoy this book again. Though I had the book in my collection, I really enjoyed the introduction by Tom and Enid Schantz. Highly recommended, with continuing thanks to Rue Morgue Press for bringing an old favorite back to print.

COCKATIELS AT SEVEN by Donna Andrews (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$23.95). Ninth in the hilarious Meg Langslow series. **Rating: A-** Even when things are almost normal with her family, life can still be interesting for Meg Langslow. She's asked by her friend Karen to take care of her son, Timmy. Karen and Meg haven't seen much of each other recently, so Meg isn't aware of what may be going on in Karen's life. That makes life harder for Meg when Karen doesn't return for Timmy, nor does she answer her cell phone.

Karen has moved since Meg had been in contact with her, so she goes to Karen's workplace to find out where Karen may have gone. She finds out Karen's employer has also lost contact with her, and isn't happy

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about the matter. Nor is a co-worker happy to see the rambunctious Timmy. It seems Karen had promised not to bring him to work again.

Meg tracks down Karen's residence, and finds no trace of her. Caring for an active child is not what Meg had planned, and she steps up her efforts to find Karen. She finds out where Timmy's father has been living, after he lost his job.

Luckily, at least at first, Meg is able to enlist her family in caring for turbo-charged Timmy. This may be good practice for when Meg and Michael start their own family, but worries about Karen are upsetting Meg's peace of mind.

During this, Meg is also concerned about her Father and Brother, the birds she finds in her home, and keeping track of Timmy's beloved stuffed animal. Luckily, our Meg is up to the challenge, and while the humor is low key, it still makes for a fun read to be savored on a lazy summer day.

CHRISTMAS IS MURDER by C.S. Challinor (Midnight Ink, \$13.95). Trade paperback, Second in the Rex Graves series. **Rating: B** Barrister Rex Graves is not having the relaxing vacation he had planned. Swanmere Manor is owned by one of his mother's friends, and Rex has fond memories of the days he spent there in his youth. Now the Manor is a hotel, mostly known to people by word of mouth. His mom is visiting a sick friend, and his lady friend is doing humanitarian work in Iraq, so he's looking forward to a quiet holiday. Sadly, the hotel is snowed in, and Rex arrives via tennis racquet snowshoes.

There is an accidental death not long after Rex arrives, an elderly man who was well liked by the other residents. Sadly, it appears he may have been poisoned. When another death occurs, a not so well liked literary agent who falls down the steps to the cellar, Rex knows he's got to take action, as the police are not able to get through the snow drifts. The characters are not all they seem to be at first, and Rex must spend his vacation sleuthing in this charming country house mystery.

If it weren't for references to cell phones and the war in Iraq, this book could almost have taken place in the golden age of mysteries. I missed the first in the series, but won't miss the next one. I should also note that the author is generously donating fifteen percent of her royalties to Soldiers' Angels and other charities that support those wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan.

THE LAUGHTER OF DEAD KINGS by Elizabeth Peters (Morrow, \$25.95). Sixth in the Vicky Bliss series. **Rating: A-** Vicky Bliss is a contented woman most of the time. She has a great job working for a museum in Munich, Germany. Her boss, Anton Schmidt, is a great guy. She has a dog and cat to keep her happy at home, and sometimes the company of John Tregarth, formerly known as Sir John Smythe. John had been an international antiquities thief, who has reformed. He's now a legitimate dealer, but law enforcement has a long memory, and knows the statute of limitations.

Vicky and John are contacted by an Egyptian friend, Feisal. Feisal is in charge of a site in Egypt, a site with the remains of the most famous mummy in the history of Egypt, King Tut. The reason Feisal comes to Munich is that those remains have been stolen, by a gang that perfectly imitated the way authorities would have moved them. Sadly, they are being held for ransom. Given John's past, he is a suspect.

John, Vicky, and Schmidt assure Feisal they will assist him in recovering the remains, and that takes them to various spots in Europe and Egypt. Given John's past connections, Vicky's quick wits, and Schmidt's lavish spending, they have some success in figuring out what happened.

There is an interesting discovery of a link between someone in this novel and the Peabody-Emerson series. More than that, I won't say. I will say that this is a wonderful return to an old favorite character. There are references to previous Vicky Bliss novels, and I wish I had the time to read them before reading this. I hope the gap between this book and the next in the series will be much shorter.

VODKA NEAT by Anna Blundy (St. Martin's, \$24.95). Second in the Faith Zanetti series. **Rating: B+** Faith Zanetti is a journalist for a UK paper, returning to Russia after a breakdown covering the war in Iraq. As a teenager, she married a man she met on a school trip to Moscow. Dimitri was sort of a small time crook with ties to the black market. Faith left Russia after she and Dimitri discovered a horrific murder in an apartment near them. A young couple is dead, the woman murdered by her husband who then chopped off his leg and bled to death.

Sixteen years later, Faith is back, and hauled in by the police to discuss the murder. It seems that Faith's incarcerated husband finally told prison officials Faith was the murderer. When Faith goes to the prison to confront him, she finds an old friend, Adrian, rather than Dimitri. Adrian is an American who has been living in Russia for so long using forged papers, it is impossible to prove who he really is.

Faith and her off again on again lover, Eden Jones, delve into the mystery of why Adrian is in prison under another name. With another journalist, they travel through the new Russia, with Faith's vivid memories of living through a time of shortages and hardship with the sheer courage of youth. In an exciting ending, Faith comes to grips with her past and her future.

I enjoyed this book, but was a bit disappointed to discover it was not the first in the series. I put this a bit higher on the mountain of books to be read and reviewed as it was said to be humorous. I didn't see the humor in the book, but enjoyed it nonetheless.

UNEASY RELATIONS by Aaron Elkins (Berkley, \$23.95). Fifteenth in the Gideon Oliver series. **Rating: B+** Gideon Oliver is honored to be invited to a ceremony on Gibraltar honoring the anniversary of the discovery of Gibraltar Woman and Gibraltar Boy. When the skeleton of the Homo Sapien woman sheltering a child who was part

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Neanderthal, the fields of archeology and anthropology were turned on their heads.

Gideon has a new book coming out, and to his great dismay, his publisher is making rash claims of revealing a stunning fraud. There is nothing like that in the book, but given the interest it's garnering, sales could sky rocket. Gideon would rather keep his reputation intact than be a best seller based on erroneous press releases.

That someone is taking the claims seriously is proven when there are a couple of attempts on Gideon's life. They could be accidents, but are found to be of a more sinister nature.

Gideon and wife Julie must be on their toes to prevent a more serious attempt. Luckily, they are up to any challenge. When the case solved, it is bittersweet for Gideon and his colleagues.

As always, it's a pleasure to be reunited with the Olivers. Elkins takes us to places we may never get a chance to see first hand, and always makes the trip enjoyable.

COFFIN SCARCELY USED by Colin Watson. (Rue Morgue Press, \$14.95). Reprint, Trade Paperback, first in the Flaxborough Chronicles. **Rating: B+** In the East Anglican village of Flaxborough, things aren't always what they seem. When prominent citizen Harold Carobleat dies, his funeral is surprisingly low key. Carobleat left his widow well provided for, though his business closed. Few people other than his friends attended the private internment. One of the friends, Marcus Gwill, is the publisher of the local newspaper. When Gwill is found electrocuted, his mouth full of marshmallows, the police are summoned.

Inspector Purbright and his assistant, Sergeant Love get the assignment, and delve into the deaths. Finding the answer to strange coded advertisements in the newspaper help solve the mystery. Other mysteries present themselves, such as why the local doctor's office has so many after-hours patients. This is a village, not a large city. Finding the answer to these questions, as well as where the Widow Carobleat goes for weekend trips makes for an enjoyable introduction to life in the town of Flaxborough.

It's been a long time since I've read a book in this series, and I really enjoyed a return trip to Flaxborough. I can't wait for more entries in the series. Rue Morgue Press has a keen sense of what mysteries need to be reprinted to delight mystery readers. Chances are they will find an author new to even the most well-read mystery fan.

FISHERMAN'S BEND by Linda Greenlaw (Hyperion, \$24.95). Second in the Jane Bunker series. **Rating: B** Jane Bunker left her job as a Miami homicide detective, and has moved the Green Haven Maine. She

works a dual job, as a marine insurance investigator, and as an Assistant Deputy of Knox County. Having spent her youth helping out on boats and her adult life as a cop, all her skills will prove useful. She had lived in Maine as a child before her mother moved the family to Florida, so it's almost like a return to her roots.

When a research vessel is vandalized, Jane is called in to investigate for the insurance company as well as the police. The Quest has been hired to survey the ocean floor for a company wanting to start an oyster farm. Local fishermen and native tribes are not happy about the threat to their livelihood.

Jane hires Cal, a local sea-faring man, to ferry her around the area on her investigations. While out at sea, they find a local boat, circling the water. No one is aboard, and foul play is suspected. Jane learns that there are two groups of fishermen in the area. The groups have been feuding for years. The missing skipper, Parker Alley is wealthy, due to his being able to capitalize on opportunities when they present themselves. Or is there something more sinister. Jane gets to the bottom of the crime, while surviving an attempt to sink her to the bottom of the ocean.

While fishing is not one of my favorite activities, the author made at least reading about the ins and outs of the industry interesting. The author was featured in **THE PERFECT STORM** by Sebastien Junger. I hadn't read the first book in the series, but was not at sea. Life in a small town was realistically portrayed, and the characters fit right in to my expectations of what Maine fishermen would be. This

is a good example of writing what you know, successfully. **MIGHTY OLD BONES** by Mary Saums (St. Martin's, \$23.95). Second in the Thistle and Twigg series. **Rating: B+** Small town Tullulah, Alabama has a charm that appeals to Jane Thistle, widow of an army officer, who has a vary interesting past. She and new friend Phoebe Twigg find a skeleton after a storm uprooted a tree on property Jane inherited in the last book.

Jane calls in a friend of hers to help discover more about the body and surrounding site. Sadly, word gets out and a band of marauders tries to take advantage of the isolated setting to steal anything of value. Jane and Phoebe are up to the challenge of fending off the villains, protecting the find, and keeping a natural treasure safe for future generations.

Though there is a bit of a woo-woo factor in the book, I found it charming rather than distracting. Jane and Phoebe are a good example of how people of different backgrounds can forge a lasting friendship.

FEARLESS FOURTEEN by Janet Evanovich (St. Martin's, \$27.95). Fourteenth in the Stephanie Plum



Mary Saums

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series. **Rating: A-** Stephanie Plum may never win the title of Bond Enforcement Agent of the Year, but she makes the job a lot more entertaining than anything on cable TV. When she and Lula apprehend a woman who is a distant relative of Morelli, Stephanie's hunky boyfriend, the woman is worried about her son. Stephanie gets volunteered to take care of Zook, expecting it will only be for an afternoon. To her great distress, she has custody of Zook long enough to realize she could be in over her head. While her newest car was normal looking, Zook painted it all over with his name in bright colors. Driving the Zook car makes surveillance a bit tricky. Luckily, she's been hired by Ranger to help provide security for an aging singer who has a reputation for wild living that almost makes Britney Spears look like a model parent, so no undercover work is necessary.

Another relative of Morelli enters the picture, causing more trouble. Dom Rizzi was one of a group of men who robbed a bank, but he was the only one that did time. Dom refused to rat out his accomplices, and the loot was never recovered. There have been many rumors about where the money is, and the latest is that it was hidden in the house Morelli inherited. The latest activity in the burg is digging up the yard and basement of the house. Morelli tries to discourage this, but in the end has the basement floor removed.

As with any Plum Caper, there are eccentric hangers on, chase scenes, and a lot of merriment. This is no exception. Stephanie does seem to attract a certain amount of attention, though nothing that she can't handle with a little help from her friends.

STALKING SUSAN by Julie Kramer (Doubleday, \$22.95). Debut novel.

Rating: B+ Riley Spartz is trying to recover from the horrific death of her police officer husband, as well as revive her career as an investigative reporter for a Minneapolis TV station. Riley was deeply depressed, which is to be expected after losing a spouse. What made it worse was that they had fought right before he left to work.

Riley needs to find new stories to get back on the air, and luckily she gets a tip from a former cop. Nick Garnett is now head of security for the Mall of America. He had information on the deaths of two women named Susan.

Riley wants to determine if there is a serial killer out there as the women were both murdered on November 19th, though different years. One woman was a waitress, the other was a drug addict who prostituted herself to buy drugs. As the investigation goes on, Riley finds another Susan who was murdered on the 19th as well. She was the wife of a respected doctor. That may not be tied in, as her murderer was found and is in prison. Riley still wants to look into the murder of Susan Redding, to make sure her murderer was indeed found.

While this is going on, Riley gets an assignment which she dismissed initially. It seems that people who pay for

cremation of their beloved pets are being cheated by a crooked vet.

Riley uncovers the scam, which gets high ratings, and makes Dr. Redding open up to her a bit more. Eventually, Susan ties everything together in a very satisfying manner.

This was a very enjoyable debut novel. The insight into the workings of a television news show was intriguing. I also loved seeing the nasty vet get caught. I'm hoping this will be a series.

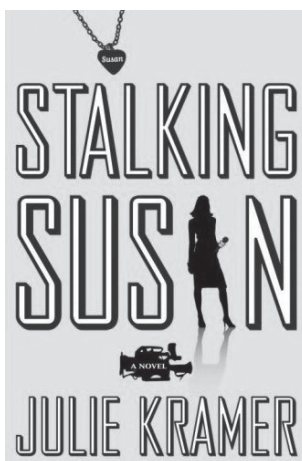
CUT TO THE QUICK by Dianne Emley (Ballantine, \$24.95, Dec, 2008). Second in the Det. Nan Vining police procedural series. **Rating: B+** As an experienced homicide detective in Pasadena Calif., Nan Vining has seen some pretty scary things, but the new case is almost beyond belief. A wealthy man and his girlfriend have been brutally murdered, though butchered is a more apt term for the slaughter that took place. Nan and Jim Kissick catch the case, and turn their attention to the man's business partner. Mark Scoville's father had started a very successful billboard business in the sixties. Mark sold a part of the business to Oliver Mercer, though they got along superficially, there was some conflict about a new venture. They had a bad argument, with witnesses.

Nan and Jim interview Mark and his wife Dina Hale. Dina is a host of a popular morning show, who may have a network job in her future. She and Mark had survived a lifestyle that included heavy drinking. An accident while driving drunk put Dina on a successful path to recovery. Sadly, Mark didn't have the same results. The cops feel Mark wasn't the murderer, but are sure he is hiding something.

A young man is caught by police after streaking in Pasadena. What brings the man the cops named Nitro to Nan's attention is his drawings of crime scenes, including the attempt on her life. Nan had survived an attack on her life by a villain she and her daughter named T.B. Mann for "the bad man." Evidence shows Nan that Nitro has some link to TB Mann, evidence she kept from everyone else.

While the police are pursuing the investigation, Mark Scoville and his wife are becoming more estranged. His wife interviews an ex-con who has written a best-selling book. They become lovers, and a connection to the murderer is shown. A showdown in the desert results in an exciting ending.

While the reader is given a look at Mercer's killer, I thought it added to the tension, as we follow the cops investigation. I do hope that more will be brought out about T.B. Mann in the next book in the series, as I don't like to be strung along too much. I would have liked



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a bit more exposition in this book, but it didn't detract from my enjoyment of the book. If not done in the next book, I would be disappointed. I like the way the relationship between Nan and Kissick is being handled.

FUZZY NAVEL by J. A. Konrath (Hyperion, \$25.95). Fifth in the Lt. Jack Daniels police procedural series. **Rating: A-** Chicago Police Lt. Jacqueline Daniels has given in and moved to the suburbs with her ex-cop mother. She's called to a sniper shooting, one of three that happened simultaneously. She doesn't have time to do her report when she gets a call from her mother asking her to come home. Something is wrong, so Jack gets her partner to cover for her and leaves, promising to be back in a couple of hours.

When she gets there, she finds her mom being held prisoner by Alexandra Kork. This really takes Jack by surprise as she had just had a call that Kork had died in prison. Jack and others had played a big part in her Kork's capture. Now Jack is dismayed to see she's free and seeking vengeance.

Complicating a dire situation are the snipers. They put a tracking device on Jack's car and have followed her home to continue their murder spree. Initially they were preying on felons, but a rogue member of the group started shooting the police called to his crime scene. Now the situation at Jack's house has Jack pitted against both Kork and the snipers. Her partner Herb comes by to check as the police brass are demanding she come in for a statement, and she's not answering her cell phone. Knowing Herb's wife will kill her if Herb is harmed adds to the pressure on Jack.

This was a thrill-filled ride along with one of the most intriguing detectives around. Jack is inventive in dealing with an overwhelming number of criminals seeking her destruction. Mostly having to act on her own, she does have a bit of help from her mom, Herb, Harry McGlade, and Phin. Rambo has nothing on Jack.

DON'T TELL A SOUL by David Rosenfelt (St. Martin's, \$24.95). Standalone thriller. **Rating: B+** Tim Wallace is a man grieving for his wife who died in a boating accident, though one police detective is bent on proving Tim murdered his wife. So far, he's unable to find any proof, but Det. John Novack isn't giving up. Tim throws himself into his work. He owns a New Jersey construction company specializing in buildings that can withstand terrorist attacks. His partners want him to get out more, and go out with him on New Year's eve.

While at their favorite pub, a stranger joins Tim at a table. The stranger tells Tim a bizarre tale of having murdered a woman in a small town, and buried her body. Not sure what to do, Tim reports the conversation to the police. This opens up a case of trouble for Tim and the beginning of a bizarre plot, one that took an incredible amount of planning and precise execution.

Tim has some good friends, including his golden retriever, and with their help, he proves himself. One friend, a woman who he met at a dog park is particularly helpful in finding the truth.

While I miss the humor of the Andy Carpenter series, this was an enjoyable read. The way the plot unfolded, I wasn't sure how Tim would be able to pull everything together in the race for the truth. I'd enjoy reading more about Tim and Kiley, the golden. I'd even hope perhaps they could have a play date with Tara and Andy.

CURSE OF THE POGO STICK by Colin Cotterill (Soho, \$24.00). Fifth in the Dr. Siri series. **Rating: A-** In the Laos of the 1970's Dr. Siri knows life will never be easy or uncomplicated. Though he had been involved in the revolution against the Royalists, he is realistic about life in the newly Communist Laos. As the Coroner, he respects his patients and tries to help the living. While on a trip to the country, he is kidnapped by seven Hmong women. They are nearly all that is left of their village. The wife of the village headman has died, and the villagers are about to set out on an expedition to freedom.

Before they can leave, they want Dr. Siri to exorcise the Headman's daughter. The villagers are convinced Dr. Siri is Yeh Ming, a powerful Shaman. Dr. Siri doesn't know the first thing about being a Shaman, but luckily, one of the women's father was a Shaman, and she helps Dr. Siri with the basics.

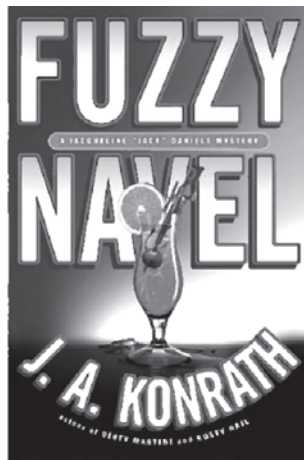
While Dr. Siri is out of town, the Morgue is experiencing some excitement. The acting Coroner is about to begin his examination of a corpse when nurse Dtui stops him.

She senses something is wrong with the body. She is right, and they find a bomb planted inside the corpse. Dtui, Mr. Geung, Madame Daeng, and Dtui's husband conduct their own investigation of a plot against themselves and Dr. Siri.

While there is a bit of woo-woo in the series, it is very well done, especially in the manner Dr. Siri conducts the exorcism. Cotterill has a love of the people of Laos, and it shows. What was very interesting to me is his mention of plants. I tried unsuccessfully to google a few, like the painful lip bush, they sounded so interesting. Also fascinating was the look at the Hmong culture and its devastation.

COOL CACHE by Patricia Smiley (Obsidian, \$23.95). Fourth in the Tucker Sinclair series. **Rating: B** Business consultant Tucker Sinclair has what many of us would consider a dream client: a gourmet chocolate shop. Helen Taggart is the great-granddaughter of a Belgian Chocolatier, and with his recipes, has opened a shop catering to the chocoholics in Los Angeles. Tucker stops by the store and finds a body inside. It's Lupe Ortiz, the cleaning woman, lying near a bloody feather.

The evidence doesn't point to a burglary interrupted, so Helen may be a suspect. The main suspect is



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Lupe's teenage son, a kid with a lot of problems. Still, killing his mom is not what anyone would have expected from him. And the feather is found to be a clue leading to Central America.

Tucker enlists the aid of her office partner and private investigator to try to help Helen, as being closed for even a day can put the financial health of the new business in jeopardy.

Unfortunately, Tucker's secretary/assistant, Eugene decides to get involved in the investigation. He might be just avoiding his visiting mother, but he isn't staying in contact, which adds to Tucker's worries. The case is solved, but not without risk to Tucker and Eugene.

While I enjoyed this book, as others in the series, I confess I was a bit disappointed that there wasn't more chocolate lore in the book. I admit my hoping for samples with the advance reading copy was unrealistic, but a chocoholic can always dream

A ROYAL PAIN by Rhys Bowen. (Berkley, \$23.95). Second in the Royal Spyness mystery series. **Rating: A-** Lady Georgiana Rannoch is making the best of her life in London. Her business opening houses for wealthy families returning from vacation is perfect for her skills, such as they are. Of course, this business is a secret from most of her family and acquaintances, especially the Queen.

Having over thirty people ahead of you in the royal succession pretty much ensures you'll never be crowned Queen, but that doesn't mean you can relax your standards of conduct. Georgie is assigned a duty by the Queen, one that will keep her very busy. There is a princess from Germany, Hanni for short, who is visiting England. The Queen hopes her son will become enamored with him, and lose interest in the American divorcee he is besotted with, much to the dismay of all who meet the woman.

Georgie has her hands full with Hanni, who has lead a very sheltered life, and now wants to live it up. At a "fast" party, there is a death, and Georgie and Hanni are quickly hurried away. That is not the only death on the agenda, and it's up to Georgie and her quick wits to save the day.

Georgie is a real treasure. I love the way she has found a way to live a life of her choosing, yet still keep on the good side of her family. Her ingenuity is amazing. Further adventures of the Lady Georgie will be highly anticipated by this reader.

THE DIRTY SECRETS CLUB by Meg Gardiner (Dutton, \$24.95). Series debut. **Rating: A-** Jo Beckett is a forensic psychologist, and when she is contacted by the San Francisco police department, she's not sure she has the time needed to determine why a top prosecutor drove her car off a freeway overpass, killing herself and people riding

in an airport shuttle bus. There was a passenger in Callie Harding's car, but she is in critical condition.

Jo generally needs days or weeks, not hours to delve into a suicide's innermost thoughts.

Police Lieutenant. Amy Tang suspects there will be another high profile death soon. There have been two previous double deaths recently. A fashion designer and his lover died on his yacht which was an inferno. A respected physician died after his son, supposedly a recovered addict, died of an overdose.

Jo and Amy are a formidable duo, a mixture of medical knowledge and police resources who find out about a secret society. The Dirty Secrets Club is made up of high rollers who have something to hide. It may be more than that, and it seems the members are being hunted by a man who was wronged by some of its members.

Jo and Amy, with the aid of others, track down the man who is intent on bringing the club to a brutal end. Jo has to battle him while protecting the young child of a friend. A Savior helps her out, one that was unexpected.

The final scene was truly hair raising, and yet poignant. Jo may take a few more books for me to really connect with her, but this made a great start to a hopefully long string of thrillers.

JUDGMENT DAY by Sheldon Siegel (MacAdam/Cage, \$26.00). Sixth in the Mike Daley/Rosie Fernandez series. **Rating: B+** In a small law firm, money can be tight, so an offer of \$50,000 for ten days of work could be very helpful. Mike is approached to help with a last ditch effort to stop the execution of Nathan Fineman. Fineman was a noted defense attorney, and for much of his career was a respected member of the bar. He lost a lot of respect in his defense of drug dealers and gang mem-

bers.

He was convicted of murdering two drug dealers in a Chinatown restaurant. Mike's dad was one of the cops called to the scene, and though he is now dead, his reputation could be tarnished. The defense tried to claim that the murder weapon was planted on Fineman, but an internal affairs investigation cleared the police of any wrongdoing.

Mike enlists his brother Pete, now a private investigator, to help with the case. Fineman's wife is wealthy, and the money offered is very tempting. Pete agrees, but reluctantly. Neither brother wants any shame brought to their father.

The investigation is made more difficult as one witness was killed after talking to the police, and the other disappeared shortly after that. The time factor is a major part of the case, as is the strategy for how the appeal process is to be done. And making it so much more difficult is the death of the lead attorney on the case. Now Mike



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and Rosie must take over more than they had bargained for when they agreed to take the case.

Someone sends a picture of Mike and Rosie's teenage daughter, and Mike and Pete have their car windows shattered, which makes them suspect Fineman may be innocent. Can they prove it in the limited time left??

Though there wasn't much in the way of courtroom action, this is still a very impressive legal thriller. The action was fast paced, and held my attention. The interaction between Mike and Rosie is realistic, and the characters are very appealing. I have missed a few in this series, but didn't find that a problem in my enjoyment of this book.

SPUN TALES by Felicia Donovan (Midnight Ink, \$13.95, trade paperback). Second in the Black Widow Agency series. **Rating: B+** The women of the Black Widow Agency are working on one case when they see what looks to be a murder attempt. The attempted victim is Linda Jordan, author of the best-selling book, **THE FRANKLIN CURE**, a book that supposedly reveals a medical cure developed two hundred years ago by a nephew of Benjamin Franklin. Though the book is fiction, it has developed a near cult following, and a lot of controversy. Some people put their faith in the cure, possibly to the detriment of their health.

Linda is in the final stages of editing her new book, one that pharmaceutical firms may want to stop. It's widely rumored that she only has one copy of the book, on a device she wears as jewelry. It's up to the Black Widow's to keep her safe while she finishes the book.

Katie Mahoney sneaks Linda into her mother's apartment at an assisted living facility. That works well until the cover is blown and they are kidnapped. The BW's use all their skills to save them, as well as figuring out who is behind the scheme.

This is another strong entry in this polished series. I enjoy reading about people who put a great value on helping other people. This book was a bit different as the main focus was on one case, and it was well done. The women are very realistic, with many different foibles, just as you would find in any company. I'd love to enlist them in my fight with my ninety-one year old mother's HMO.

NOTHING TO LOSE by Lee Child (Bantam, \$27). Twelfth in the Jack Reacher series. **Rating A-** **Reacher is on his way to San Diego, California. Finally!!!** But for now, Reacher is in Colorado, in Despair on his way to Hope. Despair is a very unwelcoming town, and when Reacher tries to order a cup of coffee in the diner, he is thrown out of town.

Reacher is met at the city limits by a cop from Hope. She is a nice woman who tries to explain about Despair, a company town, pretty much owned by one man. The main industry seems to be a recycling plant, but Reacher looks beyond that, and isn't happy about what he finds. He also wonders why some young women stay in Hope while looking for loved ones. There is a rooming house in Despair, but it isn't occupied, and is much nearer to the military installation that may hold a clue to who the women are looking for in Despair.

Telling Reacher not to return is like issuing a challenge, and he returns in the dead of night. In the desert area, he stumbles across a body. Could that be one of the missing young men? Reacher will solve the mystery, or die trying, and dying is not Reacher's style.

Once again, betting for Reacher to win when the odds are totally against him, could make you a wealthy person. There was one scene in the book that had me in tears -- Reacher visiting a nursing home/rehab facility for soldiers, and taking necessary actions to improve their deplorable care. Reacher is a good man, and I have hopes he can take on my mothers HMO, and teach a nasty case manager a lesson. Then I remember, he's a fictional character. But hey, I still can't wait for him to arrive here in San Diego. A solid winner.

Macavity Award Nominees 2008

Best Mystery Novel

SOUL PATCH by Reed Farrel Coleman

THE UNQUIET by John Connolly

BLOOD OF PARADISE by David Corbett

WATER LIKE A STONE by Deborah Crombie

WHAT THE DEAD KNOW by Laura Lippman

Best First Mystery

IN THE WOODS by Tana French

HEART-SHAPED BOX by Joe Hill

THE SPELLMAN FILES by Lisa Lutz

STEALING THE DRAGON by Tim Maleeny

THE COLLABORATOR OF BETHLEHEM by
Matt Beynon Rees

Best Mystery Short Story

"A Rat's Tale" by Donna Andrews

"Please Watch Your Step" by Rhys Bowen

"The Missing Elevator Puzzle" by Jon L. Breen

"Brimstone P.I." by Beverle Graves Myers

"The Old Wife's Tale" by Gillian Roberts

Sue Feder Memorial

Historical Mystery

HER ROYAL SPYNESS by Rhys Bowen

MISTRESS OF THE ART OF DEATH by Ariana
Franklin

THE SNAKE STONE by Jason Goodwin

CONSEQUENCES OF SIN by Clare Langley-
Hawthorne

THE GRAVEDIGGERS DAUGHTER by Joyce
Carol Oates

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DEADLY PLEASURES by George Easter



CHASING DARKNESS by Robert Crais (Simon & Schuster, \$25.95, July, 2008). **Rating: A** The first chapter really grabbed me. It depicts two policemen who are in charge of getting everyone in a certain neighborhood to temporarily move out because of a near-by wildfire. One policeman gets no response at one door and the next door neighbor's information about the man who lives there gives him cause for concern, so he finds a way to get inside and when he does, he discovers an apparent suicide. That's bad enough, but as he looks a bit closer, he peruses the scrapbook on the suicide's lap. It contains photos of the last moments of seven female murder victims. Seven victims in seven years and the police never connected the murders as the work of one serial killer. The police investigation of the murder of Victim #4 did result in a suspect (the deceased suicide), but he was cleared by the clever detective work of one Elvis Cole. Is it possible that Elvis made a mistake, which resulted in the deaths of three more victims?

This discovery sets off a firestorm of a different kind – police activity. But are they trying to close the cases too rapidly for their own purposes. Elvis Cole gets caught in the middle of all this and has to try to come up with a scenario that fits all of the discordant facts.

This is the best Robert Crais novel since **LA REQUIEM**, my personal favorite. Clever detection with a number of surprises along the way make the fast-paced **CHASING DARKNESS** a winner!

It seems like I got on a reading jag of anti-hero crime novels. Here are four that I read:

THE FIRST QUARRY by Max Allan Collins (HardCase Crime, \$6.99, September, 2008). **Rating: B+** The previous book in the series was **THE LAST QUARRY**, which seemed to end the series, but Al Collins just went back in time and wrote about hit man Quarry's first professional killing. And Quarry must have been somewhat of a "chick magnet" in his early years because it seems like every attractive woman he meets wants to go to bed with him.

He has what seems like a simple assignment: kill a college professor and get his tell-all manuscript about a Chicago mob boss. But everything that can go wrong seems to go wrong as the cool and collected Quarry goes about his business.

Not quite as satisfying as **THE LAST QUARRY**, but a quick, enjoyable read nonetheless.

HIT AND RUN by Lawrence Block (Morrow, \$24.95, July, 2008). **Rating: A** Hit man Keller is in Des Moines, Iowa to perform his last hit before his planned retirement. Little does he realize that he is being set up to take the fall for the assassination of the governor of Ohio. In an instant his life changes and he becomes the most hunted criminal in the United States. He is also cut off from all of his resources and must find a way to get enough money to survive and start a new life.

His travels eventually take him to New Orleans and a fortuitous change in his luck. This may be the last of this series, which would be a shame. I'm sure if Larry Block put his considerably talented thinking cap on, he could come up with a way to bring Keller back into the fray.

I found **HIT AND RUN** to be a real joy to read and I consider it to be the best thriller I've read this year. I can't think of a better summer read than this. Buy it, spread out your blanket on the beach and get ready for a lot of fun and excitement. Oh yeh, don't forget the sunblock! (Pun intended.)

DIRTY MONEY by Richard Stark (Grand Central, \$23.99). **Rating: B+** Of late, the novels involving professional thief Parker all seem like short episodes in a much longer continuing story. **DIRTY MONEY** starts right up where the last novel **ASK THE PARROT** left off – Park is on the lam after an armoured car heist. The police presence was too heavy to escape with the money, so he and his accomplices hid it in an abandoned church. A couple of weeks have passed and he's back to figure out how to get the money out. Parker is met with complications at every turn, but eventually manages to salvage something from the situation.

This episode seemed just a little below the general level of excellence. You're either a fan of this highly entertaining series or you're not. The author's masterful use of dialogue only adds to the enjoyment. Long live Donald E. Westlake (75 years old and going strong) in whatever persona he may take on!

THE DECEIVED by Brett Battles (Delacorte Press, \$24.00, June, 2008). **Rating: A-** This is the sequel to last year's **THE CLEANER** and features "cleaner" Jonathan Quinn, who gets big bucks for cleaning up other people's messes. Quinn is asked to dispose of an inconvenient body found in a shipping container. He is shocked to find that the body belongs to Stephen Markoff, one of his best friends – a person who saved his life. So Quinn feels duty-bound to find out what happened to Steve, so he goes in search of his Steve's girlfriend – but she has disappeared.

I liked Battles' first novel, but feel this is a step up from that one. A bit more complex and believable.

THE WATER'S EDGE by Daniel Judson (St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95, June, 2008). **Rating: A** Former enforcer Jake Bechet has built a new life as a partner in a Long Island taxi company. All is well until he hears that two men have been murdered a few miles from

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where he lives in the Hamptons -- their hands were cut off and then they were hung from the Shinnecock Bridge and left to strangle. Jake senses that his prior life is about to intrude on his peaceful new one -- and he is right.

Jake is blackmailed into investigating by Castello thugs who threaten his loved ones. At the same time, retired private investigator Tommy Miller realizes a former lover is connected to the dead men. The current police chief who replaced Miller's corrupt dad pressures him to investigate, but he planned to anyway. He searches for her to keep her safe with assistance of ex-cop Kay Barton. The three sleuths share in common a need to hide from their respective pasts and a chance for redemption by insuring their loved ones are safe.

This is the most thoughtful and in-depth narrative of the bunch. The atmosphere is intense and the in-depth characters are vividly portrayed. Daniel Judson deserves to be more widely read.

FIDELITY by Thomas Perry (Harcourt, \$25.00, June, 2008). **Rating: B+** P.I. Phil Kramer is shot dead on a deserted street in the middle of the night. His wife Emily is left with an emptied bank account and a lot of questions. She enlists the help of Phil's associates in trying to figure out what was happening.

Jerry Hobart is responsible for killing Phil and is now asked by his employer to get rid of Emily, who apparently is getting too close to finding answers about Phil's recent investigation. But Jerry smells an opportunity for one big score if he can find out what his employer is trying to hide, so he delays Emily's murder until he can find out his employer's secrets.

A Thomas Perry novel is always a treat. One is guaranteed an interesting story line, as well as a fast-paced race to the finish.

FEVER by Bill Pronzini (Forge, \$24.95). **Rating: A-** A Nameless Detective novel of late contains at least two story lines. In **FEVER** the main case his agency is working on is that of Mitchell Krochek's missing wife. It doesn't take Jake Runyon long to find her, but she doesn't want to go home. She's caught up in her gambling "fever" and doesn't want to return to her husband. But once she is beaten up and thrown out of her apartment she has no choice but to return -- only to disappear a few days later.

Nameless's agency has gotten large and successful enough for them to take on a pro bono case ("to give back to the community") from time to time and Tamara accepts the task to look into the erratic life of a young black man on behalf of his worried mother. Like any good mystery, the facts as they unfold don't make sense until the denouement when all the pieces are put together.

There are some memorable scenes in **FEVER**, but none more satisfying than when Tamara visits home and asks her policeman father to show her how to become proficient in small arms training. It's a classic protective father/rebelling daughter clash that ends with some motherly wisdom and daughterly humor.

Usually we find out some more about the main characters of Nameless, Tamara and Jake. In this volume

it's Jake's turn in the spotlight as he comes to a crisis point in his mourning of his beloved dead wife. He catches his own form of "fever" as he is consumed in finding out about a mysterious woman with a paralyzed face with whom he has a brief encounter. This part of the book is a bit reminiscent of one of Pronzini's masterworks, **THE BLUE LONESOME**. All in all, **FEVER** is a welcome addition to one of my all-time favorite mystery series.

PLAGUE SHIP by Clive Cussler with Jack Du Brul (Putnam, \$26.95). **Rating: A-** The Oregon is a ship that looks dilapidated on the outside, but inside is a state-of-the-art floating ship of war and intelligence gathering. Their mission to do those jobs that the United States cannot do in an official capacity. Led by the daring Juan Cabrillo and manned by a team of loyal experts in their fields, the Oregon starts this novel by cleverly infiltrating Iranian waters and sending a crew of men to steal some very dangerous torpedoes purchased from Russia (a claim denied by that country).

Not long after pulling off that coup, the ship comes upon a cruise ship adrift at sea. Hundreds of bodies litter its decks and just as a small team from the Oregon boards the ship (dressed in protective clothing), explosions occur and the ship begins to sink. One survivor is found on the ship and the team and the survivor manage to get off. Thus begins a search for answers to the myriad of questions Cabrillo and his crew have about what happened on the cruise ship.

I've mentioned that I sometimes have difficulty with high-concept (save the world) thrillers as not being very realistic -- and I value realism in my thriller reading. But I have to say that I found this book great fun. Lots of well-written and exciting action scenes peopled by heroic characters overcame any skepticism I had of the plot. Perfect summer reading for guys.

SILENT WITNESS by Michael Norman (Poisoned Pen Press, \$24.95). **Rating: B+** The author has taken advantage of the recent national headlines about Warren Jeffs and the polygamist cult he has led until his recent imprisonment. An off-shoot of this cult has taken to a life of crime with disastrous results when they attempt a robbery of an armored truck. One of the guards and one of the gang are killed and the gang's leader is arrested and sent to the Utah State Prison to await trial.

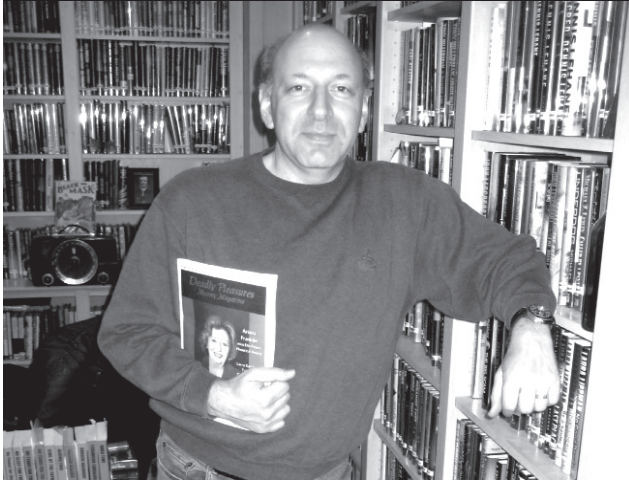
One of the key witnesses to the robbery, a gay accountant, is brutally murdered in his office parking garage and it is thought that the polygamist sect is behind it -- especially when another key witness disappears. Cops Sam Kincaid and Kate McConnell investigate.

I really had fun reading Michael Norman's descriptions of Salt Lake City and its environs. It has been my home since 1969 and I have a deep affection for the place. I've been to every place depicted in the book except a gay bar and a couple of restaurants.

The police investigation is rather predictable, with no clever detection evident and no real surprises or I would have given this work a higher grade.

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ORIGINAL and OTHER SINS by Larry Gandle



BURN ZONE by James O. Born (Putnam, \$25.95). **Rating: B+** ATF agent Alex Duarte is placed into the middle of a potentially explosive situation (literally). It seems that a Panamanian army officer known as Ortiz wants to have a large box delivered to somewhere in Texas. Ortiz and his henchman, the simian-appearing Pelly, enlist the aide of Ike, a white supremacist who wants to change America. Duarte remains hot on their trail as the race takes him from New Orleans to Houston. Can Duarte prevent mass destruction and save tens of thousands of lives?

I found **BURN ZONE** to be pure enjoyment. The characters are all larger-than-life as would be expected in any good action-packed thriller. Duarte is a big, tough cop capable of going mano-a-mano with the worst villains he might meet. The plot rockets along and never seems to let up.

Interestingly, the cover depicts Bourbon Street in New Orleans. The city has only a minor role in this story. **BURN ZONE** is a fast, fun and furious read, perfect for the plane or the pool. Recommended.

ANOTHER THING TO FALL by Laura Lippman (Morrow, \$24.95). **Rating: C** A film company has come to Baltimore to make eight episodes of a TV show called *Mann of Steel*. Of concern to the production crew is that a body has been found -- an apparent suicide. The dead man had multiple photos of Selene Waites, the starlet of the series. At the same time, mysterious happenings are occurring on the set and the producer feels she is at risk.

The company hires Tess Monahan to be Selene's body-guard. Selene does not want the protection and resists until another dead body turns up. Tess must now, of course, solve the crime.

In my opinion, **ANOTHER THING TO FALL** is a step backward for Laura Lippman. Prior to this book, Laura was writing some superb psychological suspense novels on the same level as the best of Ruth Rendell and Minette Walters. These novels have wonderfully complex characters, searing suspense and deep emotional content. Now she has reverted back to a cute, little mystery with stereotypic superficial characters and a slow-ruminating plot. To me, this book is a major disappointment, yet, it will appeal to those readers who loved the early Tess books and there are a considerable number of them.

QUIVER by Peter Leonard (St. Martin's Press, \$23.95). **Rating: B+** Sixteen-year-old Luke McCall is suffering from the fact that he killed his father with an arrow in a hunting accident. His mother Kate has been trying desperately to keep both of them sane. Feeling alone, she looks for comfort in Jack, an old flame who has reappeared suddenly in her life after being released from prison. What lies ahead for Kate and Luke is a nightmare far different, but equally as terrible as the one they have already endured.

Peter Leonard, the son of the legendary Elmore Leonard, is a talented new voice on the suspense thriller scene. He proves himself quite adept at plotting and pacing as his debut novel has almost a cinematic feel to it. Short chapters with cliffhanger endings and alternating viewpoints heightens the suspense while keeping the pages flying by. The ending is both predictable but satisfying. **QUIVER** is perfect escape fiction.

THE WHOLE TRUTH by David Baldacci (Grand Central, \$26.99). **Rating: A-** Nicholas Creel is a billionaire manufacturer of weapons. The current peace of the great powers is affecting his bottom line. He decides to create a major crises using the internet in order to alienate Russia from the rest of the world. In fact, he brings the world on the brink of destruction. It is up to Shaw, a hired assassin working for a secret US government agency, to risk his life (as he does on every mission) and rid the world of these terrorists. Can he get to the bottom of the crises and save us all?

David Baldacci has written a superior, high-octane thriller that is so entertaining that it will keep readers glued to the pages. The book is clever and the characters are a bit over-the-top just like the plot line. Great fun and highly recommended.

THE TRIUMPH OF CAESAR by Steven Saylor (St. Martin's, \$24.95). **Rating: B+** Well-written historical fiction has the ability to not only entertain but educate the reader. In a sense, such fiction might be called painless learning. In the mystery genre there has been a plethora of solid historical mysteries encompassing all of history, with noted series taking place in ancient Greece and Rome, France and England of the Middle Ages, Spain

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during the Inquisition, and all the way up to the 20th century (earlier parts of which are now considered “historical”).

One of the finest history mystery series features Gordianus the Finder, Steven Saylor’s wonderful creation. Gordianus is a “finder,” analogous to a P.I. of today. He lives in the time of Ancient Rome and his lifetime stretches through some of the most dramatic events of that era.

The latest entry into the series, **THE TRIUMPH OF CAESAR**, takes us to Rome at the time of Julius Caesar, who has returned after multiple victories. He has just been declared Dictator by the Roman Senate. Some say he wants even more power and rumors abound of plots against his life. Calpurnia, Caesar’s wife, secretly hires Gordianus to uncover these plots. He is a replacement for her first investigator who was murdered. It turns out the dead man is Hieronymus, Gordianus’s close friend, so Gordianus has two reasons to find out what is going on and to bring his friend’s killer to justice.

THE TRIUMPH OF CAESAR

is an entertaining and illuminating mystery, written, it seems, to memorialize the four successive Triumphs of Julius Caesar. These passages concerning the parades are written in great and careful detail. Recognizable historical figures abound: Mark Antony, Julius Caesar, Calpurnia, Brutus, and Cicero, among many others. Saylor describes each one in very human terms. The novel is exciting and well paced. The mystery is clever, although slightly over-the-top. This long-standing series is still going strong and **THE TRIUMPH OF CAESAR** is a welcome addition to it.

THE AMATEUR SPY by Dan Fesperman (Knopf, \$24.95). **Rating:**

A- Dan Fesperman has written some of the most timely suspense novels of our day. His books reflect the latest news headlines. Each book is well researched and full of detail, as one would expect from this veteran investigative journalist. It is impossible for the reader to go away uninformed about the peoples and places that are found in his books. Some settings of his previous novels have been war-ravaged Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Guantanamo and now with the current book, the West Bank in Jordan.

Freeman Lockhart has moved to a Greek Island with his wife Mila. Both of them have recently retired from the grueling job of humanitarian work. Before they can get settled into their new life, they are visited by three men who forcefully persuade Freeman into working for an old friend of his who runs a Palestinian relief organization, which is suspected of being a terrorist front. Freeman is hired to handle the organization’s accounting. He travels to Jordan and directly into a very dangerous situation.

Meanwhile in Washington, D.C., Abbas Rahim, a Palestinian American physician, gets involved in a poten-

tially catastrophic terrorist plot to kill many important political figures. His wife, Aliyah, discovers what her husband is up to and wants to foil the plot. She goes to Jordan to receive the aid money that will finance it and her path eventually crosses with Freeman’s. Can disaster be averted?

The careful details of a Dan Fesperman novel are both a strength and a weakness of **THE AMATEUR SPY**. As a strength, they give the book life and a certain topical importance about a current hot spot: in this case, the Bakaa refugee camp outside of Amman. The weakness of the details is that they can slow the book down to a crawling pace. In this instance, the strength of the details far outweigh the weakness. Characters are realistic and believable, especially the likeable and sympathetic Freeman.

THE AMATEUR SPY is highly recommended, as are all of Dan Fesperman’s earlier books.

RULES OF DECEPTION by Christopher Reich (Doubleday, \$24.95). **Rating:**

B+ Dr. Jonathan Ransom, a surgeon for Doctors Without Borders, is devastated when his wife, Emma, is killed while mountaineering in Switzerland. As he attempts to get her affairs in order, he is soon made aware that his wife was not at all she appeared to be. He discovers that she had an entire separate identity.

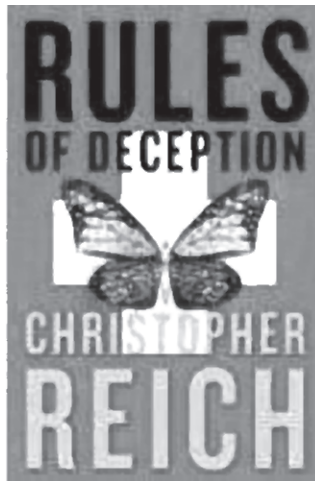
As Jonathan looks into his wife’s past, he finds himself the target of a professional hitman. At the same time, law enforcement agents become aware of a possible terrorist plot that could start a nuclear war in the Middle East. Jonathan is suddenly considered a chief suspect in this plot.

Jonathan must keep one step ahead of the authorities while continuing to search for answers in his wife’s past. He soon realizes he is at the center of the possible start of a major war. Can he save the day?

Chris Reich has written a fun, fast-paced thriller that is both timely and quite frightening. Characters are realistic but lack a great deal of depth. An annoying tendency in this book is the overuse of detailed descriptions of the past lives of each character – even if they live for only another few minutes.

Yet, as the book reaches the end, the pages do fly. The end is unrealistic and there is a plot twist concerning someone from Jonathan’s past reappearing, which I considered lazy writing. But overall, this is a solid thriller that will be well received by the crowds around the pools or on the planes.

GOOD PEOPLE by Marcus Sakey (Dutton, \$24.95). **Rating:** **A-** Tom and Anna Reed are a young couple who are struggling to make ends meet and who desperately want a child. They have spent more than they could afford at infertility clinics with no results. When their



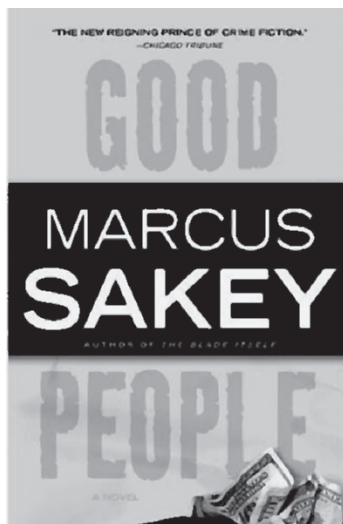
tenant, a mysterious older man dies, they discover almost \$400,000 in the apartment. They decide to keep the money as the tenant appears to not have any relatives. Unfortunately, that decision places some very unsavory characters into their lives who are aware of the money and want it back. No matter what Tom and Anna do, they anticipate that they will be killed. The only way to get out of the situation is to fight back no matter what the cost.

Marcus Sakey has written a solid and suspenseful thriller. The placing of an otherwise ordinary couple into a situation way beyond their control makes the protagonists easy to identify with. There is a certain cinematic quality to the storyline, which is both easy to follow and quite compelling. In fact, the book almost demands to be read in one sitting and that is not too hard to do. Marcus Sakey, in this, his third book, reveals himself to be a highly competent storyteller and an author very easy to recommend. His first book, **A BLADE DESCENDED**, was one of the finest debuts of 2007 and now **GOOD PEOPLE** reveals a penchant for solid storytelling that should continue to win him fans all over the world. This is one of the most entertaining books of the summer season.

SHADOW OF POWER by Steve Martini (Morrow, \$26.95). **Rating: B+** Terrance Scarborough, a law professor who thrives on controversy, writes about the injustices of slavery. He claims to have a letter written by Thomas Jefferson that will set the country on edge and disrupt already tenuous race relations. Unfortunately, before he can produce the letter for authentication, he is brutally murdered in his hotel room. The suspect arrested is the room-service valet, who happens to be a member of a white-supremacist group.

Defense attorney Paul Madriani takes on the valet's defense as a favor to the suspect's father. Madriani is up against a tough prosecutor and a mountain of evidence. As Paul looks into the case, he begins to doubt the guilt of his client and struggles to prove his client's innocence by any means possible, including the unusual tactic of subpoenaing a Supreme Court justice who knew about the Jefferson letter.

The basis of this very good legal thriller is the trial. The beginning of the book leads up to it and almost the entire book stems from it. Steve Martini writes a captivating and detailed narrative of very exciting, twist-and-turn court proceedings. There are a few scenes of investigation thrown in, but the emphasis is on very well-written witness



dialogue. If you are a reader like me, the pages will fly by without notice of what is going on around you.

A minor problem I had with the book came at the end. The trial gets wrapped up in almost a perfunctory manner and when the final truth emerges, we are subjected to a fifteen-page exposition from a person who has no motive to tell Madriana anything. With a carefully considered story, long expositions should be unnecessary. Just skip most of this part and enjoy the trial scenes, which make **SHADOW OF POWER** a most worthwhile entertainment.

ANGEL'S TIP by Alafair Burke (Harper, 23.95).

Rating: B A serial killer is stalking the nightclubs of New York City. NYPD Detective Ellie Hatch discovers the body of a young woman while jogging early one morning. The body is later identified as Chelsea Hart, a coed last seen partying with two friends. As Ellie looks into the case, suspects emerge from a local nightclub. Just as the DA feels the case is closed, Ellie starts to have her doubts and continues to search for the killer. The closer she gets to the solution, the more she comes to the realization that her life might also be in danger.

Alafair Burke has written a competent crime novel which, though lacking originality, remains fast paced and entertaining throughout. The character of Ellie is well thought out but is a relatively unmemorable creation. The hunky male partner fits right into the female detective mode written by other female mystery authors. Ms. Burke does a particularly powerful job of depicting the NYC nightclub scene and lends it a strong sense of danger. Without the clichés this would be a stronger work. Nevertheless, it is very entertaining and well worth considering for the pool or the plane.

Mount ToBeRead

MtTBR here is any book that I haven't yet read which a while ago I attempted to consolidate into a single bookcase. They overflowed that bookcase. So it became the two MtTBR bookcases. They overflowed the second bookcase. So it became two MtTBR bookcases and the pile on the coffee table. Then there were mutterings about not being able to see the TV. So now it's the two MtTBR bookcases, the pile on the coffee table, and the stack on the bedside table. Then I was having trouble reading of a night because the pile was obscuring the bedside light. So now it's the two MtTBR bookcases, the pile on the coffee table, the smaller stack on the bedside table and that pile in the corner of the little hallway. I can't promise what it'll be next week, but I am expecting a small order to be shipped from Boomerang Books... **Karen Chisholm**, Melbourne, Australia

CASSANDRA GANDLE
ON THE
YOUNG ADULT
EDGAR
AWARD NOMINATIONS

FRAMMENTS by Jeffrey W. Johnston (Simon Pulse, \$6.99). **Rating: B** As a high school student, Chase struggled through pain and heartache: he was the only survivor in a car crash that killed many of his friends, including his ex-girlfriend, who he still had feelings for. His brother went to jail, and his parents never spoke about him. And to top all that off, Chase attempted suicide soon after the accident, and was forced to seek professional help. Throughout the novel, readers learn about Chase's struggle to find normalcy, while also learning about the events that changed Chase's life forever.

FRAGMENTS was one of the most unique novels I have ever read. Although it was a bit depressing for my taste, Johnston did an excellent job in portraying real thoughts and feelings that a sixteen-year-old would have in response to such tragic situations. Johnston especially emphasized the fluctuations in Chase's mental state, which turned out to be an integral part of understanding Chase, as well as the novel as a whole. By the end of this novel, I was able to fully sympathize with Chase, and was truly drawn into the events that were occurring in the story.

The novel's ending was certainly very unpredictable. However, it was also slightly disturbing, so I would not recommend this novel for children under the age of fourteen. But for most older teenagers, **FRAGMENTS** would be an interesting read, and I would recommend it.

TOUCHING SNOW by M. Sindy Felin (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, \$16.99). **Rating: B-** **TOUCHING SNOW** describes the life of a Haitian eighth-grader, named Karina, who lives in the United States with her large and rowdy Haitian family, which includes an abusive stepfather. Karina and her sisters, however, avoid taking action against their stepfather, fearing that they will be taken away from their mother. In addition to avoiding her stepfather, Karina struggles with her schoolwork, as well as making friends. Throughout the course of the novel, Karina becomes a stronger person as she fights to keep her family from falling apart.

TOUCHING SNOW was an intriguing novel, though I never actually understood the significance of the title and how it connected to the story's plot. Readers can very clearly see Karina's character development throughout the novel. At the beginning, she was quiet, lazy in school, and never brave enough to stand up for herself. As

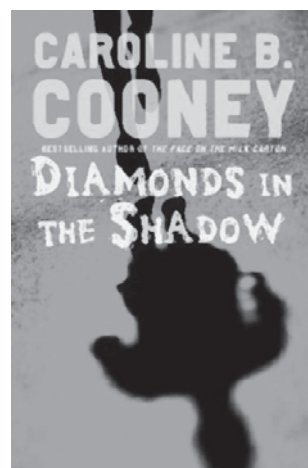
the novel progressed, she became more motivated to do better for both herself and her family. I personally felt that some parts of the novel were described in too much detail, which made certain chapters rather dull for me. However, it could also be argued that these descriptive passages add to the overall character of the story.

To forewarn readers, **TOUCHING SNOW** contains very detailed descriptions about the abuse that Karina and her sisters endured, and so for those readers who do not like topics such as this, I would recommend they skim past those passages while reading the novel.

DIAMONDS IN THE SHADOW by Caroline B. Cooney (Delacorte Press, \$15.99). **Rating: A** **DIAMONDS IN THE SHADOW**, my personal favorite of the Edgar-nominated novels, discusses the experiences of the Finch family, who decide to temporarily take in four African refugees that are being sponsored by their church. However, the Finch family does not know that a fifth refugee came to America as well, and that the fifth refugee wants something, and is willing to spill innocent blood in order to obtain it. The other four refugees, however, learn a lot from the Finch family, and the Finches, to their surprise, also learn a great deal about themselves from the Africans.

I found the plot of this book to be very unique. Most novels written for teenagers involve romance and adolescent themes in order to attract young readers, but **DIAMONDS IN THE SHADOW** does not even need these particular elements in order to be interesting. I already had some previous knowledge concerning the horrors that Africans face in unstable regions of the continent, but this book truly gave me an even deeper emotional connection to those people that are suffering in Africa. All of the characters in the novel undergo a great deal of character development, and it is remarkable to compare the characters' actions at the beginning of the story to their actions at the end.

DIAMONDS IN THE SHADOW was a thoroughly enjoyable novel for me, and I would strongly suggest this book for young adults who enjoy a suspenseful as well as educational read.

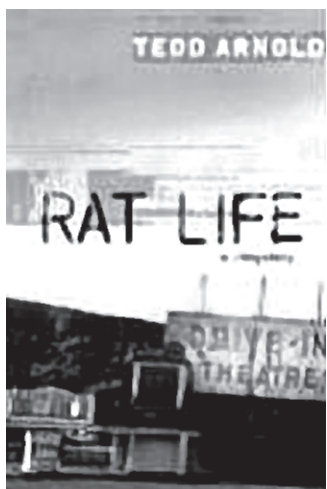


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RAT LIFE by Tedd Arnold (The Penguin Group, \$16.99). **Rating: A-** Todd's life was fairly ordinary: he worked at his family's motel, liked writing stories, and spent a lot of time with his friends. Then, he met Rat. Rat, like Todd, was a teenage boy, but Rat seemed to have experienced many difficult situations that most boys his age had never faced before. Todd started hanging out with Rat, particularly at the drive-in movie theatre where Rat offered him a job. However, while he was around Rat, Todd constantly found himself thinking about a dead body that was found in the river, and wondered whether his new friend was truly who he claimed to be.

Tedd Arnold did a great job with his first novel for young adults. The characters were interesting, and some were mysterious, as I believe the author wanted them to be. I never found myself bored while reading **RAT LIFE**: the plot was intriguing, and progressed smoothly. I also particularly enjoyed the ending, which was very suspenseful. If a sequel for this book came out, I would definitely want to read it.

This book is an excellent reading choice for all young adults, as well as older individuals, who may enjoy reading an intriguing story.



BLOOD BROTHERS by S.A. Harazin (Delacorte Press, \$15.99). **Rating: A** Clay Gardener and Joey Chancey were best friends, who were as close as brothers. However, they were very different: Clay was a part of a broken family, and to get away from it all, volunteered at a hospital, with the hopes of someday becoming a doctor. Joey was a part of a tight-knit family, and was going to be attending Duke in the fall. Clay envied Joey's life: Joey was class valedictorian, popular with girls, and wealthy. However, when Joey overdosed at a party, Clay found himself taking care of the one person who he always thought could take care of himself. Clay also discovered his need to discover what happened to Joey on the night of that party, and what caused him to make one of the worst decisions of his life.

I thoroughly enjoyed **BLOOD BROTHERS**. It was very clear to me how much research went into writing this book, since medical procedures are described in great detail. As an aspiring physician, I did enjoy learning about medicine while reading a suspenseful story. The author did a phenomenal job in portraying accurate thoughts and feelings that teenagers would have in response to tragic situations. The many flashbacks that are included in the novel further make the characters easier to understand. The novel also clearly conveys the dangers of drugs to readers, which is a very important lesson for many young adults. I would highly recommend this book for all readers: it was a great novel!

The winner of the Best Young Adult Edgar Award is **RAT LIFE** by Tedd Arnold.

Arthur Ellis Award Nominations 2008

Awarding the Best in
Canadian Crime Fiction



Best Novel

Linwood Barclay, **NO TIME FOR GOODBYE**
Terry Carroll, **SNOW CANDY**
Maureen Jennings, **A JOURNEYMAN TO GRIEF**
Louise Penny, **THE CRUELLEST MONTH**
Jon Redfern, **TRUMPETS SOUND NO MORE**

Best First Novel

Claire Cameron, **THE LINE PAINTER**
Sean Chercover, **BIG CITY, BAD BLOOD**
Liam Durcan, **GARCÍA'S HEART**
Susan Parisi, **BLOOD OF DREAMS**
Sharon Rowse, **THE SILK TRAIN MURDER**
Marc Strange, **SUCKER PUNCH**

Best Short Story

Vicki Cameron, "Eight Lords A'Leaping" in **Locked Up** (Deadlock Press)
Maureen Jennings, "Wreckwood" in **Blood on the Holly** (Baskerville Books)
D.J. McIntosh, "The Hounds of Winter" in **Blood on the Holly** (Baskerville Books)
Rick Mofina, "As Long as We Both Shall Live" in **Blood on the Holly** (Baskerville Books)
Leslie Watts, "Turner" in **Kingston Whig-Standard** (July 7, 2007)

Reviews

HISTORY MYSTERY POTPOURI by Sally Sugarman, Jay Waggoner & Guests



Sally Sugarman Reviews

THE QUEEN OF BEDLAM by Robert McCammon (Pocket Books, \$16.00, 2007). **Rating: A** In this absorbing novel, the reader is immediately transported to eighteenth-century New York City, a town in transition, expanding in every way. Unfortunately, this means crime is on the upswing. Some leading citizens have been brutally murdered. The strange markings around the dead men's eyes lead the local newspaper editor to dub the killer, The Masker.

Trying to find the identity of the mysterious murderer, Matthew Corbett is an appealing hero. As clerk to a magistrate, Matthew is intelligent, observant and resourceful, eager to advance beyond his humble beginnings as an orphan boy. However, his commitment to the principles of justice earns him enemies as well as friends. When Matthew is recruited into an organization of problem solvers, an early version of a detective agency, one of his assignments is to uncover the identity of a sad and silent woman dubbed the Queen. Matthew has other mysteries to solve as well as learning how to become a swordsman. The skill of the author is evident from the first pages of the book. Not only does he effectively recreate colonial America, he presents a range of fascinating characters from an upchucking coroner to a dandified Governor, all of them credible portraits. The strange and powerful Professor Fell echoes the Holmesian villain, Professor Moriarty. There are tantalizing hints of the paths detection will take as we leave Matthew looking at a fingerprint through a magnifying glass at the end of the tale.

This is the second book about Matthew Corbett (**SPEAKS THE NIGHTBIRD**, 2002) and the reader looks forward to further adventures of this enterprising and attractive sleuth. Nominated for this year's Best Paperback Original Barry Award.

THE BIBLE OF CLAY by Julia Navarro Translated by Andrew Hurley (Bantam, \$24.00; John Murray, £11.99). **Rating: A+** For those readers of **THE DA VINCI CODE** who enjoy a fast paced mystery connected to religious artifacts that can change what we know about the past, this is an excellent mystery with plenty of surprises and suspense. Set in Iraq, shortly before the current war, the story also flashes back to Nazi Germany

and to biblical times. The three stories are smoothly entwined and add to the general richness of the text. There are myriad characters working at cross-purposes, all of them vividly portrayed.

Unlike **THE DA VINCI CODE**, there is no single sympathetic character to follow through the story. Indeed, two of the major characters are quite despicable, but there is intrigue, betrayal, loyalty, friendship, corruption, hatred and the hovering threat of war. A group of archeologists is persuaded to engage in a dig in a rural part of Iraq as the war is about to erupt because of the belief that there are clay tablets which transcribe Abraham's tale of the earth's creation by God. As the murders pile up and time grows short, will the tablets be found? Do they even exist? This is a long book but it never lags and is continuously absorbing. The images of war, whether in Germany or Iraq, provide a political context for the events that occur; showing the impact war has on survivors. This aspect adds another dimension to the complexity of motives and actions for some of the characters. The conclusion is oddly satisfying.

TRUMPETS SOUND NO MORE by Jon Redfern (RendezVous Crime, 2007). **Rating: B+** This is a richly textured look at the theatrical and police worlds in 1840, when Victoria was still a young monarch. Although Inspector Owen Endersby is the focal character in the book, other individuals stand out vividly. There are myriad characters but they all are sharply drawn, as is the city. Endersby is an unusual detective in that he is devoted to his wife, he has gout and is always hungry, but he is keenly observant and also willing to cut a few corners with deceptive disguises and schemes to catch wrong doers. The police force is newly formed from the old Bow Runners and Endersby has a sense of responsibility to the organization. He has two crimes to solve. The one he is most interested in and which takes up the bulk of the narrative is the murder of a theatrical producer. Once the main suspect is cleared, it becomes fairly evident who the culprit is, but that happens late in the story and does not spoil the pleasure of reading about the various people who inhabit the colorful landscape. Redfern does an excellent job of transporting the reader to the busy streets of an overcrowded London. After concluding the case, Endersby feels he will miss the theatrical environment and so will the reader. **Winner of the 2008 Arthur Ellis Award for Best Novel** (Best Crime Novel written by a Canadian crime writer).

Jay Waggoner Reviews

THE BLACK HAND by Will Thomas (Simon & Schuster; \$14.00). **Rating: B+** **THE BLACK HAND** is the fifth book in an enjoyable series (the Barker & Llewelyn novels) written by Will Thomas. This outing introduces the reader, and London, to the Sicilian Mafia. It also intro-

Reviews

duces protagonist/enquiry agent Cyrus Barker and his apprentice Thomas Llewelyn to union politics and takes them to the docks of London in the summer of 1885.

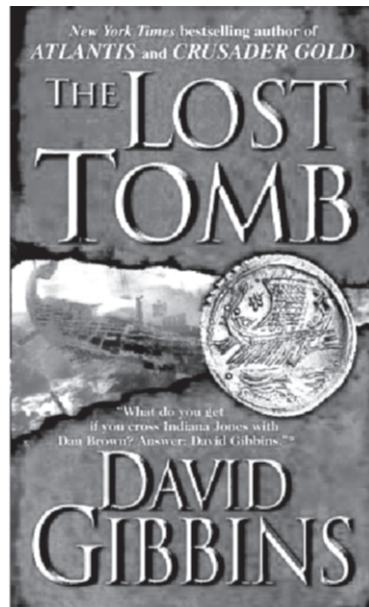
Once again the reader gets a snapshot of the British class structure in the later 1800s as well as a good story. Thomas does many things well and it does look as if this will be a series with legs. His heroes are likable, his historical meanderings subtle, not overpowering, and his stories both believable and fast-moving. I do wish that Thomas would incorporate more Barker and less Llewelyn in the tales. The magic of Conan Doyle was Holmes and his deductive skills. I, for one, would love to see more of Barker's logical and tactical prowess and less of Llewelyn's bumbling. Some of us yearn to be baffled by deductionism without reading Euclid's **THE ELEMENTS**.

THE STRANGE CASE OF JONATHAN SWIFT AND THE REAL LONG JOHN SILVER by Robert A. Prather (Acclaim Press; \$24.95).

Rating: B This is a book that some people will probably devour but, with an adjustment in format, it would definitely appeal to many, many more. (Or perhaps it's just me and a bias for learning facts through historical novels.)

Treasure seekers, particularly those in Kentucky, will pore over various parts of this book. Kentuckians will be familiar with the geography and perhaps even familiar with the people involved in the story. For these people the first hundred pages will either be savored or skipped. For the majority of readers, though, the first half the book will be slow going as Prather builds the foundation and sets the stage for his conclusion.

This is non-fiction book (at least the author would have us believe that) and Robert Prather meticulously builds his arguments and develops his case. For the audience Prather writes to, and for the conclusions he wants to arrive at, the development could not have been done much better. A word to other fiction devotees - the development is detailed. His conclusions ARE interesting but to get to them requires some patience. Mr. Prather contends there are silver mines in Kentucky that remain virtually untapped, and that the old Stevenson classic, **TREASURE ISLAND** is, in effect, a map that can lead us to them. His proof, this book is laudable (and has already won awards). For those who are treasure hunters out there and those who live in Kentucky, you need to read this book and reread **TREASURE ISLAND**. For those who wouldn't know what to do with silver unless they stumbled upon some silverware to sell on eBay, for those who want a good, quick read intermeshed with a bit of fact . . . you may wish to wait for the historical fiction sequel.



ZUGZWANG by Ronan Bennett (Bloomsbury; \$24.95). **Rating: B** Ronan Bennett's latest book is a mystery set in Russia in the early 1900s. Zugzwang is a chess term and **ZUGZWANG**, the book, uses chess as a thread to weave the story together. Dr. Otto Spethmann, a noted psychoanalyst has no good choices (zugzwang). He is suspected of murder, his daughter's not happy with his latest woman friend, his clients have *major* problems, he's beginning to question whether his friends are actually friends . . . and he's losing his chess match.

If you know your chess, you're going to like this book; if you aren't a chess player, you may like it. **ZUGZWANG** is a tight, psychological, and suspenseful novel. Though Bennett does write well, if you are a fan of historical mysteries for the opportunity to visit another time and place you may be disappointed in this one. Time period and setting play second fiddle to the story and the characters. If you want the flavor of Russia, read the book reviewed in this issue's Reviewed to Death section, **CHILD 44**.

THE LAST GOSPEL by David Gibbins (Headline, £12.99, February, 2008; in the U.S. the title is **THE LOST TOMB**, Dell, \$6.99, September, 2008). **Rating: A-** David Gibbins has penned yet another winner. This time Gibbins writes of the potential of another Gospel, written by either Paul, or perhaps, Christ, Himself. **THE LAST GOSPEL** takes place in the heart of Rome, the ruins of Pompeii, and Jerusalem, as archaeologist extra-ordinaire Jack Howard and his team of "super-heroes" search for the Word. If there's a weakness in Gibbins' writings it is that his archaeologists and divers know everything and can do everything. But that's a small price to pay for the information gleaned and the story told. Gibbins' keeps the reader both wondering and interested, not an easy task for some of the heady material he writes about. This is a must series for any one interested in archeology.

Norma Dancis Review

THE TRAITOR'S TALE by Margaret Frazer (Berkeley 2007 \$7.99) **RATING: B+** In 1450, the Duke of Suffolk's actions help lose all Britain's possessions in France. Suffolk himself is murdered on the way home. His wife, the Duchess Alice, retires to one of her possessions for her safety and that of her son. Her cousin, Dame Frevisse, is sent from her nunnery to keep the Duchess company. The Duke's body has returned from France, but his chaplain, his secretary, and his steward have disappeared or been found dead.

Joliffe, once a wandering player and now the Duke of York's investigator and spy, also is trying to learn

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what happened. He joins with the Duchess's operatives and Dame Frevisse to safeguard the lives and political futures of Alice's family and York. This book reunites both of Frazer's detectives with history at the center. Frazer's story follows exactly the historical action, although her solution is novel. Thus the convoluted politics are authentic, if bewildering to anyone who is not familiar with the fifteenth century. Both face physical danger, Joliffe directly and Dame Frevisse, as all Suffolk's retinue face violence from enraged patriots. The story abounds with double crosses and layers of intrigue. As always, Frazer excels in all the story elements.

Despite the exciting fights, the book was too talky and too complicated for my taste. This may be a case of too much history and not enough story.

Long Live Horace Rumpole – And John Mortimer



THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF HORACE RUMPOLE by John Mortimer (Penguin/Viking, 18.99; in U.S. **RUMPOLE MISBEHAVES**, Viking, \$23.95). **Rating: A** Anti-Social Behavior Orders, commonly known as ASBOs, are the New Labour government's pride and joy. A child who plays or even loiters in an unfriendly street can, on the complaint of neighbors, have an ASBO slapped on him. If he offends again he'll be found in breach of his ASBO and thrown in jail without a trial. All this, of course, raises the wrath of Horace Rumpole when he is called upon to defend a Timson child who has earned an ASBO for playing soccer on a posh street.

In another case, he is defending a young man who is accused of murder a prostitute who happens to be a Russian illegal immigrant.

As Rumpole tries to get to the bottom of his two cases, his fellow barristers in chambers decide to cite Rumpole with a ASBO for bringing food and his beloved wine into his room, and for causing global warming by lighting small cigars. Will this derail his last attempt of being appointed Queen's Counsel?

Any addition to the Rumpolian canon is most welcome. John Mortimer is getting up in age so I live in constant fear that the latest Rumpole novel may be the last. I hope he's been writing other Rumpole novels and storing them in his attic. I can assure you that as long as there are new Rumpole stories, they will always get an A rating from me. The stories are always fun, but the everyday Rumpolian banter and manipulations are priceless.

JUST IN CRIME by Norma Dancils



THE EDGE by Clare Curzon (St. Martin's Minotaur 2006, \$23.95). **RATING: A** Superintendent Mike Yeadings and his detectives in the Thames Valley police need to solve a horrible crimes – or is it two? A farmer finds the body of a woman, staked out on hay bales like a sacrificial victim. Up at the house are her husband and two dead children, all stabbed. The family's son is missing. The detectives must find the son and decide if he is victim or villain, then solve the crime(s). But first, they must discover who the family is. How can you trace the actions from the past that might have sparked the murder if you can't even establish who the victims are? Curzon is a fine writer. She tells the story through the eyes of several detectives, plus a victim.

While all these detectives are familiar from earlier books, here Curzon spends more time with Yeadings and Rosemary. There is an entertaining subplot of intersquad rivalry. A new DCI has joined as temporary second in command (and hopes to become permanent), while the two Detective Sergeants are vying for the position as well. Curzon easily introduces newcomers to the characters without old hands even noticing. The story is both complex and rich. The plot not only twists satisfactorily, but each twist brings deepens the psychological understanding. The real crime is how unfamiliar most Americans are with this fine writer.

PUSHING UP BLUEBONNETS by Leann Sweeney (New American Library 2008, \$6.99). **RATING: B+** Abby Rose is a Houston heiress who is also PI specializing in adoption matters. She is asked to identify a young woman injured in a car crash in Montgomery County, Texas. The woman had no other identification than Abby's card. After some investigation, Abby identifies the young woman, who is reunited with the man who claims to be her natural father.

He hires Abby to investigate when it is learned that the crash was a murder attempt, probably by one of his other children. Since he is exceedingly wealthy, the stakes are high. Kate, Abby's twin sister and a psychologist, and her lover, a detective in the Houston Police Force, assist in the investigation. Abby is an attractive heroine, feisty and believable even given the unlikely circumstances Sweeney sets up. The back story, from the first book in the series, is even less likely. However, Sweeney manages to make the story work. The main problem with this series is but that Sweeney is in love with Abby. She is presented as so spunky, so determined, so loved by so many people that

Reviews

the reader draws back. Sweeney's books are very much cozies, with their focus on psychology and family relationships. They are also well-written and fun. Lovers of cozies who do not yet know Sweeney will find her a welcome addition to their libraries.

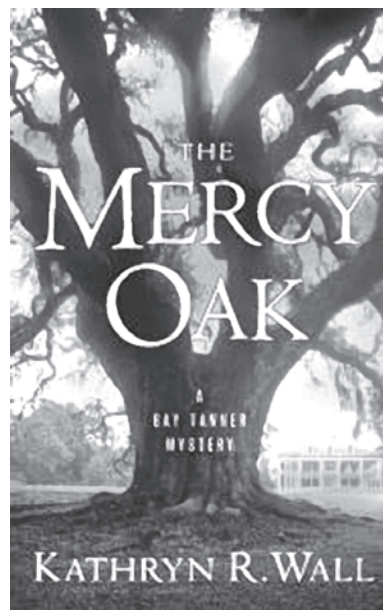
THE PENGUIN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH by Donna Andrews (Thomas Dunne Books, \$23.95). **RATING: B+** Meg and Michael's house is overflowing with people and animals. A local zoo has gone bankrupt, and Meg's Dad has volunteered her home to foster all the animals. The grounds are overrun with penguins, llamas, and relatives assembling for Meg's upcoming wedding. Then Dad finds a body in the basement. Meg is running as fast as she can, to identify the body, get rid of the animals, and elope before the mothers pull together the elaborate wedding they want. This book has been nominated for an Agatha as Best Novel. Unfortunately, only the second half deserves it. Donna Andrews at her best is wonderfully funny. Meg inhabits a cockeyed world that almost makes sense. The writing is light and clever, the characters bizarre but believable. But the beginning of this book feels forced, as if she wrote it from a good outline while fighting the flu. The writing does not sparkle: it was even boring at times. Suddenly, around Chapter 17, Andrews recovered from the flu and the rest of the book shone. It was partly too late. Neither the state of willing disbelief necessary for this kind of book nor the characters had been developed. Returning characters and their histories were never explained. Taken as a whole, the book was disappointing, although the second half is excellent.

THE MERCY OAK by Kathryn R. Wall (St. Martin's Minotaur \$24.95). **RATING: A** Private Investigator Bay Tanner is up to her neck in problems. Her housekeeper's son, Bobby, hints that the hit-and-run accident the previous night may not have been an accident. Then Bobby disappears. Bay tries to investigate and keep Bobby safe, despite hostility from the housekeeper's family and from her lover, policeman Red Tanner. Red, the brother of her late husband, is so newly in her love life that Bay doesn't now how to handle him. Red is working on a string of small robberies. The two cases begin to intersect, and both are brushing her family. And then come the threatening letters and vandalism. Wall's book is an intensely local mystery, saturated in the atmosphere and history of the Hilton Head/North Georgia area. The mercy oak itself dates from the pre-Civil War period, and some of the societal strains creating the book's situations are equally old. Other problems, like illegal immigration, come from the present. Wall juggles all these narrative strands deftly. The characters are all well defined and intensely alive. This was the first book in the series that I had read and, I now know, the best. You don't need to start at the beginning to understand the background. Try Wall. I think you will like her.

DEATH UNDER THE DRYER by Simon Brett (Five Star, 2007 \$25.95). **RATING: B** When Carole Seddon tries a new hair salon close to her home, she finds an excellent stylist—and a corpse in the back room. The

dead woman was a trainee, and everyone seems to be blaming her boyfriend, who is missing. The boyfriend's family tries to get more information from Carole, and she and her friend Jude become actively involved in solving the mystery. This book is vintage Brett: a nice, rather simple plot adroitly handled, studded with some delightful portraits and occasionally sparkling prose. Characterization is Brett's strong point. The book abounds in interesting, well-delineated personalities. Unfortunately, as is true for all of Brett's books, those fascinating people are not the protagonists. Perhaps all he can do is portray surfaces. Carole and Jude are drawn in only two or three shades and have no depths whatever. Carole in particular never gains self-knowledge, although over the series she has deepened her understanding of other people's characters. If you have ever read any of Brett's books, you know exactly what you will get, a pleasant few hours of entertainment and no more.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GLACIER by Vicki Delany (Poisoned Pen Press 2007 \$24.95). **RATING: B+** Reg Montgomery is found dead in the city center next to the site of the proposed peace garden. He is one of its foremost opponents. Was that why he was murdered? Or was it for more personal motives? Detective John Winters, in his first investigation in Trafalgar since a major error in Vancouver, has to take Constable Molly Smith along on the investigation. This is Molly's first investigation, and she is making mistakes and having trouble working with Winters. But the big difficulty for both is the press, which is whipping political protest into a frenzy. Further complications are the bicycle thief who stole Molly's bicycle—and left her without transportation, Molly's efforts to get her friend to make a complaint against the man who is harassing her, and her family's opposition to her choice of careers. This is the first in the Molly Smith series, and a thoroughly enjoyable book. It is a little too pat to be an A, but Delany has the skills to make that happen.



DEADLY AUDIO PLEASURES



Mary Mason Reviews

TWISTED by Andrea Kane (Brilliance, \$36.95, 12 CD's). Read by Joyce Bean. **Ratings: Book, B; Reader B+** Sloane Burbank was an FBI agent before a suspect attacked her. She lived, but suffered damage to her hand. Not content with a desk job, Sloane left the bureau and became a consultant, training law enforcement and private parties, and giving self-defense exhibitions.

She gets a call she can't refuse, the parents of one of her girlhood friends want her to investigate their daughter's disappearance. No body was found, and her parents hope she is alive, though it's been a year. When another young woman goes missing in similar circumstances, Sloane wonders if there is a serial killer at large.

Sloane pulls strings to get included in the FBI investigation, and even gets one of her former co-workers pulled off a big investigation to help. Little does she know that the man they are seeking is targeting her, and it may just be someone she knows.

The listener is afforded a look at the man behind the abductions, and though we aren't told who it is, the clues are there, as are a few red herrings.

The book had some fairly explicit sex scenes, which I fast forwarded through. There was one big hole that made me rate this book much lower. **SPOILER:** When the killer is identified, the cops are told of a property he moved to after leaving NYC. That was never researched, to find the address or otherwise acted upon. That really bothered me, and I was a bit distracted while listening to the cops work after that, wondering why they weren't following up on a BIG clue. **END SPOILER.** There was another scene where Sloane's body guard was attacked, and didn't immediately call for help. I also had a hard time warming up to Sloane. I liked the reader, she did a good job with all the voices. Time permitting, I'd listen to another in the series, if it is a series.

THREE SHIRT DEAL by Stephen J. Cannell (Brilliance Audio, \$36.95). Unabridged, 8 CD's, read by Scott Brick. A Shane Scully novel. **Ratings: Reader B+, Book B+** Shane Scully is still working on his marriage to Alexa. After nearly losing her life in a shooting, Alexa's personality has changed and life together is very difficult. Shane is approached by a woman who feels a man has been falsely convicted of his mother's murder. Internal Affairs detective Secada Llevar hopes that Alexa and Shane can assist her in reopening the case.

Shane is open to the proposition when he finds the case was handled by Brian Devine, a cop Shane had bad dealings with. He doesn't doubt that Truit Hickman's case was mishandled, and he and Secada start an investigation that has far reaching consequences.

Shane and Secada risk their lives in many confrontations with criminals who should only be found in the worst nightmares. They work well as a team, and eventually bring justice to the case.

While I'm not current with the Scully series, I always enjoy listening to them. I thought the reader did a very good job, and always kept my interest. One thing that might help the enjoyment of audio listeners is Brilliance's short tracks. If you stop and have to restart a track, you don't have to forward or reverse though a lot of text. That helps if you're like me and have many tapes to "read."

LOST SOULS by Lisa Jackson, Read by Joyce Bean. (Brilliance Audio, \$38.95) Unabridged, 12 CD's. **Ratings: Book B-, Reader B** Kristi Bentz is the daughter of a cop going off to college and away from her New Orleans home. Her father Rick wishes she'd stay near, as Kristi survived an attack from a serial killer.

Kristi exerts her independence and heads off to All Saints College. She is not aware at the time that an ex-boyfriend of hers is filling in for a teacher in one of her classes. She's also not aware that many young women have disappeared from the college. Kristi soon finds she has rented a room formerly lived in by one of the missing coeds.

Kristi soon discovers there is a cult on campus. The members wear vials of blood around their necks, conduct secret meetings, and attend a class on vampiric literature. Kristi decides to infiltrate the group, though doing so puts her life at risk.

Although I enjoyed this book, I felt a bit adrift at what had happened to Kristi, perhaps in an earlier book. The ending was one I didn't see coming. I did skip over a couple of explicit sex scenes.

CHARLEY'S WEB by Joy Fielding, Read by Susan Ericksen (Brilliance Audio, \$36.95). Unabridged, 11 CD's. **Ratings: Book D, Reader: - see review.** Charley Webb is a single mother of two children. She never married either of the men who fathered them. That is cause for some nasty letters from readers of her weekly newspaper column. The column deals with popular culture, or anything on her mind. Sometimes it includes family matters which always garners some mail from readers.

Charley's family is a bit complicated. Charley is the oldest of four siblings. She is the only one who has memories of their mother. Their mother left the home to run off to Australia with another woman. Their father became distant and bitter, though he did raise the children on his own. Her two sisters are successful. Her brother isn't. He's got a history of substance abuse, and Charley often needs to rescue him. Charley is the only one of the siblings who will have contact with their mother.

Charley is not a likable person. She mentions that she has no friends, and has alienated her neighbors. When

she needs fodder for a column, she's not above trashing acquaintances she's thinly veiled. Charley gets a letter from someone who makes her look like a saint.

Jill Rohmer has been convicted of the death of three children for whom she babysat. The children were tortured and abused, resulting in a death sentence. Jill contacts Charley to write her memoir. She promises to release details about the crime. Jill's attorney doesn't think Charley is the right person for the job, which makes Charley take on the project. She hopes Jill will reveal her accomplice, something she didn't do in her trial.

Jill is difficult to deal with, though Charley enters a relationship with the attorney. Jill is irate about that. If trying to deal with Jill isn't hard enough, Charley is getting emails threatening her children. When the threats are acted upon, Charley has to find a way to save her family. She does so, but not without a lot of angst, much of it brought on by her own actions.

OK, I couldn't stand Charley. She was abrasive to everyone, and though she did have contact with her mother, it seemed to me it was just to use her as a babysitter. Charley puts herself first in most matters. Her children are the only people she seems to genuinely care about. Though I don't want to do a spoiler, her actions when her children are in danger are stupid. The only reason I finished the book is that I kept forgetting to put another book in the car.

As to the reader, I'm not sure that she is to blame for Charley's constant **screaming** at everyone. For the first 5-6 cd's, Charley rarely used a normal voice. I didn't like the mother's accent, for someone who lived in Australia for twenty years, it didn't seem right. I also got tired of Charley's son's lisp. NOT RECOMMENDED.

George Easter Reviews

THE FINDER by Colin Harrison (Macmillan Audio, Unabridged, \$39.95). Read by Jason Culp. **Ratings: Book: A- Reader: A** Jin Li is a Chinese woman managing a shredding company in New York City for her wealthy brother. After work one night she takes a ride with two of her Mexican female workers. They stop in a remote parking lot and Jin Li goes off into the bushes to do her thing. While gone a sewage disposal truck pulls up next to the car, traps the two girls in it and fills the car with their refuse, smothering them. Later Jin Li realizes that she was the target and so she tries to disappear, but soon finds herself pursued by several factions and most importantly by her former boyfriend who is intent on protecting her.

Before too long the reader is introduced to a complex plot involving Chinese investor fraud, high-stakes Wall Street trading, low-life Brooklyn criminal dealings and most importantly the power of love, both between father and son and between man and woman.

COLLISION by Jeff Abbott (Brilliance Audio, Unabridged, \$38.95). Read by Phil Gigante. **Ratings: Book: A- Reader: A** In Hawaii Ben Forsberg and his new

wife Emily are enjoying the last few hours of their honeymoon. Ben goes to take a shower and when he returns minutes later, his wife is lying dead on the floor, the victim of a sniper shooting. Flash forward two years and Ben is still shaken by that event and still mourning the death of Emily.

The focus suddenly shifts to two Irish assassins, Nicky and Jackie Lynch, who attempt to murder computer geek Adam Reynolds and the "big guy" he is talking to. Nicky is successful with killing Adam, but not the "big guy" who turns out to be a former CIA agent known as "Pilgrim." Soon thereafter Pilgrim and his boss are attacked and Pilgrim barely manages to escape while his boss "Teacher" is taken captive.

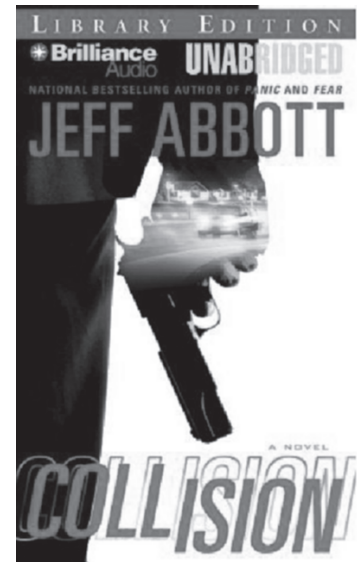
Ben Forsberg comes back into the plot when he is accused of murdering Adam Reynolds. He goes on the run and teams up with Pilgrim to get to the bottom of why they have both been set up for a downfall.

Lots of suspenseful action made **COLLISION** a compelling "listen." When I get into the middle of a book like this, I don't try to overanalyze it as to whether there are logical gaps in the plot (I suspect there are in this case.) I just go with the flow and enjoy the journey.

Phil Gigante's reading is flawless and I especially liked the voice he used for Pilgrim – it really seemed to fit the character to a "t." I am recommending this as one of the best thrillers of the year.

THE MOONPOOL by P.T. Deutermann (Brilliance Audio, Unabridged, \$36.95). Read by Mel Foster. **Ratings: Book: B+ Reader: A-** Cam Richter, head of a private investigation agency in Wilmington, North Carolina is shocked to find out that one of his female operatives has been found dead in a gas station restroom – the apparent victim of poisoning. But when her body sets off radiation alarms in the pathologist's office, high government officials become suspicious that there may be terrorism involved with her death – especially since it occurred so close to the Helios nuclear plant.

Richter is asked by a plant official to look into the matter and thus begins a somewhat convoluted, but often interesting (especially the background material on how a nuclear plant operates) thriller. The only downside for me was what I perceived as the weak and unconvincing motivation of the chief villain of the story. If you don't like snakes, I'd stay away from this one. There is a really creepy scene in which Richter is trapped in a structure made from shipping containers and must do battle against



a massive constrictor. The book gets its name from the part of the nuclear plant that cools the radioactive material used to produce energy.

Mel Foster's reading was unobtrusive and professional, as one would expect from this veteran.

THE BROKEN WINDOW by Jeffery Deaver (Audioworks Unabridged, \$49.95). Read by Dennis Boutsikaris. **Ratings: Book: A- Reader: A** Lincoln Rhyme gets a frantic call from his cousin's wife informing him that Arthur Rhyme has been arrested for homicide -- and that the evidence appears to be very convincing. Reluctantly he agrees to help out and before too long he begins to suspect that something fishy is going on. He knows his cousin is not stupid, yet a lot of evidence is left for the police to collect. It would have been a very simple matter to destroy this evidence. Add to that the bewildered Arthur who claims he didn't even know the victim. Is he being framed? Before long, Lincoln is on the trail of a very clever criminal, who somehow taps into megacomputers that mine data so that he knows a substantial amount of information about his victims and the people he frames for his crimes.

This series of cds saved me from utter boredom on a long automobile trip from California to Utah. Even my 17-year-old son got hooked on the story and the time passed quite quickly for us. There was only one part that lagged and that was when Deaver went to great lengths to explain the ins and outs of data mining. A shorter explanation would have sufficed and the pacing suffered through that part of the narrative.

The reader was very professional in his narration and I could find no fault in it.

QUIVER by Peter Leonard (Macmillan Audio, Unabridged, \$29.95). Read by Scott Sowers. **Ratings: Book: B+ Reader: A-** Kate McCall's husband has been killed in a hunting accident by their teen-aged son Luke. As Kate struggles with her son's erratic behavior, she encounters a former lover Jack, whose life has gone in an entirely different direction since they split up. Fresh out of prison he's looking for a meal ticket and he thinks he's found one in the very wealthy Kate.

Jack went to prison for a robbery and his partners in crime are waiting for his release to get their share. Trouble is he hid it in the ceiling of a motel, which was demolished before he got out of prison. They pressure him for money anyway and want him to get it out of Kate, which leads to all sorts of complications with a cast of characters right out of an Elmore Leonard tale.

I found it hard to relate to any of the characters of the book, though well written, didn't resonate with me as much as I would like.

The reader did a fine job, though, and should be commended for his work.

There were a couple of audio books I got into but just couldn't finish. The abridged version of Nevada Barr's **WINTER STUDY** not only failed to capture my interest, but some parts just didn't make sense to me. I found myself

scanning the book to see if I could figure out what was going on (a sure sign an audio book is in trouble.) I gave up after three discs. I've heard good things about the book itself so I have to conclude that the abridgement wasn't done very well. I wondered why I wasn't sent the unabridged version (which I almost always get and the other day I figured it out when I noticed in a book store that the unabridged version is done by another company. How odd.

The other audio book I had trouble with was Ace Atkins' **WICKED CITY**. The story seemed to take forever to get going and I had a lot of trouble distinguishing between characters -- to me several of voices sounded very much alike to me, which surprised me because the reader was the very talented Dick Hill.

The Critics Award 2008 Sponsored by The Strand Magazine

Best Novel

WHAT THE DEAD KNOW by Laura Lippman
– Winner

Down River by John Hart
The Shotgun Rule by Charlie Huston
The Strangler by William Landay
The Watchman by Robert Crais

Best First Novel

THE BLADE ITSELF by Marcus Sakey –
Winner

In the Woods by Tana French
The Mark by Jason Pinter
Missing Witness by Gordon Campbell
When One Man Dies by Dave White

Voted on by a panel of very well-known mystery critics: Larry Gandle, Oline Cogdill, Dick Lochte, Hallie Ephron, David Montgomery, Sarah Weinman, David Anderson and Andrew Gulli.



**SOUTHERN
AFRICA**
**A Crime Setting on
the Rise**
by Jeff Popple

Traditionally, Southern Africa has not been a favoured locale for crime fiction. There are a few exceptions. James McClure, often referred to as the “father of South African crime fiction,” provided some hard-hitting police novels in the 1970s, which mixed detection with scorching commentary on apartheid in South Africa, and Wessel Ebersohn wrote a handful of evocative mysteries in the early 1980s featuring the eccentric prison psychiatrist Yudel Gordon. Well-regarded veteran June Drummond, who lives in Durban, Australia also wrote a handful of Southern African crime novels which cast a jaundiced eye on apartheid, although she is far better known for her whodunits set in England. Otherwise there have been few Southern African crime novelists or novels with that setting, although that now seems set to change.

Hardboiled South African writer Deon Meyer is finally receiving the international attention he deserves as evidenced by all of the rave reviews of his books in *DP*, while Alexander McCall Smith’s quirky tales about Botswana private detective Precious Ramotswa have charmed huge numbers of readers around the world. Cape Town author Mike Nicol (**PAYBACK**) is also generating very favourable reviews (but his work is hard to find), and American Suzanne Arruda has successfully combined romance and historical crime with her series about Jade del Cameron.

Also coming out later this year in Australia is **A BEAUTIFUL PLACE TO DIE** (Macmillan, \$A32.99, September) by Malla Nunn, a Swaziland expatriate who now lives in Western Australia. Set in 1950s South Africa, it features Johannesburg police detective Emmanuel Cooper who is sent to the tiny backwater of Jacob’s Rest to investigate the brutal murder of a police captain.

Australian Tony Park has also been building up a steady following with his series of adventure novels set in Africa. His latest, **SILENT PREDATOR** (Macmillan, \$A32.99), is probably his best to date and is an exciting and well-constructed thriller that moves smoothly between South Africa, Mozambique and London.

When British Assistant Minister for Defence, Robert Greeves, is kidnapped from a luxury private safari lodge in Kruger National Park by a well-organised band of terrorists, his protection officer, Detective Tom Furey,

comes under suspicion for allowing it to happen. Vowing not to stop until he finds Greeves, Furey embarks on a desperate pursuit of the terrorists through the National Park to the coastal waters of Mozambique. Assisted by his South African counterpart, the attractive widow Sannie Van Rensburg, Furey comes to find, however, that the truth behind the kidnapping lies back in London.



Jeff Popple

This is a very enjoyable piece of thriller fiction. The action is frequent and believable, and the story winds its way through some good twists and turns.

Park knows how to tell a good story, but also manages to highlight, in an even-handed way, several social issues confronting modern South Africa and Mozambique, including the high rate of violent crime, the effects of corruption and the debilitating effects of the AIDS epidemic.

A very good read and probably the best thriller I have read by an Australian since Sandy McCutcheon’s **THE COBBLER’S APPRENTICE**.

Also very enjoyable is the debut African mystery by Michael Stanley (the writing team of Michael Sears and Stanley Trollip), **A CARRION DEATH** (Harper, \$23.95; Headline, £11.99). **Rating: A** Set in modern Botswana, a land where globalism and witchdoctors collide, **A CARRION DEATH** is an impressive murder mystery with a great detective in the form of Assistant Superintendent David Bengu of the Botswana police. Nicknamed Kubu, the Setswana word for hippopotamus, Bengu is a big man with an immense appetite and an easy-going manner. Despite his size, Bengu’s approach to crime-solving is delicate and cerebral and his investigation into the discovery of a half-eaten body in a waterhole near a local resort takes the reader on an entertaining journey through Botswana.

The fluid writing and fascinating descriptions of the Botswana countryside, and its people, will keep most readers happily turning the pages. Even the simplest interactions, such as Bengu’s visit to his parents, are full of interest and totally engaging. The criminal elements are also well handled and the multiple viewpoints employed by Stanley add to the mounting suspense.

Also available for those who are attracted to this locale, are the works of Richard Kunzmann whose first novel **BLOODY HARVESTS** (St. Martin’s Minotaur, \$24.95; Macmillan, £10.99) was nominated for the CWA 2005 Creasy Memorial Dagger Award (Best First Novel). He has followed that with **SALAMANDER COTTON** (St. Martin’s Minotaur, \$24.95; Macmillan, £10.99) in which a wealthy, ex-mining boss has been found burned to death in his home. The third Mason/Tshabalala mystery, **DEAD-END ROAD** (Macmillan, £11.99) is already out in England and will be soon in the U.S.



WHAT'S NEW IN THE U.K. ?

The following information was obtained from the PostMortem Book website: www.postmortem.co.uk
All amounts are in pounds that have an exchange rate of approximately \$1.97 per pound.

BILLINGHAM, Mark, **IN THE DARK (Little Brown, August). A rainy night in south London. A gun is fired into a car which swerves on to the pavement, killing the person standing at a bus stop. It seems that a chilling gang initiation has cost an innocent victim their life. But the reality is far more sinister...One life is wiped out and three more are changed forever: the young man whose finger was on the trigger; an ageing gangster planning a deadly revenge, and the pregnant woman who struggles desperately to uncover the truth. Two weeks away from giving birth, how will she deal with a world where death is an occupational hazard? In a city where violence can be random or meticulously planned, where teenage gangs clash with career criminals and where loyalty is paid for in blood, anything is possible. Secrets are uncovered as fast as bodies, and the story's final twist is as breathtakingly surprising as they come. 14.99

CAIN, Tom, **THE HOUSE OF WAR (Bantam Press, July). The return of Samuel Carver protagonist of **The Accident Man**, who recovers in a Swiss sanatorium to discover the woman he loves has disappeared. His quest to find her will uncover conspiracy and betrayal. 12.99

CUMMING, Charles, **TYPHOON (Penguin, June). Hong Kong 1997 -- only a few short months of British rule remain before the territory returns to Chinese rule. It's a febrile place. And in that claustrophobic environment of uncertainty and fear the spooks are hard at work, jostling for position and influence. So when an elderly man emerges from the seas off the New Territories, claiming to know secrets he will share only with the Governor himself, a young MI6 agent, Joe Lennox, sees an opportunity to make his reputation. But when the old man, a high-profile Chinese professor, is spirited away in the middle of the night by Joe's superiors in collusion with the CIA, it's clear that there's a great deal more than a young spy's career at stake. The professor, it seems, holds the key to a sinister and ambitious plan that could have awesome and catastrophic repercussions for China in the twenty-first century. 18.99

DOHERTY, Paul, **NIGHTSHADE (Headline August) January 1304 and Hugh Corbett, devoted emissary of King Edward I, has been charged with yet another dangerous mission. Scrope, an unscrupulous manor lord, has reneged on his promise to hand over a priceless ornate cross he stole from the Templars during the Crusades. Furthermore, he has massacred as heretics fourteen

members of a religious order, whose corpses now hang in the woods near Mistleham in Essex. The King, determined to restore order sends Corbett to Mistleham in his stead. But as Corbett reaches the troubled village, it becomes obvious that the situation has worsened. A mysterious Bowman has appeared, killing townspeople at random. Is one of the Brethren responsible, or have the Templars arrived to wreak revenge? Can Corbett restore Mistleham to peace, and return the treasure to the King, before further blood is shed? 19.99

DRAKE, Nick, **TUTANKHAMUN (Bantam Press, August). Tutankhamun, son of Akhenaten, has inherited an empire that seems to be at the height of its power and international glory. But the young King, just eighteen years old, is faced with the political and personal intrigues and conspiracies of the Court, where his godfather Ay, and the General Horemheb are locked in a bitter struggle for ascendancy. Tutankhamun must steer the empire back from the brink of disaster and dissent to which his father Akhenaten's rule led the Two Lands of Egypt, and re-assert the stability and authority of his famous dynasty. Rahotep, chief detective of the Thebes division, has his own worries -- his daughters are growing up in a changing world of danger and instability, while out on the streets of Thebes things are falling apart; poverty and dissent are breaking out into a nightmare of violence, gold and corruption seem all-powerful, and the city's shadowy underworld is itself witnessing mysterious acts of shocking brutality. Yet when he receives a mysterious invitation to the secret halls of the Royal Palace, he cannot refuse. What he finds there, and the quest on which he embarks, will change his life. 12.99

FORBES, Elena, **OUR LADY OF PAIN (Quercus, August). When a young woman's naked body is discovered deep in the snowy undergrowth of Holland Park, ritualistically bound and gagged, the only clue is a verse from a bizarre poem found stuffed in her mouth. The woman is Rachel Tenison, a wealthy West End art dealer, who outwardly seemed to lead a normal, fulfilled life. However, as DI Mark Tartaglia and DS Sam Donovan scratch away at the surface, a darker, secret side begins to emerge. Then a tip-off spins everything in an entirely new direction, suggesting that the case is linked to the murder a year before in North London of Catherine Watson, a university lecturer. Still haunted by the aftermath of 'The Bridegroom' case three months before, which nearly brought about their own deaths, Tartaglia and Donovan are forced to confront their personal demons as they struggle to find what these two very different women had in common before the killer has a chance to strike again. 12.99

FOWLER, Chris, **THE VICTORIA VANISHES (Doubleday, June). London pubs are meant to be safe places where anyone can sit quietly with a drink, but not anymore...One night, Arthur Bryant sees a drunken middle-aged lady coming out of a pub in a London backstreet. The next morning, she is found dead at the exact spot where their paths crossed. There's a bizarre twist; the street itself



appears to have changed, for Bryant is convinced that he saw the public house as it looked over a century before. The elderly detective has already lost the funeral urn of an old friend. Could it be that he's losing his mind as well? It becomes clear that a number of other women have lost their lives in London pubs. A silent, secret killer is at work, striking in full view...and yet nobody has a clue how or why, or where he'll attack next. The likeliest suspect seems to be a mental patient with a reason for killing. But knowing who the killer is and catching him are two very different propositions. As they send their new team out on the hunt for a madman, the octogenarian detectives of the Peculiar Crimes Unit prepare themselves for the pub crawl of a lifetime, and come face to face with their own mortality... 14.99

FRENCH, Tana, **THE LIKENESS (Hodder & Stoughton, August). Detective Cassie Maddox is still trying to deal with the events of **In the Woods**. She is out of the Murder Squad and has started a relationship with fellow detective Sam O'Neill but is too badly shaken to commit to Sam or to her career. Then Sam is allocated a new case, that of a young woman stabbed to death just outside Dublin. He calls Cassie to the murder scene and she finds the victim is strangely familiar. In fact, she is Cassie's double. Not only that, but her ID says she is Lexie Madison the identity Cassie used, years ago, as an undercover detective. With no leads, no suspects and no clues, Cassie's old undercover boss spots the opportunity of a lifetime: to send Cassie undercover in the dead girl's place. She could pick up information the police would never hear and tempt the killer to finish the job. So Cassie moves into Whitethorn House, poses as a post-grad student, and prepares to enter Lexie's world. 12.99

HILL, Reginald, **THE ROAR OF THE BUTTERFLIES (HarperCollins, June). The return of Joe Sixsmith in a beautifully packaged, witty new crime novel. A sweltering summer spells bad news for the private detective business. Thieves and philanderers take the month off and the only swingers in town are the ones to be found on the 19th hole of the Royal Hoo Golf Course. The civilized reputation of the 'Hoo' is in trouble, however. Shocking allegations of cheating have been directed at one of its leading members, Chris Porphyry. When Chris turns to Joe Sixsmith, PI, he's more than willing to help -- well, he hasn't got any other clients -- only Joe hadn't counted on being French-kissed then dangled out of a window on the same day. Before long, though, Joe's on the trail of a conspiracy that starts with missing balls, and ends with murder! 10.00

JECKS, Michael, **THE PROPHECY OF DEATH (Headline, June). 1325: There is turmoil in

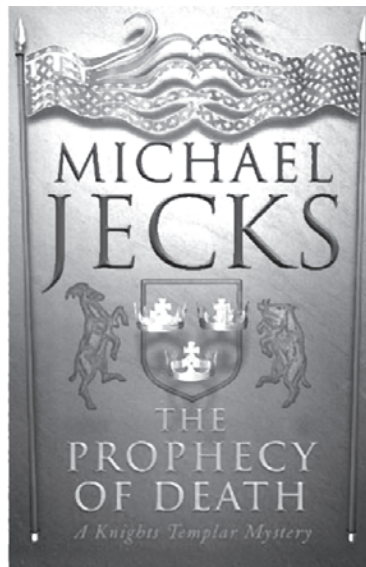
England. But could the Prophecy of St Thomas's Holy Oil save King Edward? It is believed that the king who is anointed with it will be a lion among men: he will conquer France, unite Christendom and throw the heathens from the Holy Land. King Edward II has rejected his wife, Queen Isabella, confiscated her income, exiled her servants and taken away her children. Yet even now she is in France to negotiate peace with her brother, King Charles IV. Meanwhile, Sir Baldwin de Furnshill, Keeper of the King's Peace and his friend Bailiff Simon Puttock return from France with an urgent instruction for the King. Before long Baldwin and Simon find themselves at the centre of a deadly court intrigue involving the most powerful and ruthless men in the country, who will stop at nothing, not least murder, to achieve their ambitions... 19.99

KERNICK, Simon, **DEADLINE (Bantam Press, July). It's evening, you're back late from work - and the house is in darkness. You step inside, and the phone rings. You answer it - and your world turns upside down. Your fourteen-year-old daughter's been taken, and her kidnappers demand half a million pounds in cash. They give you 48 hours to raise the money, and warn you that if you call the police, she'll die. Trying desperately to remain calm, you realise that your husband - the man you married only two years previously - is also missing. But he can't be involved in your daughter's abduction. Or can he? As your nightmare begins, you can be certain of only two things: that you will do anything to get your daughter back alive. And that time is running out. 17.99

NABB, Magdalen, **VITA NUOVA (William Heinemann, August). The author's posthumous novel. When Marshal Guarnaccia is called upon to

investigate the murder of a young woman, he is convinced that there's more to her family than meets the eye, and wonders if the girl's father, Paoletti, might have had something to do with her death...Enlisting the help of a local journalist, Marshal Guarnaccia's investigations draw him into the seedy underworld of Florence - lap dancing, prostitution and the illegal, human trafficking of Eastern European women who are sold into the sex trade. But can he save these women before it's too late and what do they have to do with the killing of Daniela Paoletti? Distracted by the plight of these women and the murder investigation, Guarnaccia forgets about his own personal problems but it's not long before he has choices to make - should he seek help and risk exposing himself and possibly losing his job, or should he go it alone? 14.99

NADEL, Barbara, **ASHES TO ASHES (Headline, July). As London suffers at the hands of the German Luftwaffe during the height of the Blitz, undertaker Francis Hancock suddenly finds himself caught up in the middle of



a terrifying web of murder and abduction. It's the 29th December 1940, the night that Hitler has chosen to destroy London under a barrage of flaming incendiary bombs. Their main target -- St Paul's cathedral -- is where Francis Hancock is sheltering from the onslaught. But the First World War veteran doesn't just have bombs to contend with on this night. A young girl, who was also sheltering in the cathedral, mysteriously goes missing. Then some of those charged with protecting the building are brutally murdered. Francis must face both his own demons and fears in his struggle to catch those responsible and bring them to justice... 19.99

****PEPPER, Andrew, KILL-DEVIL AND WALTER** (Orion, August). From the author of **The Last Days of Newgate**. Pyke returns in a gripping tale of brutal murder and deception, set in the back streets of Victorian London and the cane fields of Jamaica. 12.99

****RUSSELL, Craig, THE CARNIVAL MASTER** (Hutchinson, August). Jan Fabel thought he was finished with death. Instead, while he is preparing for a new career outside the police, a Cologne murder detective asks for his help in tracking down the Carnival Cannibal, a terrifying serial killer who has killed each year for three years at the start of Cologne's world-famous annual Carnival. Maria Klee, Fabel's deputy, is close to mental breakdown and on extended sick leave. Unknown to anyone, Maria also heads for Cologne to hunt down a different, even more dangerous killer. One with whom she has a score to settle. Taras Buslenko, a Ukrainian special-forces commander prepares his hand-picked undercover spetsnaz unit for a 'black' operation into Cologne. Their aim: to end, with extreme prejudice, the rule of an ex-pat Ukrainian crime-boss of legendary cruelty. Their orders: to let nothing or nobody get in their way. Three paths converging on Cologne at Carnival at a time when the world is traditionally turned on its head and Chaos rules. And everybody hides behind a mask. Fabel finds himself on a trail of betrayal and vengeance, violence and death. And once more faces his greatest enemy: the true Master of the Carnival. 12.99

****TEMPLETON, Aline, LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER** (Hodder & Stoughton, June). A sunny evening, a tranquil garden and an old man brutally gunned down on his doorstep. In the pretty and tranquil market town of Kirkclue a proposed superstore development has divided the population in an increasingly bitter war. The low-level aggression of bored youth that is generally tolerated has become sinister. The bloodied carcass of a sheep abandoned in the streets is more than just unpleasant vandalism and teenage bikers, terrorising a woman to breaking point, are impossible to control. When a second victim is killed in what seems a random shooting, the fear in the town becomes tangible. DI Fleming will not accept that the crimes are motiveless, but she struggles to make sense of the two murders, when nothing makes sense any more and no one will believe anything. Not even the truth. 19.99

****TREMAYNE, Peter, THE COUNCIL OF THE CURSED** (Headline, July). When Bishop Leodegar of Autun calls upon the church leaders from western Europe to attend a council, it is to be a meeting haunted by sudden death and intrigue. It's AD 670, and the Council of Autun is meeting to discuss serving a final devastating blow to the Celtic Church. But when a conflict between two delegate results in the murder of the chief delegate from Hibernia, the entire Council is in danger. Sister Fidelma and her companion, Brother Eadulf, arrive in Autun to act as advisors to the Irish delegation. Between the autocratic Bishop Leodegar and the malignant abbess, Mother Audofleda, a web of sinister intrigue soon spreads. The theft of a priceless reliquary box, the disappearance of women and children and rumours of a slave trade make this one of the most sinister puzzles that Fidelma and Eadulf have ever faced... Price: 19.99

****VAUGHAN-HUGHES, Pip, PAINTED IN BLOOD** (Orion, July). 1242 AD and Europe is in flames once more. The King of France, Louis, has decided to stamp out the heretic faith of the Cathars once and for all. The trouble is that Petroc and his mentor, Captain de Montalhac are on the wrong side... For the Captain can no longer ignore his Cathar roots and heads for the Languedoc and war with his former patron. He takes with him not only gold, but also something far more valuable - a mysterious relic depicting the face of Jesus. This 'Cathar Crucifix' will rally a full-scale rebellion against the French Monarchy. But Petroc can see the danger to his friend. Louis possesses a huge army and the necessary ruthlessness to crush all in his path. Now -- as Montalhac retreats to the mountain fastness of Montsegur -- only Petroc can save his friend -- and perhaps the most sacred relic of all. 12.99

****VINE, Barbara, THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT** (Viking, August). Mention his name and most people will say, 'Who?' while the rest think for a bit and ask if he wasn't the one who got involved in all that sleaze back whenever it was ...? It's late spring of 1990 and a love affair is flourishing: between Ivor Tesham, a thirty-three year old rising star of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, and Hebe Furnal, a stunning North London housewife stuck in a dull marriage. What excitement Hebe lacks at home, however, is amply compensated for by the well-bred and intensely attractive Tesham - an ardent womanizer and ambitious politician. On the eve of her twenty-eighth birthday, Tesham decides to give Hebe a present to remember: something far more memorable than, say, the costly string of pearls he's already lavished upon her. Involving a fashionable new practice known as 'adventure sex', a man arranges for his unsuspecting but otherwise willing girlfriend to be snatched from the street, bound and gagged, and delivered to him at a mutually agreed venue... Set amidst an age of IRA bombings, the first Gulf War, and sleazy politics, **THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT** is the gripping story of a fall from grace, and of a man who carries within him all the hypocrisy, greed and self-obsession of a troubled era. 18.99

REVIEWS from the UNITED KINGDOM

Jeff Popple Reviews

SHATTER by Michael Robotham (Sphere, £9.99). **Rating: A** One of the best of the new guard of British crime writing is Sydney writer Michael Robotham, whose London-based police novels have displayed a depth and intelligence over and above the average crime novel.

SHATTER is his fourth novel and features the return of the clinical psychologist Joseph O'Loughlin as the main protagonist. Summoned by the police to help with a potential suicide, O'Loughlin arrives at the Clifton Suspension Bridge in time to witness a naked woman in red high-heeled shoes whisper "You don't understand", before jumping to her death. Like the police, O'Loughlin is quick to dismiss it as a tragic suicide until the woman's teenage daughter convinces him otherwise, and he finds himself engaged in a deadly duel with a deranged killer.

During his short career Robotham has been very good at exceeding expectations and with **SHATTER** he does it once again with a great story that constantly surprises and always entertains. The description on the back of the book suggest that **SHATTER** is going to be a heavy psychological drama, but Robotham quickly dispels such notions and within a few pages ratchets up the suspense and the pace, and sets his story racing down some unexpected paths.

As with his earlier novels, the plot is intriguing and the characterisations are complex and convincing. This is especially the case with the central character, O'Loughlin, who is still battling the mental and physical effects of Parkinson's disease. Despite being an outstanding psychologist, which Robotham establishes early in the book through an entertaining lecture that the Doctor delivers to a new class of psychology students, O'Loughlin is seemingly oblivious to his own insecurities and failings which are worsened by the effects of "Mr Parkinson". The dual threats to O'Loughlin of disease and killer add to the suspense and keep the tension high throughout.

The minor characterisations, especially Detective Inspector Veronica Kray, are also well done and **SHATTER** is a first rate crime novel that is sure to enhance Robotham's growing reputation.

[This novel was recently shortlisted for the Ian Fleming Steel Dagger Award by the CWA]

RITUAL by Mo Hayder (Bantam, £14.95). **Rating: B+** **RITUAL** is Mo Hayder's fifth novel and marks the return of the haunted police detective Jack Caffery from her chilling debut **BIRDMAN** and its equally disquieting sequel **THE TREATMENT**.

Newly seconded to the Major Crime Investigation Unit in Bristol, Caffery finds himself caught up in another gruesome case when a police diver, Flea Marley, discovers two dismembered hands in Bristol Harbour. Most disturbing is the fact that the hands were recently amputated and that the victim was still alive when they were removed. Aided by Flea, who has her own demons, Caffery's investigation leads him into the dark recesses of Bristol's underworld, where junkies will do anything for a fix and evil predators feed on the weak.

Hayder's novels always have a touch of the horrific and **RITUAL** is no different. From the opening pages it is clear that this is going to be a dark tale with touches of the supernatural at the edges. Hayder skilfully mixes elements of ancient witchcraft with more modern evils and keeps the reader guessing as to where the story is heading. The pacing drags at times, with too much reflection and talk, but the denouement is exciting and the story is not easily forgotten.

COLD IN HAND by John Harvey (William Heinemann, £12.99). **Rating: A-** John Harvey is an old hand of the British crime scene who is now rightly receiving the attention that he so richly deserves. **COLD IN HAND** is the eleventh novel in his series about the ageing, jazz loving Inspector Charlie Resnick, and once again features his trademark real life characterisations and vivid descriptions of Nottingham.

The romance of Valentine's Day is shattered when a dispute between two rival teenage gangs escalates into violence and a female police detective becomes caught in the middle. DI Lynn Kellogg was merely trying to stop the fight, but when she recovers consciousness she finds that one girl is dead and that she is blamed by the girl's father for the killing. Kellogg is Resnick's partner and colleague and although nearing retirement he is hauled back to the front line to deal with the fallout, but finds that his objectivity is dangerously compromised.

This is an intelligent crime thriller that also contains a great mid-story shock that will stun readers and keep them avidly turning the pages until the end. Another classy novel from the always reliable Harvey.

GALLOWES LANE by Brian McGilloway (Macmillan, £14.99). **Rating: A-** Brian McGilloway made an impressive debut with **BORDERLANDS** (soon to be out in the U.S. by St. Martin's Minotaur) which was short-listed for last year's Crime Writers Association New Blood Dagger. **GALLOWES LANE** is just as good and once again features Inspector Benedict Devlin of the Irish Borderlands. The normally peaceful town of Lifford is rocked by a series of gruesome murders, including the crucifixion of a born-again ex-con. As Devlin investigates he finds links between some of the murders and an old crime across the border in Northern Ireland. Meanwhile it seems as though a serial rapist and killer is on the loose drugging young girls in nightclubs and abducting them.

GALLOWES LANE is an easy flowing and very engaging police mystery. A good balance is struck between the details of the police investigation and the



personal lives of the officers involved in the case. The characterisations are nicely fleshed out and Devlin is an interesting and very credible detective. The high body count will keep most readers guessing as to the identity of the killer and the final resolution is neatly worked out and satisfying. Highly recommended.

THE FINAL DAYS by Alex Chance (William Heinemann, £10.00). **Rating: B+** Debut author Alex Chance provides some interesting twists on the standard serial killer thriller with a dual plot line that moves between San Francisco and the Utah desert.

Psychologist Karen Wiley is concerned when she starts receiving letters from a child crying out for help. That concern grows when her own daughter comes under threat. Meanwhile Mormon detective Ella McCullers confronts a horrific crime in the small Utah town of Canaan when a young girl is brutally kidnapped from a trailer park. As the killings mount Ella and Karen find themselves drawn to an abandoned desert church and the sinister Cult of the Final Days.

This is a powerful thriller with well developed characters and a good, interesting storyline that keeps the reader guessing for quite awhile as to what is happening. There are also plenty of suspenseful and exciting action scenes. The story drags a bit in a few parts and there is too much exposition and flashback towards the end. Nevertheless, it is a very good read.

A word of warning, however, the book also features some very disturbing violence against children.

TIMEBOMB by Gerald Seymour (Bantam, £14.99). **Rating:**

A Gerald Seymour is one of the world's best thriller writers. His first novel, the much acclaimed IRA thriller **HARRY'S GAME**, appeared in 1975 and since then Seymour has established himself as a master of telling it like it is with well researched novels that pull no punches and often have downbeat endings.

He has now written some twenty-five novels, often dealing with various forms of terrorism, and it is hard to recall a bad one. His latest novel, **TIMEBOMB**, certainly shows no diminution of ability.

Fired from a top-secret Soviet nuclear base in the chaotic last days of the communist regime, a disgruntled KGB security man steals a suitcase bomb, smuggles it out and buries it in his backyard. Sixteen years later the aging former security agent decides to put it on the market to the highest bidder. A Mafia gangster based in England is the buyer for a terrorist group and as he journeys to a remote sector of the Polish-Belarus frontier to make the exchange his moves are tracked a small MI6 team, who only have a sketchy idea of what's going on. Their best hope rests with an undercover police officer who has infiltrated the crimi-

nal gang, but as the deadline approaches the agent becomes less reliable.

TIMEBOMB is a typical Seymour novel with its multiple viewpoints and rich cast of characters, all of whom gradually make their way to the exchange in Poland. Despite the complexity of the plot, Seymour keeps the suspense at a high level and the story moves to a thrilling showdown. The characters and the scenario are chillingly believable and the heroics are credible and understated. A superb topical thriller that presents a chilling picture of a feasible terrorist threat

George Easter Reviews

A QUIET FLAME by Philip Kerr (Quercus, £14.99). **Rating: A**

This is the fifth Bernie Gunther novel (despite the dust jacket indicating otherwise) in a consistently high quality series. It is 1950 and Bernie has arrived in Argentina along with two other former Nazis, including the infamous Adolph Eichmann. Through a series of fortuitous circumstances Gunther is hired by the secret police to find the wife and daughter of an influential German banker – as a favor to the ruling Perons. As we follow Bernie through his investigation, we get more than a sense of how Nazi war criminals were easily integrated into Argentinian society and how complicit the government was in looking the other way.

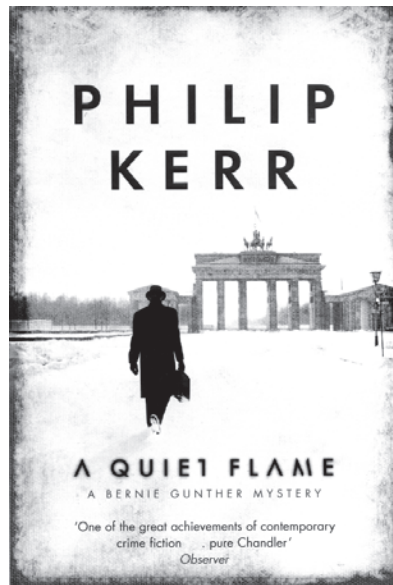
Bernie also takes on a case to find some long-missing relatives of a beautiful Jewess (he thinks it is to atone for his past sins, but has to admit

that he is awfully attracted to her as well). As usual, Bernie sticks his nose in where it not only doesn't belong, but where he has been seriously warned not to go.

After a sixteen-year hiatus, Philip Kerr added to this series last year with the highly praised **THE ONE FROM THE OTHER**. One can only hope that he will provide us with further Bernie Gunther adventures far into the future. Good detection, a complex and admirable protagonist and high quality writing are hallmarks of one of the very best crime fiction series of today or any day.

RITUAL by Mo Hayder (Bantam Press, £14.99). **Rating: B+** Mo Hayder brings back the protagonist from her first two novels, **BIRDMAN** and **THE TREATMENT**. DI Jack Caffery is still suffering from the long-ago disappearance and most likely death of his younger brother at the hands of a pedophile. On a case involving the discovery of two severed hands (but no body) he is teamed up a police diver Flea Marley, another damaged soul who is haunted by the deaths of her parents in a scuba diving mishap.

The case takes them deep into the culture and religious practices of the African immigrant community



and on a separate track we trace the events leading up to a character having his hands cut off.

I'm not sure I'd want to spend too much time in Mo Hayder's mind if her plots are any indication of what is usually going on in there. Scary, and certainly one of a kind. The author will be attending Bouchercon this year for the first time and I'm looking forward to finally meeting her.

BRUNO, CHIEF OF POLICE by Martin Walker (Quercus, £12.99). **Rating: A-** First novel. Bruno Courreges may have a grand title of Chief of Police, but in reality he is the municipal policeman of the small town of St. Denis in the beautiful Perigord region of southwestern France. He loves the town and his people and has a fierce loyalty to both. Most of the time the most serious thing on his plate will be thwarting the EU inspectors as they come through town and try to enforce unreasonable EU regulations on the town businesses. But all that changes when an old man, the head of a local Algerian immigrant family, is found murdered, in what at first blush appears to be a hate crime. The crime is investigated at a higher level than his, but they rely on him for his local knowledge.

I would characterize **BRUNO, CHIEF OF POLICE** as an intelligently written cozy mystery. Bruno is eminently likeable and reminds me of Rumpole in the way he cleverly manipulates people for the good of the whole community – and this is reflected in the ultimate resolution of the story. This supplied a nice change of pace from the pretty steady stream of hard-boiled crime fiction coming out of the U.K. nowadays.

Maggie Mason Review

NO SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES by The Mulgray Twins (Allison & Busby, £18.99). Debut novel. **Rating: C+** DJ Smith is an undercover agent for HM Revenue & Customs, and works with a unusual partner, a sniffer cat, Gorgonzola. They are assigned to sniff out a heroin smuggling ring, thought to be operating in Edinburgh. DJ notes the White Heather Hotel doesn't allow pets, so she fakes car trouble, and sneaks in Gorgonzola. Morag Mackenzie, the proprietress and her husband Murdo run the hotel and have a side business selling tinned haggis.

There are many suspicious characters at the hotel, but several of them come to a bad end, leaving DJ with fewer suspects than usual in a case like this. An American golfing enthusiast is her prime suspect. DJ follows many leads, and ultimately uncovers the smuggling operation, in a manner that was verging on the unbelievable.

There were some good things about the book, mostly the setting. I wasn't fond of the characters, and

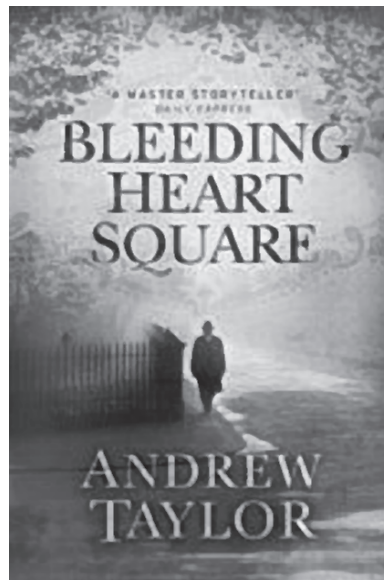
thought they were cliched. I did like the way DJ was able to handle not being allowed to have Gorgonzola in the hotel. DJ's age was never clear to me, though I initially thought she was much older than I later concluded she was. As this is a first novel, if time permitted, I would read another in the series

Cath Staincliffe Reviews

BLEEDING HEART SQUARE (Michael Joseph, £16.99). 1934 and aristocrat Lydia Langstone flees her violent husband but has nowhere to go. In desperation she makes her way to Bleeding Heart Square and the shabby lodging house where her down-at-heel drunken father (who Lydia never knew) lets a room from Joseph Serridge. The house was owned by a middle-aged spinster, Miss Penhow, who disappeared some years before. Narton, a plain-clothes policeman is watching the house and someone is sending ghoulish parcels to Joe Serridge - rotting hearts. A labyrinthine mystery, devilish plotting, terrific suspense and atmosphere you could bottle - all the elements that characterise Taylor's stories, are here. The nuances of class and status, the legacy of the Great War and the rise of British Fascism are part of rich fabric that Taylor uses to tell his tale. Superb.

CRY FOR HELP by Steve Mosby (Orion, £18.99). Dave Lewis is a magician. He knows the secrets that lie behind the tricks and illusions and spends his time publishing a magazine debunking spiritualists and other charlatans who con the public. It's an endeavour rooted in his own experience: after the murder of his brother, Dave watched his parents scabble for comfort and meaning in the company of frauds and mediums. Detective Sam Currie is haunted by his failure to prevent his son Neil's death and tries to redeem himself through his work. A serial killer is abducting young women and sending texts and emails from them to their friends and families while the victims are tied up and slowly die of thirst. When Currie discovers that Dave Lewis is linked both to the women and to those instrumental in Neil's death, he is determined to hunt him down. There is always a fresh, original slant to Mosby's writing. Excellent at capturing contemporary lifestyles and concerns, this is engaging story-telling delivered with panache and assurance.

THE TWILIGHT TIME by Karen Campbell (Hodder & Stoughton, £12.99). Sergeant Anna Cameron starts work in the Flexi Unit, policing Glasgow's notorious Drag. This is a place of working girls and drug deals. Several local prostitutes have been attacked by a man who uses his knife to carve initials on their faces. Then an old Polish man is found murdered in his flat. The Twilight Time is written in gutsy, gritty prose with some laugh out loud descriptions: "He looked like a coconut ice, spider-veined



face frilled by white hair". If 'bad language' bothers you as a reader, steer clear, and there are no-holds-barred references to the most intimate bodily functions. An insider's knowledge of work in the police is used to good effect (Campbell was a serving police officer). But the strained relationships between Anna and her new team, which includes ex-lover Jamie (now married with a wife and a child), are as gripping as the hunt for the bad guy. A powerful first time novel from Campbell, who brings a scorching honesty to the emotional inner-life of her characters. This will surely be the start of a successful series.

STEEL WITCHES by Patrick Lennon (Hodder & Stoughton, £19.99). Ex-cop turned private eye, Tom Fletcher, receives a bizarre phone call from his estranged father, a call which leads him to the murdered body of a young physics student who was moonlighting as a club hostess. Why was physics student Daisy so interested in the art painted on wartime aircraft, and how are Fletcher's family connected to the mystery? Modern day conflicts have their roots in the distant past and Lennon plays on age old fears about witchcraft and persecution and spins marvellous depictions of the Fenlands and the spooky air-bases, old and new, that pepper the Fens. As the country is thrown into the grip of a ferocious winter storm, with freezing weather giving way to floods and a 'psychlone' on the way, the conspiracy thriller builds to a terrific climax. There is a breadth to the story that is captivating as well as some finely drawn characters and lovely language but the star must be the fantastic landscape as it is battered by the biggest storm in centuries.

FLESH HOUSE by Stuart MacBride (Harper Collins, £12.99). The title gives a fair steer as to what you're going to find between the covers. MacBride has penned a gory thriller with human flesh and body parts by the truck full – prime cuts which have got into the meat supply. The Flesher — a serial killer who butchered his victims -- has served time, been released and is now missing. Officers originally involved in securing his conviction are being targeted. And off-shore from Aberdeen a container is found to be stuffed with human joints.

DS Logan McRae is on the case, trying to avoid the machinations of his bosses and cope with the inadequacies of his deeply flawed colleagues, and with the appalling Aberdonian weather. Whilst such fare may not be to everyone's taste, MacBride manages to combine the darkest of situations with the workaday foibles of his cops (and their attempts to maintain some sanity in a world gone barmy) and to make the whole shebang both very funny and suspenseful.

KILLER TUNE by Dreda Say Mitchell (Hodder & Stoughton, £6.99). Rap singer Lord Tribulation is about to make the big time: he's on the brink of a new recording

deal and tipped to retain his title in the slamdown for The Writer in Residence for Ladbroke Grove. Then his life is rocked to the core. A teenager listens to Lord Tribulation's music as he fire-bombs a house, injuring people inside, and Lord Tribulation's father, a veteran musician dies suddenly in an alley. An elaborate plot unfolds linking both incidents to 1976, a time when the far right was organising racist attacks, black people were hounded by the use of the 'sus' law, radical black groups were emerging in response and a riot erupted at the Notting Hill Carnival. The narrative leads to unpalatable truths and secrets and also works as a coming of age story for Lord Tribulation as he is forced to make hard choices and deal with his own short-comings. Steeped in music, and laden with musical references, and

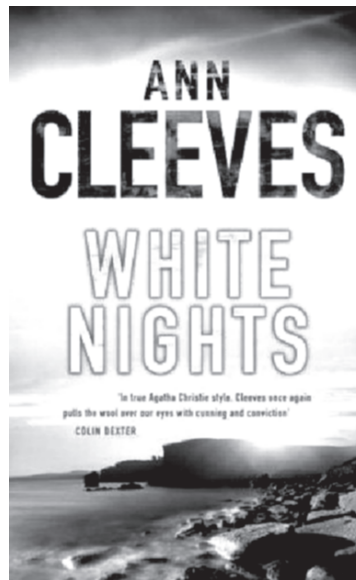
with its own play list appended, **KILLER TUNE** is a celebration of a culture and a community rarely found in crime fiction. This is the second novel from Say Mitchell who won the CWA's John Creasey Best First Novel Award with **RUNNING HOT**.

SMALL CRIMES by Dave Zeltserman (Serpent's Tail, £7.99). Ex-cop Joe Denton is released from prison after serving several years for a brutal attack which left the local district attorney horribly disfigured. Joe gets precious little welcome when he returns home. Already estranged from his ex-wife and daughters and hurt that his parents never once visited him in prison, he now finds himself ostracised by his former colleagues and most of the town community. Top gangster Manny Vassey is dying of cancer and is close to coming clean: a confession that would send Joe back inside. Another player gives Joe an

ultimatum: silence Manny or we'll silence you. Powerfully tense, reading this is like watching a car crash happen, as Joe thrashes like a landed fish trying to survive in a world seriously stacked against him. The characterisation and mental torment are reminiscent of the insightful psychological thrillers of Jim Thompson. Stunning stuff.

Martin Edwards Reviews

WHITE NIGHTS by Anne Cleeves (Macmillan, £16.99). Ann Cleeves' idea for the Shetland Quartet featuring the appealing cop Jimmy Perez is that each book will be set in a different season of the year. Here the backdrop is summer, the time of the long white nights. The Shetland setting is beautifully done. Few if any modern crime writers convey the essence of a rural community as effectively as Ann Cleeves, and with the islands off the north of Scotland, she is in her element. There is a lot of interesting background detail. I now know what the 'summer dim' is and what 'singling neeps' involves, while **RAVEN BLACK** introduced me to the tradition of Up Helly Aa, Europe's largest fire festival. Reading these



novels has made me want to visit Shetland and see the locations for myself (one quibble is that a map would have been a welcome inclusion; I understand that one is due to appear in the American edition.) This book begins with a mysterious masked man, dressed as a Pierrot, handing out leaflets to tourists arriving at Lerwick from a cruise ship. Then the attention shifts to Perez and his lover Fran, attending an art exhibition at which a stranger falls to his knees and begins to weep. Soon afterwards, local man Kenny Thomson looks into a hut on a jetty and finds a man, dead from hanging. He is wearing the mask of a clown.

Like the late Julian Symons, I'm fascinated by the idea of masks, and the intriguing nature of this plot device was one of the elements that drew me into the book. A second murder soon follows, and the momentum is maintained throughout, whereas the pace in the first hundred pages of **RAVEN BLACK** was rather more leisurely. There are a couple of features of the plot that struck me as a little unlikely, but perhaps legitimate given that the story-line involves performance and playing a part. The great merit of this book is that the people and places are described with such conviction as to ensure that the tale told never becomes unbelievable. This is a first rate crime novel.

THE BLOOD PIT by Kate Ellis (Piatkus, £19.99). The latest entry in the Wesley Peterson series by this very reliable author is arguably the best yet. Once again, there is dirty work afoot in Tradmouth (a fictionalised Dartmouth.) A serial killer's first victim is a highly unpleasant individual, but the next man to die is much more agreeable. There is evidently a link between them - but what can it be? Meanwhile, Wesley's archaeologist friend Neil Watson (are all the best sidekicks called Watson?) receives a string of disturbing messages about gruesome events of the past. All the familiar ingredients of an Ellis novel are here: complex plotting, a love of history and a cast of characters that is distinctive yet memorable. Complicated story-lines are worked out with considerable skill and the result is a first rate example of the traditional mystery brought up to date. A thoroughly enjoyable piece of work.

OUT OF A CLEAR SKY by Sally Hinchcliffe (Macmillan, £12.99). Bird-watchers are an obsessive lot, and obsessives make great characters in a crime novel. In her debut offering, Sally Hinchcliffe has started with this premise and fashioned a neat novel of psychological suspense. The protagonist is Manda, a woman with a troubled past and an equally challenging present. She's just been dumped by her lover Gareth, a fellow birdwatcher. But there are two other men in her life - Gareth's amiable chum and the spooky David, who seems to be stalking her. Haunted by the mysterious death of her mother as well as the loss of Gareth, Manda is, despite her strength of character, a born victim. When someone starts to menace her, the question is whether she will survive and, if so, at what cost. This is a well-written book, which the publishers compare to the work of Nicci French and Barbara Vine. But French and Vine are highly accomplished plotters, and this book is rather short of plot. Hinchcliffe compensates with a mass of detail about bird-watching, and although this

is very well done, it is not quite enough. The major twist will be foreseen by most seasoned mystery readers, but Hinchcliffe is a writer of real potential and this first outing augurs well for the future.

The Cath Staincliffe and Martin Edward reviews appear on the Tangled Web website and appear here by permission of the authors.

Karen Chisolm Review

THE ADVERSARY by Michael Walters (Quercus, £12.99). For more than twenty years a hidden hand has ruled the backstreets of Ulan Baatar, but now Muunokhoi, the once untouchable head of Mongolia's largest and most powerful criminal empire, has finally been caught. It should be the Serious Crime Team's finest hour. But nothing is ever that simple in the new Mongolia.

THE ADVERSARY is the second book in the Nergui / Doripalam police procedural series set in Ulan Baatar, Mongolia. The first was **THE SHADOW WALKER**. Fans of police procedurals who haven't caught up with this series should give it a go. Whilst it is set in Mongolia, and there are unusual names and settings which give it a slightly exotic feel, the basis of the book is a sound procedural with the same sorts of issues that plague police departments the world over.

THE ADVERSARY finds Nergui moved on from the Serious Crimes Squad with Doripalam, his one time protege, taking over as head. When the crime lord Muunokhoi is acquitted because of problems with the validity of evidence against him, the issue of corruption within the Serious Crimes Squad can't be ignored any longer. Nergui is bought back to try to get to the bottom of the fiasco. Tunjin, old, obese and totally responsible for the faked evidence is suspended. Judge Raadna, who presided over the aborted trial, turns out to be an old Nergui acquaintance and she is being threatened. Meanwhile an elderly woman - member of a nomadic family is beaten to death when she has stayed, refusing to move on with her family, waiting for her missing son to be found.

Set within the partly exotic world of the Mongolian steppes and the sometimes drab post-Soviet environment of Ulan Baatar, **THE ADVERSARY** takes the elements of a really good police procedural, sets a cracking pace, adds some insight into the clash between the traditional and post-Soviet / Western influence and then tops it all up with characters that it's almost impossible not to like.

Probably the standout character and story is Tunjin - the failed, obese, alcoholic, compromised policeman who starts out saving his own skin, and ends up the most unlikely hero. But don't sell Nergui short - inscrutable, contained, besuited and elegant - he and his protege Doripalam are a new force to be reckoned with in detecting partnerships.

If you haven't read **THE SHADOW WALKER** then **THE ADVERSARY** will still work for you, but there's really no reason not to read them both. [Karen Chisolm is an Australian fan and webmaster of <http://blogs.sakienvirotech.com/AustCrimeFiction>]

THE AFRICAN CONTINENT IN BRITISH CRIME FICTION

by Philip L. Scowcroft

Some of the worldwide settings of British crime fiction are owed, at least in part, to the existence of the one-time British Empire and this is particularly due to those books which are set in the continent of Africa. My examples, and I am sure these are far from being comprehensive, come from all over that large continent. Agatha Christie, much traveled, supplies several examples from her output of crime stories. **THE MAN IN THE BROWN SUIT** (Lane, 1924), a thriller rather than a detective story, reflected Christie's Empire-wide tour with her first husband in the 1920s; we visit South Africa and Rhodesia (now called Zimbabwe) – the story is fun.

At extreme ends of Africa from South Africa are Morocco, scene of the later Christie thriller **DESTINATION UNKNOWN** (Collins, 1954), a bit of a farrago but entertaining with it, and Egypt. **DEATH ON THE NILE** (Collins, 1938), an orthodox murder mystery with Poirot present and in his best form, is set largely on a river Nile steamer on which the murder(s) take place. It exists not only as a novel but also as a play (which was called **MURDER ON THE NILE** and did not feature Poirot) and as a film which was based on the novel version.

Egypt and its ancient history was particularly popular in the 1920s (when Tuankhamen's tomb was discovered). Christie cashed in on this with her short story "The Adventures of the Egyptian Tomb," collected in 1924 in **POIROT INVESTIGATES**. Later she set a detective novel, **DEATH COMES AS THE END** (Collins, 1945) in ancient Egypt and this is still, in the present age in which so many historical crime stories appear, one of the very earliest periods in which such a story has been set.

There was, or could be, a dark side to the exciting discovery of the treasures of ancient Egypt. Unscrupulous people saw the chance to make money out of these treasures and this is a feature of Carter Dickson's **LORD OF THE SORCERERS** (Heineman, 1946, a.k.a. **THE CURSE OF THE BRONZE LAMP**). The action takes place in 1935, mostly in England. Egyptologist Lord Severn suffers the death of one of his associates and this is blamed on an ancient bronze lamp and its supposed curse. Severn's daughter Helen vows to scotch the curse and on her return to England, she takes the lamp with her to Severn Hall. She is seen and heard entering the front door but then disappears (the lamp, however, does not). Despite an immediate search, she cannot be found and soon afterwards Lord Severn, too, disappears. Has the

lamp "got" them? No murder has been committed, though there is no lack of criminal activity. Sir Henry Merrivale is equal to all the magic and is as robust and cantankerous as ever, especially in a memorable row with a welshing Egyptian taxi driver at Cairo's main railway station. All told, this is a fascinating tale which I never tire of re-reading.

Dickson visited Morocco in his later "HM" novel **BEHIND THE CRIMSON BLIND** (Heinemann, 1952). Moving a little further south J.R.L. Anderson's **DEATH IN THE DESERT** (Gollancz, 1977), set in and around the Sahara region in a fictitious West African republic, has a Secret Service flavor to it with Anderson's Colonel Blair equal to all skulduggery. R. Austin Freeman, creator of Dr. Thorndyke, most famous of all medico-legal sleuths, was at one time a medical officer in British West Africa and his short story "The Case of the White Footprints," from **DR. THORNDYKE'S CASE-BOOK** (Hodder, 1923) draws on this experience and Freeman's knowledge of diseases common to that part of Africa.

Finally a word for A.E.W. Mason, much traveled, both in a personal sense and in his books. He set a book in Morocco, **THE WINDING STAIR** (Hodder, 1923), but it is not really crime; nor, quite, is his most famous novel, the oft-filmed **THE FOUR FEATHERS** (Hodder, 1902), which largely takes place in the Sudan – a good adventure story, with elements of secret service. Mason's last Haraud detective novel, **THE HOUSE IN LORDSHIP LANE** (Hodder, 1946) includes a sub-plot in which an attempt is made to destabilize Egypt by drug imports. This is doubtless a good idea for a book, but the two chapters devoted to it merely serve to distract attention from the main plot and spoil the structure of what is a good detective story, if not quite Mason's best.



GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER by Mike Ripley

Mean Streets of Glasgow

I cannot claim to be particularly familiar with the city of Glasgow, but it seems you can see some funny things on its streets these days.

My only reference for this is the opening page of the forthcoming debut novel **THE TWILIGHT TIME** from Hodder, written by former police constable Karen Campbell (a fine Scottish surname which is, I believe, particularly popular in the Glencoe area).

In the opening scene of the novel, the police detective heroine is walking towards her new office and crossing the road when she is narrowly missed by: *a man, near prone in a Sinclair C5 ...*

The driver of this Sinclair C5 turns out to be the detective's new boss: a character called Rankin – another popular Scottish name. But the interesting thing, surely, is the C5. When they were first produced I purchased a dozen of them so that the more elderly and frail among the staff here at Ripster Hall could better navigate the lengthy corridors so that I could enjoy my breakfast toast whilst still warm, but they were not popular and I disposed of them to a passing rag-and-bone man.



I had often wondered what had become of them, but now I know they are being ridden around Glasgow by people called Rankin, I must make plans to visit the city – and read beyond page one of Ms. Campbell's intriguing new novel.

Whither Walthamstow?

I have discovered that one of the most innovative crime writers of the last decade, former probation officer Jeremy Cameron, is alive and well and living in Walthamstow. The author of the mould-breaking **VINNIE**

GOT BLOWN AWAY now has his own website, www.jeremycameron.co.uk, which he maintains whilst indulging his twin passions for growing vegetables and supporting Norwich City.

As Jeremy informed me only the other day: "Almost everyone I have ever met has lived in Walthamstow at some time. It's a step on the ladder, sometimes upwardly mobile, sometimes downwardly. Those that haven't lived here have driven through it. Quickly."

Life in the Blurbs

I have had to enlarge my reading list for the coming year as I have now discovered new titles which come highly recommended.

There is, for example, Steve Hamilton's **NIGHT WORK** from Orion, which I am assured by Lee Child is "An automatic book of the year." I am already looking forward to October, when Penguin publish Chris Kuzneski's **THE LOST THRONE**, a tale of "high stakes, fast action, vibrant characters – not to be missed" or so it is described by...er...Lee Child, presumably just after he'd finished the "truly excellent" (Lee Child) **THE BLADE ITSELF** by Marcus Sakey and after he'd recovered from reading P.J. Parrish's **A THOUSAND BONES** (coming from Pocket Books), which he describes as "American crime fiction at its finest."

Volk's Delay

Some while ago I was sent a proof of American Brent Ghelfi's debut thriller **VOLK'S GAME** by those fantastic folk at Faber and I immediately began to devour it, finding it jolly exciting indeed.

I paused in my reading of this most excellent Russian gangster thriller on being told by publishers Faber that UK publication was being delayed until May. Briefly, I wondered if anything had gone wrong. Some glitch with the contracts, perhaps? Or had the Russian Mafia taken pre-emptive measures? My mind positively whirled with suspicion.

However, the new Faber catalogue reassures me that all must be well, for the *second* Brent Ghelfi novel, **VOLK'S SHADOW**, is advertised for publication in November. Even more reassuring, it comes with a front cover recommendation from none other than Lee Child. Phew! What a relief!

Turning Leeward

I am saddened to report that Lee Child, whose literary recommendations I hang on, has found himself unable to attend the forthcoming jollities at Crimefest in Bristol, 5th-8th June (www.crimefest.com).

There will, however, be at least one Lee there, in the form of debut novelist Lee Weeks who is described as "the female James Patterson" on the



Lee Weeks

who is described as "the female James Patterson" on the

cover of her book **THE TROPHY TAKER**, published by Avon.

In the past, I have taken to task those editorial Avon ladies for allowing the use of the word "Cos" without the appropriate apostrophe [ˈkɒs] when referring, in a rather cavalier manner, to the word "because." Now call me a nit-picking pedant (as many do), but I must take them to task again.

The biographical blurb in the front of **THE TROPHY TAKER** (which looks to be a jolly exciting serial killer thriller set in Hong Kong) tells me that: "Lee Weeks left school at 16 with one O'level...."

Could it be that an O'level is some form of Irish qualification with which I am unfamiliar, or do they mean the old GCE qualification of O-Level? In any case, Ms Weeks is clearly too young to have had to take O-Levels, which I am told were abandoned by the educational authorities at some point in the last century.

Knight Errant

I am delighted to see that my old and distinguished friend Professor Bernard Knight is to celebrate the twelfth Crouner John mystery **THE MANOR OF DEATH**, published by those saucy socialites at Simon & Schuster.

The Crouner (think "coroner") John novels set in the wild and woolly west country in the late 12th century are already acknowledged as a National Treasure. I know this to be true for it says so on the new book's dust jacket and the authority it quotes is unimpeachable.

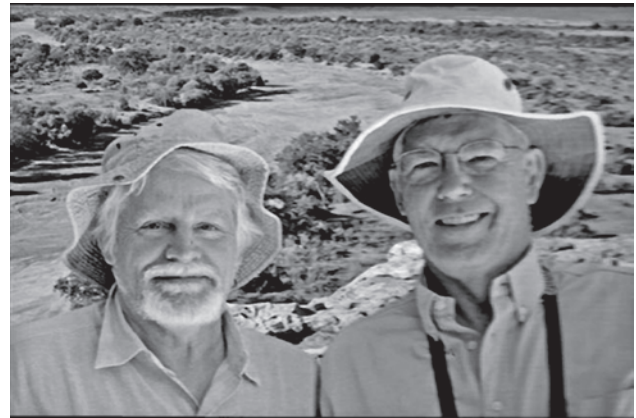
But Professor Knight, CBE, is himself something of a National Treasure, after a forty-year career as a pathologist with the Home Office during which he performed over 25,000 autopsies. He also, I am reliably informed, gives a highly informative lecture to young medical students on how crime writers get their forensics wrong!

African Skies

I suppose it was inevitable that with the televising of **The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency** (or *Wild At Heartbeat* as one wag called it) that publishers should see Africa as a happy hunting ground.

Of course for those of us brought up on the excellent Kramer and Zondi books of James McClure back in the early 1970s, this is not unexplored territory. And one should not be surprised at iconic Swedish crime writer Henning Mankell choosing to set his new novel **THE EYE OF THE LEOPARD** (from those super souls at Harvill Secker) in northern Zambia, for Mankell actually lives in Africa, presumably to get away from all those gloomy policemen and serial killers in southern Sweden.

But a new novel from those lovely Headline hobbits threatens to reveal "the real Botswana" through the adventures of Assistant Superintendent David "Kubu" Bengu in **A CARRION DEATH** by "Michael Stanley."



I can exclusively reveal that "Michael Stanley" is in fact the pen-name of a writing team of old Africa hands: Michael Stanley, who lives near Johannesburg (and is something of a Bill Oddie lookalike) and Stanley Trollip, who lives in Minneapolis, which I believe happens to be on another continent.

Thus it proves the old maxim that you don't have to live in Botswana to write about it.

New China Hands

With immaculate timing as the Beijing Olympics loom ever nearer, those perky publishing people at Pan have produced a brace of thrillers set in China, or Cathay as it was called in my day.

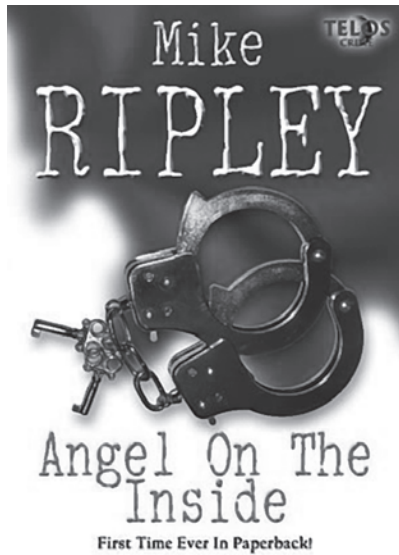
And just when I had reported on the first Beijing private eye last month, I find there is another one, called Song, who features in Catherine Sampson's **THE POOL OF UNEASE**.

In Andy Oakes' second novel, **CITIZEN ONE**, there are bodies in the foundations of the new Olympic stadium in Shanghai and the recently demoted chief investigator Sun Piao lands the case.

Missing Angel

I am constantly being asked (well, occasionally) about what has become known as the "missing" novel in my 'Angel' series, **ANGEL ON THE INSIDE** which appeared some years ago in hardback but was never issued in paperback. I am sure there was a good reason why this was the only one of fifteen titles in the award-winning series (oh, did I say that out loud?) not to appear in paperback, but at the time of publication I was otherwise engaged in hospital having a stroke. I discovered that the planned paperback edition had been axed some months later when I read my (then) publisher's catalogue only to find I wasn't in it.

Now those terrific types at Telos Books have jumped in to fill this extraordinary literary gap and will be



publishing the first ever paperback edition, complete with an introduction by the author, around about July, just in time to mark the 20th anniversary celebrations of the very first 'Angel' tale which appeared in 1988.

Curse of the Ripster

It is rather early in the year to be invoking the Curse of the Ripster but I will do so nonetheless.

I may be wrong (I frequently am), but I do believe that Philip Kerr's outstanding new Bernie Gunther novel **A QUIET FLAME** is eligible for the three major crime writing prizes in this year's awards calendar, whatever they are called at the moment. I am thinking of the Crime Writers' Gold Dagger (which may or may not still be called that), the Ian Fleming Steel Dagger for thrillers and, of course, the Ellis Peters Award for historical crime. Philip's new book qualifies brilliantly in all three categories and I have no hesitation in tipping him to scoop a unique treble and win all three. Having said that, the weight of history shows that I will, of course, be wrong, and **A QUIET FLAME** will probably go disgracefully unrecognised. Sorry about that, Philip. [Editor's Note: sadly, you were right.]

Raiders of the Lost Manuscript

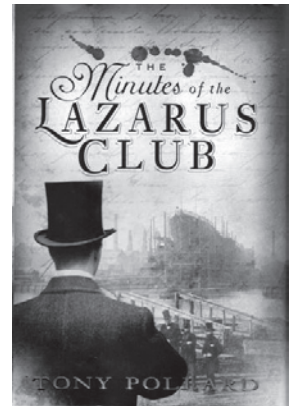
It is unusual, but not entirely unknown, for archaeologists to forgo the fame and riches which accrue from that noble profession and downsize into the world of writing crime fiction. When it does happen, it is always a wrench with many a tear shed as a fedora is doffed or a bullwhip cracked for the last time. Slowly, realisation dawns that there will be no more adventures with crystal skulls in temples of doom; that the last crusade has indeed been and gone and perhaps that pesky Ark will remain lost forever.

So my heart goes out to Dr Tony Pollard who has abandoned the glamorous lifestyle of the relic hunter and traded in his trowel for a word-processor to produce his debut novel **THE MINUTES OF THE LAZARUS CLUB**

for those stunningly attractive publishing people at Penguin.

Set in Victorian London, this may well be Dr Pollard's first attempt at fiction (something which could not be said of some of my archaeological site reports!) but it is certainly not his first published work. Who could forget his masterly co-editing of the bestselling **Fields of Conflict: Progress and Prospect in Battlefield Archaeology** from 2001? Or indeed, his superb paper in that same slim volume: "Place Eskowe in a state of defence": the archaeological investigation of the British fort at KwaMondi, Eshowe, Zululand?

For those not instantly familiar with the historical backdrop, the fort at Eshowe was the scene of one of the lesser-known engagements (come on, you've seen the films) of the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879, where a British garrison of some 1700 soldiers were besieged for almost three months. Although vastly outnumbered, the British had the Gatling gun and the Zulus did not.



The Station now arriving...

Those wonderful young people at Old Street Publishing (www.oldstreetpublishing.co.uk) have finally managed to persuade me to read a David Downing novel and I am very glad they did.

Mr. Downing's latest, **SILESIA STATION**, is a fabulous thriller, rich in historical detail, which covers politics, a bit of private detective work and the problems facing a journalist working for three rival intelligence services at once. All this done in the setting of Germany and Eastern Europe in the summer of 1939 as the world slides inexorably into war.

It is always a pleasure to discover a new thriller writer, especially an intelligent one with a good grasp of history and so I am further delighted to discover that the first book (in what I hope will be a long series), **ZOO STATION**, is now out in mass-market paperback.

Canada Far From Dry

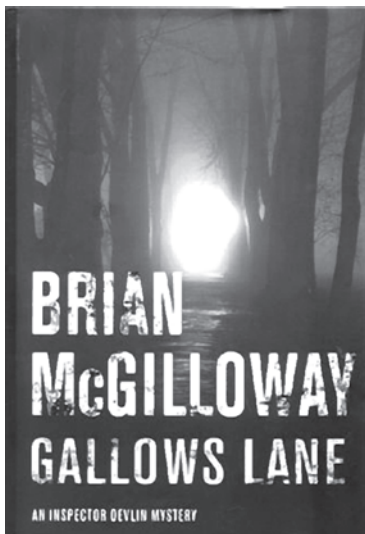
On a recent visit to the Metropolis, I chanced upon members of the emergency services normally concerned with crowd control (mounted police, fire brigade water-cannon crews, St John's ambulance staff and of course the Salvation Army) engaged in an extensive training exercise in Trafalgar Square near the entrances to Canada House. A security exercise of this magnitude can only mean one thing: the impending visit to this country of Louise Penny. No wonder the airport authorities were hurried into opening Terminal 5 at Heathrow before it was fully operational.

Not paying attention

At some point last year, I thought I made it clear that there was far too much crucifixion creeping into crime fiction (Irishman Ken Bruen and Scottish person Allan Guthrie were among the unusual suspects). Obviously my pleas fell on deaf ears, for what should arrive – in Easter Week! – but a copy of the new novel **GALLOWS LANE** by one of the rising stars of Irish crime writing, Brian McGilloway.

Wouldn't you just know it, but one of the murders investigated by Garda Inspector Benedict Devlin in the book (from those innovative imps at Macmillan New Writing) involves a body nailed to a tree.

I believe this to have been a method of execution employed by the Romans in Britain during their somewhat heated religious debates with the native Druids, and had



assumed it had fallen out of favour over the last 1,900 years. Strangely, it seems, not in Scotland and Ireland.

Malice Afterthought

I had always regarded the brilliant **MALICE AFORETHOUGHT** by Francis Iles as the pioneer “psychological suspense” crime novel – the one that broke the mould of the so-called “Golden Age” Monopoly (or should that be “Cluedo”?) of whodunit detective stories. It did so, of course, by telling you who did it in line one of Chapter One, which caused quite a stir in 1931, and the rest of the book was really a question of *does he get away with it?*

It was one of my students on the course I teach for Cambridge University (a course entitled with due homage *With Malice Aforethought: Aspects of the Crime Novel*) who reminded me that there is another book which can claim pioneering status in this field.

C.S. Forester became famous for **THE GUN**, **THE AFRICAN QUEEN** and of course, the Hornblower books, to such an extent that two of his earliest novels – crime novels – are almost totally forgotten.

PAYMENT DEFERRED, written when Forester was only 25 and published in 1926, could be said to have beaten **MALICE AFORETHOUGHT** to the punch by five years. If not in that dramatic opening line, but certainly by the end of Chapter One, Forester tells you who has done the murder, why, and how, and the rest of the book is how the murderer gets his comeuppance, although no detectives are involved and almost all violence is described ‘off-stage.’

It is also a *suburban* murder – not a country house in sight – and a wonderful examination of lower middle class morals and manners in a closely observed family unit, only one of whom (the most cynical) actually survives. This is not a novel of detection, rather a novel about the consequences of a grubby little murder and a stunning portrayal of how the fear of being discovered (rather than any feeling of guilt) gnaws away at the murderer.

His second (and last?) crime novel, **PLAIN MURDER**, appeared in 1930 (still a year before **MALICE AFORETHOUGHT**) and, again using a suburban lower middle class setting, begins with a murder conspiracy and a murder echoed in Len Deighton’s **FUNERAL IN BERLIN** more than three decades later. The whodunit, whydunit and howdunit are all given in the opening chapters and the main plotline follows the disintegration of the conspiracy and how the murderers turn on each other.

Both are pioneer crime novels of psychological suspense rather than “detective stories” and, given the tragic inevitability of the events set in train by the murders and their nihilistic tone, I might even suggest they are prototypes of *noir* fiction.

The creator of **Mr. Midshipman Hornblower** as the great-grandfather of British *noir*? Who’d have thought it?

Things in common

Manda Scott is a writer whose crime novels I much admired, particularly **HEN’S TEETH** and **NO GOOD DEED**. At one time I would have suggested we had much in common. We both live in the East of England, we have both written crime novels and we have both written books about the Iron Age Queen Boudica, even spelling it the same, correct way, albeit I only did one and Manda four. We also both have new paperbacks out this summer.

But there the commonality ends, for the paperback edition of Manda’s **THE CRYSTAL SKULL** (published by Bantam with immaculate timing considering the exploits of my old friend Professor Indiana Jones), comes replete with the review: “Original, scary, rooted in the past but as current as tomorrow’s nightmare. An enthralling read” from none other than the inexhaustible Lee Child.

At this point I have to humbly bow out of any comparisons, for I cannot boast a Lee Child endorsement on any of my 18 titles. [Editor’s note: Give it time -- he’s trying to catch up with authors who have large backlists. You know, Mike, Lee Child is a **very** nice guy and he’s just trying to help other authors out.]

Father's Day

Reginald Hill's 'other' series, featuring Luton-based private eye Joe Sixsmith, has been fairly well eclipsed by the popularity of his stunning Dalziel and Pascoe novels, even though Sixsmith has made numerous appearances in print since his debut in 1993. Personally, I blame Luton for this.

However, Joe is due for a boost in a superbly packaged (and illustrated) new novel, **THE ROAR OF THE BUTTERFLIES**, from Reg's perky publishers (for the last 38 years) at HarperCollins.

Published in June, with a clever eye on the Father's Day market, **BUTTERFLIES** starts with scandalous goings-on in the local golf club and murder before we reach the safety of the 19th hole. I am resisting the urge to create an armoury of reviewer's epithets such as "A hole in one" (if it's good) and "Below par" (if it falls below Hill's own high standards), and will keep my powder dry.

I will admit now, though, that I have never been a golfer as I have never seen the point of putting the bar at the end of such a long and convoluted stroll. And then there is Luton. Why Luton? It doesn't even have a football team as good as, say, Hartlepool.



Terrible Admission

I have always been slightly bemused when people tell me, quite openly, that they indulge in "blogging." For many years I was under the impression that this activity involved acts of a sexual nature between consenting adults in a municipal car park, a practice which was long ago banned on National Trust property.

However, I am now sufficiently down among the kids to realise that "blogging" is something which takes place on the jolly old interweb and it is clear to me that personal blogs perform a cathartic function as a form of electronic confessional.

How else can one explain the awful confession of crime writer Martin Edwards, who has recently "come out" (as I believe the modern expression is) and admitted publicly to the millions of readers of his "blog" on www.martinedwardsbooks.com that he has *never read anything* by John D. MacDonald or Ross Macdonald.

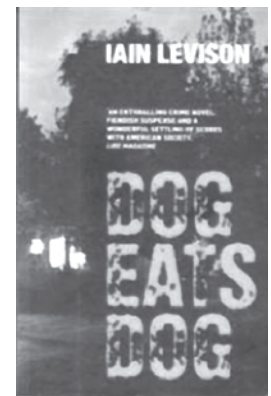
Such a staggering confession surely deserves a penance of huge proportions from a spiritual higher authority, and I shall take my time deciding what it should be. [Editor's Note: I suspect that all of us who proclaim that we are well-read in the mystery/crime fiction genre, have holes in our reading like this.]

Dog Days

I know there is no copyright on titles, but publishers usually try their best to avoid confusing bookseller and reader. I myself was once forced to change a title because an American thriller writer also had a book called **ANGEL EYES** due for publication from the same publisher. I naturally accepted their decision with good grace and rumours of my attempts to change my name to Eric van Lustbader have been grossly exaggerated.

But I am worried about the recent publication of another novel with the title **DOG EATS DOG**. The original one of course, was written by Edward Bunker (famously "Mr Blue" in the film *Reservoir Dogs*) and published here in 1996.

And now comes **DOG EATS DOG** by Iain Levison, published by those usually inventive people at Bitter Lemon Press, and it is a book, like its famous predecessor, which comes with a fascinating author back story. Born in Scotland, the much travelled Iain Levison now lives in North Carolina, having served in the British army (in Peru!) and been a crab fisherman in Alaska. He is the author of two non-fiction works: **Working Stiff's Manifesto** and **Since the Layoffs** but this is his first novel and was originally published in France under the title **Une Canaille et demie**. I believe this translates roughly (for modern languages are not my speciality) as **A Scoundrel and a Half**.



Now that is not a bad title – I've certainly come across worse (**Hands Up Miss Seton** springs to mind) – but it's not as good as **DOG EATS DOG**, which is a pity because it might upset hardboiled fans for the reason that those who loved the late Eddie Bunker's book will absolutely adore this one. One of the lead characters has a career in "weapons-based financial reallocation" (armed robbery), another is a seedy, over-ambitious small town college professor writing a thesis entitled *Hitler Was Right*, and a third is a female FBI agent determined to smash through the glass ceiling of male chauvinism, or at least put a bullet through it.

The opening bank robbery which inevitably goes wrong and the subsequent interaction between career criminal, civilian and pursuing law officer, are quite brilliantly done. In fact I had to check whilst reading this book that it wasn't Elmore Leonard or Richard Stark writing under another name for tax reasons.

Reflected in the Mira

Those relatively new kids on the crime publishing block in Britain, MIRA Books, are getting noticed for their list of fast-paced, no-nonsense thrillers, mostly by American authors who ought to be better-known (over here) than they have been.

One cannot, of course, suggest that Tess Gerritsen is an unknown quantity, and MIRA's forthcoming **WHISTLE BLOWER** is eagerly awaited. And growing in reputation here is Alex Kava, with six of her backlist championed by MIRA plus her latest heady mix of greed and corruption, **WHITEWASH**, out now.

Less well-known, at least to me, is Chris Jordan, whose latest, **LOST**, was originally published in the US under the title **TAKEN**.

Fangs ain't what they used to be

In the latest crop of British publishers' catalogues for the second-half of 2008, there seems to be an unhealthy concentration on what I can only describe as "chick-lit vampire fiction."

Pocket Books, for example, offer the "thrilling and sexy contemporary vampire world" of Susan Sizemore. Allison & Busby have "The Morganville Vampires" series by Rachel Caine and the "sophisticated, sexy, surprising" stories of Lady Victoria, vampire slayer, by Colleen Gleason. Transworld, meanwhile, have the creator of the Anita Blake (vampire hunter) books, Laurell K. Hamilton. And Piatkus proudly publish numerous "sexy" series labelled "Undead", "Dark Hunter" and "Dark Carpathian," from authors Mary Janice Davidson, Sherrilyn Kenyon, Christine Feehan and Keri Arthur.

Now I have nothing against vampire literature *per se*. Indeed, I possess all the classic vampire books – both dear Bram's **DRACULA** and Richard Matheson's **I AM LEGEND**.

What I find slightly unhealthy is the way publishers are falling over themselves to gorge on this particular flavour-of-the month (and surely a minority taste). Still, I suppose it happens in the crime and mystery field. Since the success of Henning Mankell, every UK publisher has been scouring Scandinavia with a ruthlessness the raiding Vikings of yesteryear would have admired.

Angel Unexpected

I have been inundated with a telegram from an irate book-dealer (Rare and Unwanted Manuscripts Inc.) demanding to know why I had been keeping secret my new novel. I have hastily pointed out that the forthcoming book **ANGEL UNCOVERED**, from Century, has certainly not been written by me, though I do admire its catchy title. The name of the author appears to be one Katie Price, but I am afraid I have absolutely no idea who that is. I will immediately consult my extensive collection of back copies of the *Literary Review* and the *Times Literary Supplement* to find out all I can about this mysterious author. My factotum Waldo has offered me the loan of his own collection of certain magazines, which he assures will not only help but give me 'something to think about'.

Pip! Pip! The Ripster

The foregoing are excerpts from the author's columns found at www.shotsmag.co.uk and published with the permission of the author and the site.

SNEAK PREVIEWS Upcoming Mysteries



July 2008

- Aird, Catherine, **Losing Ground** \$23.95 Minotaur (C. D. Sloan)
- Andrews, Donna, **Cockatiels at Seven** \$23.95 Minotaur (Meg Langslow)
- Barbeau, Adrienne & Scott, Michael, **Vampyres of Hollywood** \$23.95 St. Martin's (First Novel - Ovsanna Moore)
- Black, Benjamin, **The Lemur** \$13.00 Picador (stand-alone)
- Burke, James Lee, **Swan Peak** \$25.95 Simon & Schuster (Dave Robicheaux)
- Cannell, Stephen J., **At First Sight** \$25.95 Vanguard
- Casey, Kathryn, **Singularity** \$24.95 Minotaur
- Cavanagh, Thomas B., **Prodigal Son** \$24.95 Minotaur (Mike Garrity)
- Cooper, Natasha, **A Poisoned Mind** \$25.95 Minotaur (Trish Maguire)
- Culhane, Patrick (Max Alan Collins), **Red Sky in Morning** \$24.95 Morrow
- DePoy, Phillip, **The Drifter's Wheel** \$24.95 Minotaur (Fever Devilin)
- Donovan, Felicia, **Spun Tales** \$13.95 Midnight Ink (Black Widow Agency)
- Flacco, Anthony, **The Hidden Man** \$14.00 Ballantine (Blackburn & Nightingale)
- French, Tana, **The Likeness** \$24.95 Viking (Cassie Maddox)
- Gardiner, Meg, **Mission Canyon** \$7.99 Obsidian (Evan Delaney)
- Goldberg, Lee, **Mr. Monk Goes to Germany** \$21.95 NAL (Monk)
- Grabien, Deborah, **Rock and Roll Never Forgets** \$24.95 Minotaur (First Novel - JP Kincaid)
- Greenwood, Kerry, **Queen of the Flowers** \$24.95 Poisoned Pen (Phryne Fisher)
- Haines, Carolyn, **Wishbones** \$23.95 Minotaur (Sarah Booth Delaney)
- Hamilton, Denise, **The Last Embrace** \$26.00 Scribner
- Handler, David, **The Sour Cherry Surprise** \$24.95 Minotaur (Berger & Mity)
- Ison, Graham, **Hardcastle's Burglar** \$27.95 Severn (Ernest Hardcastle)
- Judson, Daniel, **The Water's Edge** \$24.95 Minotaur
- Malliet, G. M., **Death of a Cozy Writer** \$13.95 Midnight Ink (First Novel - St. Just)

- Neiderman, Andrew, **Deadly Verdict** \$27.95 Severn
 O'Neil, Vincent H., **Exile Trust** \$23.95 Minotaur (Frank Cole)
 Preisler, Jerome, **Nevada Rose** \$7.99 Pocket (CSI)
 Rosenfelt, David, **Don't Tell a Soul** \$24.95 Minotaur (stand-alone)
 Rowson, Pauline, **The Suffocating Sea** \$28.95 Severn (Andy Horton)
 Segura, Jonathan, **Occupational Hazards** \$14.00 Simon & Schuster
 Sole, Linda, **A Different Kind of Justice** \$28.95 Severn (Sarah Beaufort)
 Steiner, Peter, **L'Assassin** \$24.95 Minotaur (Louis Morgon/Jean Renard)
 Thomas, Will, **The Black Hand** \$14.00 Touchstone (Thomas Llewellyn/Cyrus Barker)
 Thurlo, Aimee & David, **The Prodigal Nun** \$24.95 Minotaur (Sister Agatha)
 Yessayan, Raffi, **Eight in the Box** \$25.00 Ballantine
 Zubro, Mark Richard, **Schooled in Murder** \$24.95 Minotaur (Tom & Scott)

August 2008

- Baker, Sam, **Deadly Beautiful** \$25.00 Ballantine (Annie Anderson)
 Bannister, Jo, **Closer Still** \$24.95 Minotaur (Brodie Farrell)
 Barnes, Linda, **Lie Down with the Devil** \$24.95 Minotaur (Carlotta Carlyle)
 Bell, Nancy, **Paint the Town Dead** \$23.95 Minotaur (Jackson Crain)
 Biddle, Cordelia Frances, **Deception's Daughter** \$24.95 Minotaur (Martha Beale)
 Braver, Gary, **Skin Deep** \$25.95 Forge
 Buchanan, Edna, **Legally Dead** \$25.00 Simon & Schuster (first in new series -- Michael Venturi)
 Chercover, Sean, **Trigger City** \$23.95 Morrow (Ray Dudgeon)
 Cleverly, Barbara, **Folly du Jour** \$24.95 Soho (Joe Sandilands)
 Crosby, Ellen, **The Bordeaux Betrayal** \$25.00 Scribner (Wine Country)
 Daheim, Mary, **Vi Agra Falls** \$23.95 Morrow (Bed & Breakfast)
 Finch, Charles, **The September Society** \$24.95 Minotaur (Charles Lenox)
 Garcia-Roza, Luiz Alfredo, **Blackout** \$24.00 Holt (Insp. Espinosa)
 Gardner, John, **No Human Enemy** \$24.95 Minotaur (Suzie Mountford)
 Grabenstein, Chris, **Hell Hole** \$24.95 Minotaur (John Ceepak)
 Granger, Ann, **A Mortal Curiosity** \$24.95 Minotaur (Lizzie Martin)
 Hogan, Michael, **Burial of the Dead** \$25.95 Minotaur
 Jance, J. A., **Damage Control** \$25.95 Morrow (Joanna Brady)
 Jardine, Quintin, **Aftershock** \$24.95 Headline (Bob Skinner)

- Kaminsky, Stuart M., **The People Who Walk in Darkness** \$23.95 Forge (Porfiry Rostnikov)
 Kaplan, Janice, **A Job to Kill For** \$24.00 Touchstone (Lacy Fields)
 Koryta, Michael, **Envy the Night** \$24.95 Minotaur (stand-alone)
 Lecard, Marc, **Tiny Little Troubles** \$24.95 Minotaur
 Maron, Margaret, **Death's Half Acre** \$24.99 Grand Central (Deborah Knott)
 Parrish, P. J., **South of Hell** \$7.99 Pocket (Louis Kincaid)
 Pfarrer, Donald, **A Common Ordinary Murder** \$26.00 Random House
 Pinter, Jason, **The Stolen** \$7.99 Mira (Henry Parker)
 Rhoades, J. D., **Breaking Cover** \$25.95 Minotaur (Jack Keller)
 Skibbins, David, **The Hanged Man** \$23.95 Minotaur (Warren Ritter)
 Wright, Edward, **Damnation Falls** \$24.95 Minotaur
 Yancey, Richard, **The Highly Effective Detective Goes to the Dogs** \$24.95 Minotaur (Teddy Ruzak)

September 2008

- Balzo, Sandra, **Bean There, Done That** \$27.95 Severn (Maggy Thorsen)
 Benn, James R., **Blood Alone** \$24.00 Soho (Billy Boyle)
 Brandreth, Gyles, **Oscar Wilde and a Game Called Murder** \$14.00/\$24.00 Touchstone (Oscar Wilde)
 Camilleri, Andrea, **August Heat** \$14.00 Penguin (Salvo Montalbano)
 Carrington, Tori, **Working Stiff** \$24.95 Forge (Sofie Metropolis)
 Dunn, Carola, **Black Ship** \$24.95 Minotaur (Daisy Dalrymple)
 Gardiner, Meg, **Crosscut** \$7.99 Obsidian (Evan Delaney)
 Krueger, William Kent, **Red Knife** \$24.00 Atria (Cork O'Connor)
 Magson, Adrian, **No Kiss for the Devil** \$17.95 Creme de la Crime (Riley Gavin/Frank Palmer)
 Mariotte, Jeff, **Right to Die** \$7.99 Pocket (CSI: Miami)
 Marston, Edward, **The Brighton Express** \$29.95 Allison & Busby (Railway Detective)
 Masters, Priscilla, **The Watchful Eye** \$29.95 Allison & Busby (Stand-alone)
 Montanari, Richard, **Badlands** \$26.00 Ballantine (Jessica Balzano/Kevin Byrne)
 Reichs, Kathy, **Devil Bones** \$25.95 Scribner (Temperance Brennan)
 Ripley, Mike, **Angels Unaware** \$29.95 Allison & Busby (Fitz Angel)
 Sandford, John, **Heat Lightning** \$26.95 Putnam (Virgil Flowers)
 Shuman, George D., **Lost Girls** \$25.00 Simon & Schuster (Sherry Moore)
 Smith, Alexander McCall, **The Comforts of a Muddy Saturday** \$22.95 Pantheon (Isabel Dalhousie)
 Trow, M.J., **Maxwell's Chain**, \$29.95 Allison & Busby (Peter Maxwell)

RECENT PAPERBACKS OF NOTE

Soft-Boiled to Medium-Boiled

Caine, Leslie, **POISONED BY GILT** (Dell, \$6.99). Building the most earth-friendly home in Crestview, Colorado proves more difficult when a murdered body shows up. A Domestic Bliss Mystery. PBO

Daheim, Mary, **SCOTS ON THE ROCKS** (Avon, \$6.99). Latest B&B mystery in which Judith and Renie go on location to a Scottish castle where they investigate a deadly crime and do battle with a not-so-friendly ghost. PBO

Dereske, Jo, **INDEX TO MURDER** (Avon, \$6.99). Librarian Helma Zukas teams up with friend and avant-garde artist Ruth Winthrop to find two paintings stolen from Ruth. PBO

Englert, J.F., **A DOG AMONG DIPLOMATS** (Dell, \$6.99). The brilliant Labrador Randolph and his not-so-brilliant master Harry penetrate the shadowy corridors of the U.N. to find a killer and clear a loved one. PBO

Haines, Carolyn, **HAM BONES** (Kensington, \$6.99). Someone has laced the lipstick of the female lead of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* with cyanide. Southern Belle Sarah Booth investigates. PBO

Lovesey, Peter, **THE SECRET HANGMAN** (Soho Crime, \$13.00). Peter Diamond is on the trail of a murderer who leaves his victims hanging in public places. It has been three years since Diamond's wife died and he is just beginning to get interested in women again, but is his new love interest connected with his case?

Michaels, Fern, **HOKUS POKUS** (Zebra, \$6.99). The Sisterhood (seven vigilante friends) must come out of hiding and return to the U.S. to find out who is blackmailing Supreme Court Chief Justice Pearl Barnes.

Myers, Tamar, **DEATH OF A RUG LORD** (Avon, \$6.99). A carpet store owner is found dead the day after antiques dealer Abigail Timberlake Washburn finds a valuable Persian rug among her cut-rate carpets. PBO

Medium-Boiled to Hard-Boiled

Battles, Brett, **THE CLEANER** (Dell, \$6.99). Jonathan Quinn cleans up messy situations including the disposal of dead bodies. But his latest assignment finds himself in over his head and cut off from his normal sources who may have betrayed him. Excellent debut thriller.

Billingham, Mark, **BURIED** (Harper, \$7.99). DI Tom Thorne investigates the disappearance of the son of a former police officer. Did he go voluntarily or was he abducted? Then the videotape arrives...

Bloch, Robert, **SPIDERWEB** ("Even a phony fortune teller could see danger in her future") and **SHOOTING STAR** ("When murder comes to Hollywood, only a one-eyed private eye can spot the killer") (Hard Case Crime, \$7.99). Two full crime novels.

Brown, Dale, **STRIKE FORCE** (Harper, \$9.99). A rebel Iranian general is launching a coup that could topple Iran's theocratic regime. He enlists the help of his old nemesis, U.S. Air Force Lt.-General Patrick McLanahan.

Brophy, Grace, **THE LAST ENEMY** (Soho Crime, \$13.00). When her domineering mother dies, Rita's aristocratic relatives are aghast to learn that she is planning to live with them in Assisi. As the penitentes procession winds through the streets during Easter Week, someone smothers Rita. Commissario Cenni investigates.

Bruen, Ken and Jason Starr, **THE MAX** (HardCaseCrime, \$6.99). The continued adventures of Max Fisher and Angela Petrakos. They find themselves imprisoned – Max in Attica and Angela on the Greek island of Lesbos. PBO

Byrnes, Michael, **THE SACRED BONES** (Harper, \$7.99). A newly unearthed burial box draws American forensic scientist Charlotte Hennessey and Italian anthropologist Giovanni Bersei into unlocking secrets contained in that box.

Collins, Max Allan, **THE FIRST QUARRY** (HardCaseCrime, \$6.99). The never-before-told story of Quarry's first job: infiltrating a college campus and eliminating a professor whose affair with one of his students is the least of his sins. PBO

Dane, Jordan, **NO ONE LEFT TO TELL** (Avon, \$6.99). A man's body is found in a chapel with a cryptic note pinned to his chest. Detective Raven Mackenzie uncovers a connection between the dead man and a powerful female crime boss.

Dane, Jordan, **NO ONE LIVES FOREVER** (Avon, \$6.99). Christian Delacorte has seven days to rescue the father he never knew. PBO

DeCandido, Keith, **CSI: NY - FOUR WALLS** (Pocket Star, \$7.99). The crew investigate a double homicide at a medium security prison on Staten Island. PBO

Dublin, D.H., **FREEZER BURN** (Berkley, \$7.99). Crime Scene Unit rookie Madison Cross investigates a series of seemingly unrelated cases.

Ellison, J.T., **14** (Mira, \$6.99). The Snow White Killer who killed ten woman in the mid-1980s was never caught. Now four more bodies are found in Nashville, Tennessee, all with his signature. PBO

Fox, Kathryn, **SKIN AND BONE** (Avon, \$7.99). A mother has been murdered, a baby is missing and a teenage girl has vanished without a trace. Australian Detective Kate Farrer investigates. PBO

Frimansson, Inger, **THE SHADOW IN THE WATER** (Caravel, \$18.00). Six years have passed since Justine Dalvik killed a couple of tormentors. However, the past, especially in the form of a stubborn policeman, threatens to catch up with her. U.S. PBO

Gagliano, Anthony, **STRAITS OF FORTUNE** (Harper, \$7.99). Ex-NYPD cop Jack Vaughn is now a fitness trainer in Miami. He is offered 100k to burn a yacht along with the dead body in it.

Gagnon, Michelle, **BONE YARD** (Mira, \$6.99). A mass grave site unearthed on the Appalachian Trail puts FBI special agent Kelly Jones at the head of the investigation. PBO

Goldman, Joel, **SHAKE DOWN** (Pinnacle, \$6.99). Three individuals are drawn together after mass murder at a Kansas City residence that Special Agent Jack Davis has carefully staked out for weeks. PBO

Greanias, Thomas, **THE ATLANTIS PROPHECY** (Pocket, \$7.99). For the *National Treasure* movie fan. It has astronomically aligned Washington, D.C. monuments, a mysterious burial at Arlington Cemetery, Masonic rituals, and the key to a centuries-old warning that archaeologist Conrad Yeats discovers on his father's tombstone. PBO

Hamilton, Denise, **THE LAST EMBRACE** (Scribner, \$15.00). Reporter/author Denise Hamilton takes a look at the famous case of the disappearance of Hollywood actress Jean Spangler. PBO

Hewson, David, **THE SEVENTH SACRAMENT** (Dell, \$6.99). Fourteen years have passed since Giorgio Bramante killed the prime suspect in his son's disappearance. The father is out of jail and one by one any people connected to the boy's disappearance are dying.

Hitchcock, Jane Stanton, **THE WITCHES' HAMMER** (Harper, \$7.99). A respected surgeon and rare book collector is brutally murdered in his elegant Manhattan home, just hours after showing a book dealer a 15th-century manual of black magic.

Holden, Craig, **THE NARCISSIST'S DAUGHTER** (Simon & Schuster, \$14.00). An ambitious young man from a troubled home. His boss, a successful doctor with a beautiful wife and daughter. Secrets long buried in a quiet Rust Belt city.

Jacobs, Jonnie, **THE NEXT VICTIM** (Pinnacle, \$6.99). When wealthy heiress Sloane Winslow is found murdered in her house along with the body of pretty college co-ed Olivia Perez, the evidence points to John O'Brien, San Francisco defense attorney Kali O'Brien's brother.

Jance, J.A., **JUSTICE DENIED** (Harper, \$9.99). J.P. Beaumont is asked to keep quiet about the murder of an ex-drug dealer ex-con. Why?

Kelly, Jim, **THE FIRE BABY** (Leisure, \$7.99). An American plane crashes into the Cambridgeshire Fens and out of the flames walks a young woman, Maggie Beck, with a babe in arms. Twenty-seven years later Maggie gives a startling deathbed confession that can blow open a recent murder investigation.

Koontz, Dean, **THE GOOD GUY** (Bantam, \$7.99). A stranger in a bar hands Timothy Carrier a bag full of cash, a photograph and a note that says "*Ten thousand now. You get the rest when she's gone.*"

Lane, Vicki, **IN A DARK SEASON** (Dell, \$6.99). Nola Barrett's North Carolina land is at the center of multiple mysteries (suspicious death, rape and a hanging), which Elizabeth Goodweather investigates when Nola jumps to her death. PBO

Lowell, Elizabeth, **INNOCENT AS SIN** (Harper, \$7.99). Private banker Kayla Shaw barely escapes a brutal kidnapping and soon finds herself accused of the illegal laundering of millions of dollars.

Margolin, Phillip, **TIES THAT BIND** (Harper, \$9.99). Traumatized Portland attorney Amanda Jaffe takes on a sensational client, one who runs an upscale call-girl service and is accused of murdering a U.S. senator.

Margolin, Phillip, **GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN** (Harper, \$9.99). Defense attorney Betsy Tannenbaum is risking everything to defend a cold, powerful, and manipulating client who may be a victim – or a monster.

Millar, Sam, **BLOODSTORM** (Brandon, \$25.95). When he has a chance to kill the man responsible for the brutal rape and murder of his mother (and his own sexual molestation), P.I. Karl Kane is shattered when he finds that the man has, just two days later, raped and murdered two young girls. PBO

Olsen, Gregg, **A COLD DARK PLACE** (Pinnacle, \$6.99). In a secluded farm house in the Pacific Northwest, a family has been slaughtered – and a teenage son has disappeared. Single mother and cop, Emily Kenyon, spearheads a dark hunt for a killer. PBO

Palmer, Rob, **EYES OF THE WORLD** (Leisure, \$7.99). The first female president of the U.S. has a secret lover who is accused of the murder of a woman who is close to the president. PBO

Perry, Thomas, **SILENCE** (Harcourt, \$14.00). Six years ago, Jack Till helped Wendy Harper disappear. Now Till must find her before tango-dancing assassins Paul and Sylvie Turner do.

Piccirilli, Tom, **THE COLD SPOT** (Bantam, \$6.99). Chase was raised to be a criminal, but he breaks with his past to be with a lovely deputy sheriff. Then tragedy strikes and he must re-enter that dark underworld he thought he had left forever. PBO

Rifkin, Shepard, **THE MURDERER VINE** (Hard Case Crime, \$6.99). Three college boys go to Mississippi to work for civil rights and disappear. NY PI Joe Dunne is hired to find the men responsible and kill them.

Rollins, James, **THE JUDAS STRAIN** (Harper, \$7.99). Operatives of the shadowy covert organization Sigma Force search for answers to the bizarre affliction aboard a cruise liner, which is later attacked by terrorist hijackers.

Ruttan, Sandra, **WHAT BURNS WITHIN** (Leisure, \$7.99). A year after a case almost destroys them, three cops are working on separate cases, which, over time, seem to be related. PBO

Schneider, Bart, **THE MAN IN THE BLIZZARD** (Three Rivers, \$14.95). On the eve of the Republican Convention is St. Paul, Minnesota, eccentric P.I.

Augie Boyer uncovers a plot to kill three abortion doctors. PBO

Silver, Mitch, **IN SECRET SERVICE** (Pocket Star, \$7.99). Ian Fleming seals a manuscript intended for a future reader who turns out to be an American academic. It is 2005 and there are forces that really don't want the academic to read what Fleming sealed away so long ago.

Siverling, Michael, **THE SORCERER'S CIRCLE** (Leisure, \$7.99). Jason Wilder of the Midnight Investigation Agency is told by Elijah Messenger that he has a premonition that he (Elijah) will be killed. The next morning Elijah is found murdered and the Agency is hired to represent the prime suspect in the case – the mayor's daughter.

Staub, Wendy Corsi, **DYING BREATH** (Zebra, \$6.99). Cam Hastings has come to Long Beach Island with her teenage daughter to save her failing marriage. A serial killer gets in the way. PBO

Thomson, Colleen, **TRIPLE EXPOSURE** (Leisure, \$7.99). Altered, lurid photos of photographer Rachel Copeland appeared on the Internet, starting a downward spiral that ended in a shooting of a 19-year-old stalker in self-defense.

Thompson, Larry D., **SO HELP ME GOD** (Tor, \$7.99). When a teenage member of televangelist Thomas Jeremiah Luther's congregation almost dies from an abortion, he convinces her family to file a multi-million-dollar lawsuit. The right verdict will shut down abortion clinics all over the country and catapult Luther to the top of conservative Christian political power.

Trinchieri, Camilla, **THE PRICE OF SILENCE** (Soho, \$13.00). Emma Perotti took a young artist under her wing. Now she is on trial for the girl's murder.

Wood, Simon, **WE ALL FALL DOWN** (Leisure, \$7.99). Engineer Hayden Duke is baffled by the suicide of his former college roommate and current fellow employee. Others within the company are killed and he and his friend's sister delve deep to find out what is going on. PBO

Zeltserman, Dave, **SMALL CRIMES** (Serpent's Tail, \$14.95). Corrupt cop Joe Denton gets out of prison early, but none of his former friends and associates want him around. But he has some unfinished business. PBO

Zigal, Thomas, **PARIAH** (Toby, \$9.95). Aspen Sheriff Kurt Muller is the chief suspect in an old flame's murder.

History Mystery

Akunin, Boris, **SISTER PELAGIA AND THE BLACK MONK** (Mortalis, \$14.00). 19th century Russian nun Sister Pelagia visits the island monastery of New Ararat to find out what is wrong at the Hermitage. PBO

Cleverly, Barbara, **TUG OF WAR** (Delta, \$13.00). 1926. The war-ravaged vineyards of France, where Inspector Joe Sandilands is called on to find the identity of a shell-shocked patient. Several families are claiming the unknown soldier as their own.

Culhane, Patrick (Max Allan Collins), **BLACK HATS** (Harper, \$7.99). An aging Wyatt Earp teams up with old friend Bat Masterson, travels to Chicago and takes on a brutal, hot-headed young gangster, Al Capone.

Downing, David, **ZOO STATION** (Soho, \$14.00). As World War II approaches, Anglo-American journalist John Russell faces the prospect of having to leave his German son and longtime girlfriend in Berlin. He must bob and weave when Soviet, German and British intelligence try to recruit him.

Haines, Kathryn Miller, **THE WINTER OF HER DISCONTENT** (Harper, \$13.95). Working in a chorus line of a flopping Broadway musical, Rosie Winter comes to the aid of her mob-muscle pal, Al, who is accused of murder. 1940s New York City. PBO

Hamilton, Denise, **THE LAST EMBRACE** (Scribner, \$15.00). Reporter/author Denise Hamilton takes a look at post-WWII Hollywood and the famous case of the disappearance of Hollywood actress Jean Spangler. PBO

Leonard, Elmore, **UP IN HONEY'S ROOM** (Harper, \$9.99). U.S. Marshall Carl Webster is on the trail of two escaped German POWs who escaped from an Oklahoma internment camp. He seeks help from Honey Deal, the estranged wife of a German-born butcher.

Murray, Yxta Maya, **THE KING'S GOLD** (Harper, \$14.95). Bibliophile, bookstore owner and adventuress Lola Sanchez goes in search of a stolen fortune in Montezuma's gold. PBO

Perez-Reverte, Arturo, **THE SUN OVER BRENDA** (Plume, \$15.00). The third episode of swordsman-for-hire Captain Alatriste. In the tradition of Alexandre Dumas.

Perry, Anne, **AT SOME DISPUTED BARRICADE** (Ballantine, \$15.00). July 1917. Chaplain Joseph Reavley and his sister Judith, an ambulance driver, have conflicting feelings about 12 men charged with killing their incompetent superior officer. Judith helps the men escape.

Perry, Anne, **WE SHALL NOT SLEEP** (Ballantine, \$15.00). Chaplain Joseph Reavley and his sister Judith, an ambulance driver are hard-pressed with problems: soldiers are abusing German prisoners, a nurse has been raped and murdered, and the sinister ideologue known as the Peacemaker now threatens to undermine the peace just as he did the war.

Soos, Troy, **STREETS OF FIRE** (Kensington, \$6.99). 1895 New York City. The trolley workers go on strike and labor strife boils over until a policeman drops dead in a crowd of protesters with two bullet holes in his back. Reporter Marshall Webb investigates. PBO

Sussman, Paul, **THE LOST ARMY OF CAMBYSES** (Grove Press, \$14.00). Seemingly random murders cause an Egyptian police detective and an archaeologist's daughter to join forces in solving them. Along the way are mythical lost tombs and historical mysteries.

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Editor/Publisher

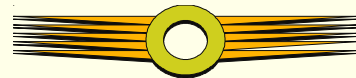
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